



CoffeeMeetsBagel

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#WorstValentinesDayEver: Coffee Meets Bagel Data Breach

On Valentine's Day 2019, the popular online dating site, Coffee Meets Bagel announced its online platform was hacked, exposing users to a possible data breach. While the platform boasted that they do not save sensitive information like credit card numbers or passwords, other personal details (like those included in dating profiles) were likely obtained by hackers. The breach impacts anyone with an account before May 2018. The company sent out an email to all account holders informing them of the hack and providing instructions on future actions.

Problematically, the hack challenges the trust between the organization and its users. As one executive reflected, "With online dating, people need to feel safe. If they don't feel safe, they won't share themselves authentically or make meaningful connections."

You work for the PR department for Coffee Meets Bagel. You are asked to create a PR plan that will rebuild trust between the organization and users, as well as improves public opinion of the organization. You have six months and \$200,000. Write at least two objectives and corresponding strategies and tactics. Develop specific messaging for traditional and future audiences.

Overview and History –

Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB) is a dating application connecting its users together. Unlike other dating apps, the smart algorithm develops quality matches, so singles spend less time swiping. The application itself uses an individual's Facebook profile to link them to potential matches to engage in relationships with. Users match with at least one person per day but can only contact their matches if they “like” them and their matches “like” them back. Members get to know their matches by creating in-depth profiles. Some exclusive features are the icebreakers that help initiate a meaningful chat, activity reports, and read receipts, which allow members focus more on active matches.

In 2012, sisters Arum Kang, Dawoon Kang, and Soo Kang developed Coffee Meets Bagel after feeling hopeless with their own dating lives. Learning from their entrepreneur parents, they conducted research finding out more men use dating apps compared to women. Their own primary research led them to this distinctive outlook for dating in the twenty-first century. Coffee Meets Bagel states,

... underneath our pioneering features, handsome app, and bagel puns, we're aiming for a greater goal: to get to the **heart** of meaningful connections. And because we continue to refine with that original goal in mind, Coffee Meets Bagel has made more than 50,000,000 matches and thousands of lasting relationships globally. Follow us as we rewrite the narrative of online dating.

The three aspects users appreciate most:



Smart Algorithm

Every day at noon, receive quality matches curated just for you by our ever-evolving algorithm.



In-Depth Profiles

Share the true you and get to know your matches with profiles that dig deep.



Real Conversations

Skip the small talk and spark meaningful conversation with personalized icebreakers.

Secondary Research: Media Audit –

Purpose: The purpose of secondary research is to clarify opinions and data already existing about CMB and guide the intent of the primary research. Reviews and articles about or related to CMB will establish the current understanding of this application. It will help the practitioner determine what outlets to explore while conducting the content analysis for primary research.

Top Ten Reviews

This review by Anna Burleson compares CMB to the other popular dating apps. Across the board, the features are similar to other dating services. Setting up a profile took about 10 minutes. CMB uses Facebook friends to improve your matches. The information on the page includes education, job, location, height, ethnicity, and the availability to upload six photos. According to the article,

CMB maintains more similarities to Tinder, but acts more like Bumble. In 2016, the application switched to women “#LadiesChoice” after research showed women remain more selective and crave more control over their dating experience while men prefer a large selection. Out of the 10 dating apps reviewed by the site, CMB received “Best App.” Other categories included, “Best for Planned Outings,” “Most Thorough,” and “Best for Millennials.” The three pros listed include “the fact that it limits your daily matches makes you consider profiles more carefully,” “names are private until you and another user both like each other,” and “setup asks you what you like in a mate.” The three cons listed include “there is no web version,” “you can’t ‘like’ an unlimited number of users in one setting,” and “it is advertised as a women’s choice app, which might be unappealing to some men.”

PROS / It limits your daily matches, which makes you consider profiles more carefully.

CONS / There is no desktop version of the service.

★ **VERDICT /** Coffee Meets Bagel is a well-designed free app great for people seeking meaningful relationships.

[Tech Crunch](#)

According to this article, CMB changed their interface placing a higher emphasis on user profiles. The additions showcase more text answers, giving users the option to “heart” the profile or comment. This article compares the changes to Hinge, a relationship-focused app. “Coffee Meets Bagel says that during its beta testing, members who sent comments to their matches had a 25 percent higher chance of getting liked back. And when comments led to conversations, there was a 60 percent increase in total messages exchanged.” Other changes in the discover and suggested sections offer seamless scrolling and better navigation.

Related to the crisis:

[The Verge](#)

On February 14, 2019, Coffee Meets Bagel sent out an email to users explaining personal information was breached. An unauthorized party gained access to user data. The company reported the hackers did not steal any sensitive information such as credit card numbers or passwords. CMB engaged with forensic security experts reviewing the systems to help find out how the breach occurred.



Donie O'Sullivan ✓
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Coffee Meets Bagel decides to tell users it suffered a data breach.... on Valentine's Day. 💔

♡ 41 9:23 AM - Feb 14, 2019 · Manhattan, NY

After a year of data breaches from companies like Facebook and Google, it only makes sense that even our most boring and benign data would become the subject of rogue hackers online. Credit card information is one thing, but imagine trying to get into user messages. You would just find one person saying ‘Hey,’ and no one ever responding. Forever.

CMB never disclosed the number of accounts affected by the breach but said that some users who were on the app before May 2018 had their names and email addresses leaked.

Recommended Primary Research –

Purpose: Coffee Meets Bagel must identify how deeply the data breach affected users. CMB must regain and redevelop trust to those users and create a sense of transparency to entice and assure current and potential users. In order to get this information, primary research is essential.

- A content analysis will provide CMB with direct comments from their users.
- Interviews will provide in-depth information with ways to improve communication.

Quantitative Method: Content Analysis – In order to properly understand user opinions on CMB, investigating comments on social media platforms provided by users is necessary. Especially with the data breach on Valentine’s Day, looking at posts during the month of February would be helpful to understanding perceptions before the breach, the day of, and after the breach. CMB posts regularly on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#). This analysis helps determine which ways to communicate with those most affected and future CMB participants.

Qualitative Method: Interviews – Besides exploring comments on social media, a great technique is asking open-ended questions. CMB can send emails to users asking them to participate in an interview, developing questions asking users about their experiences with CMB pre- and post-data breach. CMB developers can ask how to make the experience feel safer for users trying to develop new relationships, directly impacting the strategic communication plan.

Issues –

- Coffee Meets Bagel’s data breach damaged the reputation its established with users.
- Coffee Meets Bagel must create new unique selling aspects to stand out among other dating applications available.

Ambition –

It is essential for Coffee Meets Bagel to minimize the backlash caused by the data breach announced on Valentine’s Day by remaining transparent and honest. By developing specific messages to existing audiences, CMB can re-develop confidence with current users and reestablish its brand identity for potential users.

Audiences –

Internal	External
• CMB current users • CMB employees	• Former CMB users • Other dating app users - Tinder - Bumble - Hinge - eHarmony - Match.com
Intermediary	Special
• Activists for data protection • CMB stakeholders • Media	• Potential CMB users • People refusing to use dating apps • Hackers

Audience Ranking Chart –

	Priority Targets	Secondary Targets
	MUST Influence	SHOULD Influence
LIKELY to Influence	• CMB current users • CMB stakeholders ◦ investors • Potential CMB users • CMB employees	• Former CMB users
UNLIKELY to Influence	• Other dating app users • Media	• People refusing to use dating apps • Activists for data protection

Maximum PR Effort

Significant PR Effort

M-A-C Triad –

Message	Audience	Channel
Coffee Meets Bagel continues to grow through challenges to provide the best experience for users looking for serious relationships.	CMB current users	• Email • Social media • Website
Coffee Meets Bagel will rebuild trust with current users and prevent future breaches.	CMB employees	• Media Kit • Intranet • Email
Coffee Meets Bagel values its users and will develop stronger security measures and new creative ways to form connections moving forward.	Media	• Press release • Media advisory • Pseudo-event • Media Kit
Coffee Meets Bagel provides singles a unique opportunity to forge a lasting connection.	Potential CMB users	• Social media • Advertisements

Change Agent Chart: CMB current users –

Current State	Message	Desired State
Coffee Meets Bagel data breach tarnished CMB's established reputation as a leading dating application.	Coffee Meets Bagel continues to grow through challenges to provide the best experience for users looking for serious relationships.	Coffee Meets Bagel's ever-evolving platform improved security and smart algorithms that positions the brand as a distinct dating app superior to others.

Force Field Analysis: CMB current users

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
People want to build relationships through CMB understanding the layout of the app 5 	Do not agree with the standard established with "women's choice"  2
Current trends in building relationships include participation on CMB 3 	People participate on multiple online relationship building applications  5
Users provide personal information intending to seek a partner 4 	Users lack awareness of terms on the privacy of personal information  3
1 2 3 4 5	5 4 3 2 1

Message: Perfectly brewed, Coffee Meet Bagel spices up online dating.

Key Message: Savor the Fresh Brew

Strategic Communication Plan Goal: Improve the perception of Coffee Meets Bagel post-breach and maintain a positive impression from continuing and new users moving forward.

Issue 1.0: Coffee Meets Bagel's data breach damaged the reputation its established with users.

Objective 1.0: Improve engagement with application users by 10 percent within the first two months post data-breach.

Strategy 1.1: Chat with Coffee Connoisseurs #CMBForYou

Tactic 1.1.1: Improve security measures keeping users informed.

Tactic 1.1.2: Develop customer service line for users with access to ask their questions and voice their concerns about their information.

Tactic 1.1.3: Send notifications on the app explaining new security measures in place with swipe feature to explore ways to protect your account.

Strategy 1.2: Adding Sugar to Your Coffee

Tactic 1.2.1: Develop a new app feature for people who want to meet without uploading personal information. Blending new online dating with less popular relationship practices.

Tactic 1.2.2: Notify users of new features through notification and include it in update description in the app store.

Tactic 1.2.3: Create digital campaign incorporating the latest app features.

Issue 2.0: Coffee Meets Bagel must create new unique selling aspects to stand out among other dating applications available.

Objective 2.0: Raise awareness of Coffee Meets Bagel application improvements by 15 percent to continued and new users in three months post data-breach.

Strategy 2.1: Traditional Coffee Meets Outgoing Bagel

Tactic 2.1.1: Introduce CMB Community Calendar.

Tactic 2.1.2: Host real-life icebreakers, speed dating and other mixers for singles using the application in major cities across the country.

Tactic 2.1.3: Implement user surveys rating their experience with a new blend of Coffee Meets Bagel initiatives.

Strategy 2.2: Searching for your Everything Bagel

Tactic 2.2.1: Interview couples who met through the app and new couples from in-person events to compare experiences.

Tactic 2.2.2: Create a video including interviews and snippets of in-person as online testimonials to distribute on social media and the website.

Budget: \$200,000

Evaluation –

Objective 1.0: Conduct a follow up content analysis examining the tone and posts using #CMBForYou across various social media platforms.

Objective 2.0: Evaluate information from surveys and interviews to make changes on further initiatives. Conduct a focus panel to determine the value of new programs.

Ethics: Potter Model –

Ethical Issue: Is it ethical for Coffee Meets Bagel to continue to require personal information provided by users to form personal relationships?

1. Definition Yes: In order for users to learn more about each other, uploading information must happen. No: User information should be protected and not accessed or stolen. 	4. Loyalties Yes: Coffee Meets Bagel remains loyal to user security. No: Coffee Meets Bagel does not remain loyal to consumers by stockpiling private information. 
2. Values Yes: Coffee Meets Bagel values user satisfaction above everything else. No: Coffee Meets Bagel does not value users by storing their information. 	3. Principles Yes: Mill's Utilitarianism – “What is useful is right” No: Judeo/Christian Principle – “Treat others as you would be treated yourself”

Decision: Yes, it is ethical for Coffee Meets Bagel to require personal information users provide to develop personal relationships because of the nature of the application and dating itself.

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