

Yahoo Personals

Impact Highlights

- Identified components of online dating services that are most crucial to new users.
- Conducted side-by-side comparison of Yahoo! Personals versus other personals sites.
- Measured improvement of new design in reaching target market.

"The Keynote solution was exactly what we needed to get the quantitative, qualitative and behavioral data we were seeking within a timeline that worked for us."

Cricket Wardein, director of marketing for Yahoo! Personals.

About Yahoo! Personals

Yahoo! Personals was first introduced in the U.S. in 1997 and has quickly grown to become one of the leading and most popular online dating services available. The service offers a large, dynamic dating scene where users can search for, meet and communicate with a variety of people. Yahoo! Personals launched in Europe in June 2003 with sites in the United Kingdom and Ireland (<http://personals.yahoo.co.uk>), France (<http://rencontres.yahoo.fr>) and Germany (<http://dating.yahoo.de>). Yahoo! Personals also launched in Australia and New Zealand in July of 2003.

According to Jupiter Research's December 2002 report on online dating, the total online personals category is expected to grow from \$313MM in 2002 to \$602MM in 2006. As the industry continues to grow, Yahoo! Personals remains committed to innovating its product and offering the best user experience in a competitive market.

The Yahoo! Personals Challenge

With the rapid growth of the online personals category, Yahoo! Personals had become one of four services accounting for 70% of Yahoo! Subscription revenues. However, Yahoo! Personals' competitors were also growing quickly. In order to continue their impressive growth, Yahoo! Personals wanted to gain a more intimate understanding of how new customers experience the excitement of online dating for the first time. Additionally, they wanted to explore which factors were most important in spurring potential customers to purchase a Yahoo! Personals subscription.

The Yahoo! Personals team needed an effective way to research these important issues. They had just completed a major site redesign and wanted to measure the impact of their improvements over the previous design and the competition. They needed a tool that would allow them to compare users' experiences and perceptions on multiple personals websites, all in one study.

"The Keynote study gave us specific feedback from a panel customized to meet our business objectives," said Wardein. "As a result, we know with confidence that our site is sending a message that resonates with our target market, resulting in a higher likelihood of converting casual browsers to paying customers."

About Keynote

Keynote Systems (NASDAQ "KEYN") is the global test and measurement company for mobile communications and online business performance. As an independent and trusted third-party, Keynote provides IT and marketing executives with an unbiased view into their Internet services from around the world. For over a decade, we have been providing measurement data and testing capabilities that allow companies to understand and improve their customer's online and mobile experience.

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The Keynote Solution

Keynote and Yahoo! Personals designed an open-ended research study that investigated which factors were most important to singles when choosing an online dating service. They also analyzed how users' experiences on the site influenced the purchase decision and identified potential hurdles to conversion. Additionally, they worked together to define relevant and reliable metrics for assessing the impact of the new Yahoo! Personals site in comparison with the competition. The team attacked the problem from a number of angles, including a non-branded "blind taste test" to study the impact of the strong Yahoo! brand on the purchase decision.

Keynote drew from its extensive research panel to assemble a customized panel of 525 singles of all ages that were interested in online dating but had never used Yahoo! Personals. Panelists were from 18 major U.S. metropolitan areas and accurately reflected Yahoo! Personals' target demographic. The Keynote software then followed the panelists as they interacted with the personals websites, gathering feedback throughout their experiences.

"With Keynote, we were able to get extremely thorough results quickly," commented Cricket Wardein, director of marketing for Yahoo! Personals. "The Keynote solution was exactly what we needed to get the quantitative, qualitative and behavioral data we were seeking within a timeline that worked for us."

The Keynote Impact

At the end of the study, Keynote provided Yahoo! Personals management with rich data detailing the factors that potential customers identified as the most important components of online dating services. The study provided clear insight into how well the new Yahoo! Personals site met these requirements and uncovered opportunities for improvement.

"Because online dating may be a new experience for users, it is especially important that information about our service is communicated clearly," commented Wardein. "The Keynote study identified the key factors that make our target market most comfortable with a purchase decision, enabling us to focus our efforts on improving those critical areas."

Additionally, the innovative Keynote technology allowed for easy head-to-head comparison of the user experience on the Yahoo! Personals site versus the previous design and the competition. In the comparative results, Yahoo! Personals was pleased to see that the goals of their redesign were achieved. The new design tested very well with their target market, showing significant improvement over the previous design and prevailing over the competition.

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