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## IITIIMSHAADI.COM: CAN POSITIONING SUPPORT MARKET EXPANSION?

As the age-old saying goes, 'marriages are made in heaven', perhaps not true for every marriage because not all of them could be called successful. Questions often cropped up among people if they could ever find their right life partner when it comes to an arranged marriage. However, the young, vibrant entrepreneur, Mr. Taksh Gupta was upbeat in finding a solution to make the success rate high, at least for a niche group of customers. He believed that the roots of a successful marriage lie in matching intellect, ecosystem, and exposure. One common denominator to cover these aspects could be education (with prior authentication).

Mr. Taksh Gupta's idea got momentum on a rainy evening in 2012, when he was having a cup of coffee with his cousin. His cousin was working with an American multinational investment bank after passing out from one of the top management institutes of India and was looking for an equally well educated match as a life partner. As their discussion progressed that rainy evening, his cousin showed his frustration with the existing matrimonial websites. After searching meticulously for the past six months he had failed to get a suitable match. One of the major problems that he faced was that there was a lot of fake information across matrimonial sites. The other problem mentioned was that against each search criteria unlimited profiles showed up and it was tedious to shortlist. The worst part was that there was no process of validating the information. Selecting a suitable profile on these websites was similar to looking for a needle in a haystack. A lot of time had to be spent on searching and that was something missing from these busy high profilers. This tickled the brain of Mr. Taksh Gupta with a new business model, who himself possessed an MBA degree from one of the premier management institutes in India. Mr. Gupta felt that

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*Prof. Ramendra Singh of the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, Siddhartha Paul, Poonam Gupta and Amit Kumar developed this case study as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate the effective or ineffective running of an organization.*

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highly educated people deserve a site of their own wherein they could find their soul mates with minimum effort.

The founder, CEO of IITIIMShaadi, Mr.Taksh Gupta believed that

*“The alumni of premier education institutions deserved companionship of ‘matching the intellect’, with similar experiences and expectations.”*

With lots of grit and determination he started a new journey by launching a start-up IITIIMShaadi in April 2014, to explore matrimonial alliance among the alumni of premier educational institutes in India and abroad. Although the ideation of the business happened in 2012, the launch year was in April, 2014. This was a matrimonial alliance business for a niche group of highly educated members. The members were authenticated on the basis of an institution’s degree. The focus was on the eligible bride and groom being equals in the field. In contrast to the other existing websites, the main differentiating factor of this business model had been the quality of members in terms of education. IITIIMShaadi.com invited alumni of premier educational institutions in all streams of education to register on the website. It was realized that the boys to girls ratio in premier colleges had not been 1:1. Instead, boys typically outnumbered girls by 3-6 X. Hence, list of colleges for girls were extended to keep gender uniformity. For boys it was top 10-15 colleges/institutes and for girls the number was top 30-50 colleges/institutes across India and abroad for various fields of study.

Some of the informal advisors suggested that with nil registrations in the beginning, no-one would register. The trend to overcome this problem was to host some fake profiles initially so that others were encouraged to feed in their details. IITIIMShaadi was not comfortable doing the same. Instead, they put up a message on their home page that the site was new and that they would expect gradual pick up in profiles. For this reason, the company decided to charge after the member count crossed 1000 in number. Periodically mails started being sent to registered members advising them to temporarily bear with fewer profiles for a short while. They were assured that efforts were on to increase database. With all these initiatives, new registrations started trickling in. The initial 8 months were free for subscription and the company started their paid service from the beginning of January 2015.

Over the years almost 1,10,000 members had registered themselves at IITIIMShaadi.com. Among them around 25,000 members were actively searching as on 1st March 2021. However, there was scope for improvement and the next leg of the journey would be to leverage its capability and grow in the highly crowded matrimonial market space. After a seven-year journey, the young entrepreneur had been looking for innovative ideas to take the next leap by enhancing the growth rate of new subscribers and active members. The dilemma was how to expand in the highly competitive market place by positioning itself as a niche player?