
MARKETING PRACTICES:- INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

As business evolve from product or campaign centric to customer centric marketing, a set of best practices is emerging that focus on measuring and increasing the life time value of customer because loyal customers are both a scarce and a source of value. To deliver customer value firms have to manage their service quality because big gap exists between the expectations of the customers and the level of services they get. It is important to understand and meet customer expectations. If the firm understand the expectations and also has the capability to serve them, the customer will be satisfied with service In order to survive and perform better, marketers are coming up with various marketing strategies like eco marketing, social marketing, permission marketing, viral marketing, ambush marketing, bluetooth marketing, guerilla marketing, etc., to attract and retain customers. In this paper an attempt has been made to provide an overview of several emerging marketing approaches that are being used by marketers to influence consumer buying behavior and generate demand of their products.

CONCEPT OF BUYING BEHAVIOUR

It becomes a necessity for the today's marketer to influence the customer's buying behaviour. The process of influencing buying behaviour can be done through consumer research in which information regarding consumer's need, cognition and his particular behaviour related to product and services is collected. Consumer Behavior or buying behavior of a consumer refers to the buying behavior of final consumers- individuals and households who buy goods and services for personal consumption. The behavior of consumer has been studied by companies to know about what consumers buy, where they buy, how and how much they buy, when they buy, and why they buy.

As defined by American Association of Marketing, "it is the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives. In other words it involves the thoughts and feelings people experience and the actions they perform in consumption process". It also includes all the things in the environment that influence these thoughts, feelings and actions, that includes observations from other consumers, advertisements, price information, packaging, product appearance, and many others.

A number of factors influences the buyer behavior, these are, cultural factors (sub culture, classes), psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning, belief and attitude), social factors (reference group, family, aspirational group, roles and statutes), personal factors (occupation and economic circumstances, lifestyle, personality, self-concept). Based on this information, appropriate marketing mix including product, packaging, branding elements, advertising, sales promotion, pricing and discounts, etc., are designed or modified as appropriate.

Modern Marketing Approaches/practices to Influence Buying Behaviour

The modern marketing approaches which would influence the buying behavior of customers can be broadly classified into three categories -

1. Concept-based
2. Cause based and
3. Technology-based approaches.

These three categories of marketing approaches are shown in figure below:

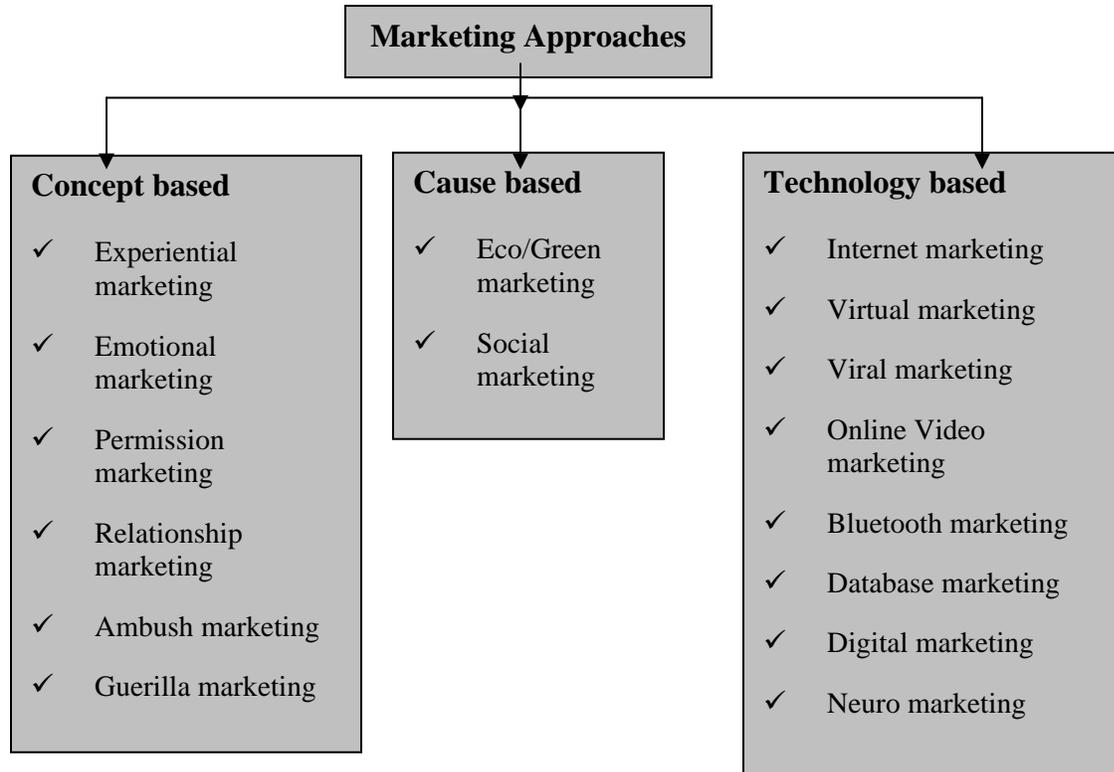


Figure 1: Marketing Approaches

1. CONCEPT BASED APPROACHES

Experiential Marketing

This method of marketing focuses on the experiential benefit provided by the product. It aims at providing customers a holistic experience through Strategic Experiential Module proposed by Bernd H Schmitt which constitutes sensing experience (sense), affective experience (feel), creative cognitive experience (think), physical experience (act), and social identification experience (relate) and these are collectively termed as experiential mix which the customers pass through various stages from brand identity to brand experience. The idea behind experiential marketing is to let the customers touch, feel, think and relate before buying the product. The sensing experience includes the five elements of sense such as sight, sound, scent, taste and touch. The technique of marketing which includes anyone or all of these elements is said to be executing sensory experiential marketing; and in apparel retail marketing, the most commonly used are sight and touch. The affective experience (feel) includes creating a favorable image in the unconscious mind of the audience by associating the brand with certain emotions,

so that whenever the customer sees the product, it triggers the desired emotion. The association between the customers and the brand or product can be generated through the experiential marketing approach.

Emotional Marketing

Emotions play a vital role in the customers' purchase decision. The success of marketing activities depends on understanding the psychology of customers and their emotional feelings. Incorporating emotional values in a product can captivate the customers' mind and heart quite strongly, and this leads to enhanced customer loyalty. Customers bond with products based much more on emotions and compatibility with their life styles and personalities, than they do based on features alone. Emotional dimensions can be linked to a product in a variety of ways, based on their benefits, usage context, affection for others, gift purposes, etc.

Permission Marketing

This marketing approach was suggested originally by Seth Godin. He emphasizes customer relationship through management of the customer life cycle. Permission marketing is the opposite of interruption marketing, where permission from the customers is asked first before involving them in an affiliation and rewarding them with incentives. In permission marketing, customers are engaged in the marketing activities of a company by getting consent from them, and they will be given incentives or other benefits. For example, in e-permission marketing, a customer accepts to engage in a relationship when he checks a box on a web page to state that he agrees to receive communication from a company; and this is called as 'opt-in'. If the customer does not wish to receive any communication, he can then select the 'opt-out' choice

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing emphasizes on building relationship between the brands and customers by interacting with customers on a regular basis through loyalty programs such as pleasing repeat shoppers with gifts, discounts and prizes to help the customer to build a bond with the store, brand or company because nowadays, customers have a wide range of options in the products and services to choose from, and they make their choice based on what they perceive about the quality, value and service of a particular product. This leads to the marketer giving importance to value and satisfaction of customers. This is addressed through relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing leads to reduced defection rates, integration of quality and customer service and implementation of TQM at all levels of the supply chain.

Ambush Marketing

Ambush marketing is also known as parasite marketing. It is an activity where an organization makes use or takes advantage of the publicity value of a major event without officially sponsoring it in any form. It is an attempt by one company to benefit from an event at the cost of another company, which may be spending money to sponsor it. Generally, big corporate competitors who missed the opportunity of getting the official sponsorship may involve in this type of promotional technique to take advantage of the popularity of an event by creating a wrong notion that they are the sponsors. Some companies may also involve in ambush marketing because of the high cost of sponsorship and the complications of legal obligations related to the official sponsorship. Though ambush marketing is unethical and unauthorized, it is becoming increasingly popular, and up to a level can be considered rightful and tolerable.

Guerilla Marketing

Guerilla marketing is based on building relationship with the consumers through an eccentric style of promotional activity. This marketing technique is often implemented without the audience being aware about it, by adopting an undercover or stealth marketing approach. The use of undercover is to create a buzz or impulsive word-of-mouth which comes for free. Guerilla marketing promotes repeat and referral actions through word-of-mouth campaign, personal canvassing, forehead campaign, advertisement in yellow pages, T-shirts, search light, brochures and handouts distributed at crowded gatherings, flags and banners, etc.

2. CAUSE BASED APPROACHES

Eco/Green Marketing

Eco marketing, also termed as green marketing, is an approach to marketing of products with an ecological conscience. Awareness and concern about the environment is growing among the people, and the demand for eco-friendly products is increasing considerably, though the prices of these products are slightly higher as compared to those of their regular equivalents. The target customers for this type of marketing approach are those who are concerned about the environment. In the case of apparels for example, eco marketing approach may include use of

organic cotton, natural fibers, non-hazardous dyes and chemicals, recycling of cotton wastes and packaging, etc.

The concept of eco marketing not only deals with eco-friendly products, but also encompasses eco friendly production and distribution processes, etc. The objective of eco marketing is to increase awareness about environmental protection amongst the people and also reduce activities that affect the environment in a negative way. Eco marketing covers activities ranging from the development of a new product to the altering of features of existing products or packaging and even making the promotional strategies more eco-friendly.

Macdonald's Going Green

Macdonald's have stopped packaging their hamburgers etc. in polystyrene containers and now use cardboards which come from a renewable resource and is biodegradable or recyclable



Social Marketing

According to **Philip Kotler**, "Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify or abandon behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups or society as a whole". In other words social marketing is an approach that combines marketing with bringing in social change through the marketing of social behavior, by changing the attitudinal, behavioral and cultural mindset among the people. Social marketing, which is regarded as an integrated sub domain of commercial marketing, can bring in considerable change in the behavior of people as well as the society. As part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives, many companies have been practicing social marketing as an avenue to improve their social image and relationship with customers. Marketers can focus on social marketing activities related to drug abuse, health & hygiene, gender inequality, abolition of child labor, etc. This is expected to have a positive impact on social concerns and discipline.

3. TECHNOLOGY BASED APPROACHES

Internet Marketing

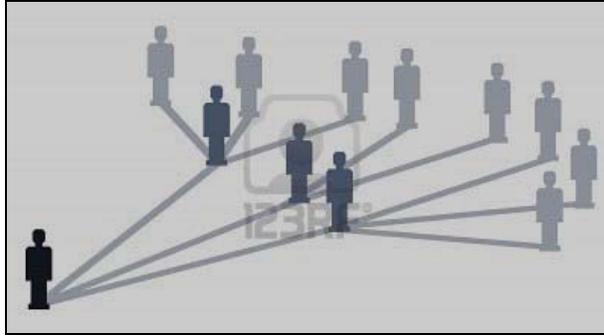
The advent of Internet has led to a situation where people spend a lot of time both at their workplace and at home sending and receiving e-mails, searching for information, social networking, etc. The trend of online shopping has increased tremendously over the past decade. This provides a huge opportunity for marketing products through the Internet. The Internet can also be used to market one's products by sending e-mails, through blogs and social networking sites, through pop-up ads, etc. Results of the marketing efforts on the Internet can be measured easily when compared to conventional marketing.

Virtual Marketing

Virtual marketing is that marketing approach which uses the concept of virtual world for marketing purposes. Virtual world, which is termed as 'second life', burst onto the web and digital world in 2006 and is growing rapidly. This includes a mix of Internet and contact marketing, by combining the virtues of technology and modern trends on the Internet like social networking, etc. They provide the users entertaining and interactive experience. The virtual world offers tremendous opportunity to engage the target customers in an interactive and immersive brand experience, and the scope for virtual marketing is indeed quite bright.

Viral Marketing

In this marketing approach the customers sell a product on behalf of the company; often without intentionally doing so or without even being aware that they are doing so. One method of doing this is to insert a small advertisement or logo on every message sent, thus making each user a salesperson. This approach is particularly well suited to the Internet, and is commonly done through emails. As the message spreads in multiplicative fashion like a virus, it is referred to as viral marketing.



Online Video Marketing

This marketing approach incorporates video in Internet marketing by using video clippings, video distribution for multiple site sharing and video steaming. This may comprise music, news, comedy, movie ads or trailers, television programs like reality shows, sports trailers, etc. This provides e-marketers potential for online branding, improving interaction and public relations, demonstrating of products, etc. The categories of online video are business introduction videos, sales presentations, testimonials, educational selling, news, events and messages.



Bluetooth Marketing

Bluetooth is a technology which allows wireless communication within a short range area (around 100 meters) by using electronic devices to send and receive messages to and from mobile phones. Bluetooth marketing also termed as 'proximity marketing' is used to convey advertisement and promotional messages through Bluetooth technology, in the area proximity of

a marketing broadcast. Customers in that area receive the broadcast on their mobile phone. Through this method, marketers can send communication in the form of plain text, audio and video, games, images, e-business cards, reminders, etc., economically and flexibly to multiple users.



Bluetooth marketing can be applied in areas such as transportation hubs i.e. bus and rail stations, airports, etc., service areas like hotels, hospitals and educational institutions, exhibition and trade shows, as well as in public places like cinemas, malls, amusement parks, etc.. The merits of this approach are that it increases awareness and facilitates interaction at a low cost in an environment -friendly manner.

Database Marketing

Database marketing involves using customer data to market the products. It includes the activities of building the customer database, maintaining and using the same for the purpose of contacting the customers, carrying out transactions and building customer relationship. The benefits provided by the database marketing include identification of prospective customers, selection of customers for providing services, strengthening customer loyalty, motivating purchase, elimination of agents, customer retention, refined segmentation of customers, customer relationship management, etc.

Database marketing can be enhanced by continuous upgrades in web technology and data mining techniques. Various types of database that can be built are bibliographical, numerical or statistical, transactional, special purpose, etc.

Neuromarketing

It is the latest technological approach of modern marketing. Neuromarketing is a kind of consumer behavior research technique which uses brain scan technology to find out how

marketing stimuli affects the subconscious. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners are used to record the brain activities to measure the effectiveness of the product in affecting the brain's pleasure centers.

Neuromarketing can locate the triggering place of emotions and informs the marketer which advertisement will circulate more blood to a given place in the brain.

CONCLUSION

The attitude of today's consumers has undergone a major transformation over the last few years. The consumer today wants to lead a life full of luxury and comfort. Possibly the most challenging concept in the marketing is to deal with understanding the buyer behaviour and converting him loyal customer by delivering value. To persuade customer towards a specific brand, marketer's has to adopt a style and marketing comes in many styles and flavors, most of which are defined as approaches or practices. All above mentioned approaches/practices can be very effective and helpful first of all in understanding the buying behaviour and then in growing the business, market share, profit and creating loyal customer.

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