



EVANGELISM AS A MARKETING STRATEGY- IN THE CHALLENGING AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESS SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era, where people's culture is being influenced by Web, the most powerful form of marketing is word of mouth. In a highly populous market where various companies sell homogeneous goods, it is crucial to find a business which performs an exemplary service. Transforming a customer into an advertising media is a marketing dream. As there are several companies with more or less similar products, and the present business environment is really a challenging one, more connections with the customers have become need of the hour. Always prospective customers depend on the existing customers recommendations while they are making a purchasing decision. With the onset of Social Networking, evangelism marketing has taken a crucial role, where companies compete to spread their influence through the social networks of their customers. The term product evangelism means to build reputation for the company through the existing customers by the word of mouth method. This presentation expounds the importance of evangelism marketing in the challenging and innovative business scenario thus pointing out the virtue of this apparatus. This study is mainly based on secondary data which has been collected from Internet and various books.

Keywords: Evangelism, Customer, Product, Purchase decision, Word of mouth

INTRODUCTION:

Brand Evangelism occurs when a customer actively tries to convince other consumers to buy or use a Particular brand based on a positive experience or perception. Likewise, evangelism marketing is an advanced form of word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) where companies develop customers who believe so strongly in a brand that they freely try to convince others to buy and use it. Brand evangelists spread their beliefs about a brand due to a previously positive experience with the brand. Because they are not compensated, they are perceived to be more trustworthy and credible because their motivations lie within a shared derivation of benefits instead of monetary compensation.

Evangelism marketing is an innovative method of word-of-mouth marketing. Here the customers who are happy after using a particular product or service may convince others to make a purchase decision use the same. In this way the customers act as voluntary advocates for the product by spreading the merits of the product for the company. Affiliate marketing and Evangelism Marketing are two terms used synonymously. Affiliate marketing is a marketing which is based on the performance, where each and every customer will be provided with an incentive in the form of money or money's worth for every new customer brought in by him. But, an evangelist customer communicates their opinion and attracts new customers voluntarily on the basis of belief towards the customer. Here the evangelist thinks for some other's benefit while affiliator works for own benefit. An evangelist works deliberately and so they are known to be key influencers of a company's product or service. As they work for no incentives, their recommendations are perceived by the new customers as more credible and trustworthy. Brand evangelists give opinion about a brand from a



previous positive experience with the product or a brand. The customer who keeps on influencing the wants and desires of other, prospective customers are known as “**Customer Evangelists**”.

History:

The concept of evangelism marketing was first put forth by Guy Kawasaki in his books “The Art of the Start” (2004) and “How to Drive your Competition Crazy” (1996). With the advent of Social Networking, evangelism marketing has become a major factor where organizations compete to spread their influence through the social networks of their customers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brand evangelism is a strong consumer-brand relationship that manifests itself as an extension of positive consumer-to-consumer WOM communication. Brand evangelists are committed consumers who have a strong emotional connection to a brand and spread the message about their preferred brands. Doss (2014) defines brand evangelists as ‘individuals who communicate information, ideas, and feelings concerning a specific brand freely, and often times fervently, to others in a desire to influence consumption behaviour’. According to Matzler et al. (2007), brand evangelism describes an active and committed way of spreading positive opinions and trying to persuade others to become engaged with the same brand, as ‘consumers who evangelize are passionate about their brand and feel the need to share their emotions with others.’ Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) see brand evangelism as ‘the active behavioural and vocal support of a brand including actions such as purchasing the brand, disseminating positive brand referrals, and convincing others about a focal brand by disparaging competing brands’. A brand evangelist acts as an unpaid spokesperson on behalf of the brand (Doss, 2014). Albert et al. (2008) examine the dimensions of brand love. Their study reveals eleven brand love dimensions: passion, a long-duration relationship, selfcongruity, dreams, memories, pleasure, attraction, uniqueness, beauty, trust (satisfaction), and a willingness to declare the love. The former can be considered WOM communication. Online environments are likewise a platform for demonstrating brand evangelism (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013), as online WOM communication is amplified by the speed of diffusion and the large size of the communication network of social media channels.

It is easy to see that the concept of brand love, as consumers experience it, is related to brand evangelism. Batra and colleagues (2012) in turn found seven core elements of brand love: self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviors, positive emotional connection, long-term relationship, positive overall attitude valence, attitude certainty and confidence (strength), and anticipated separation distress. Consumer love for a brand has certain consequences, such as brand loyalty, positive WOM, resistance to negative information, and willingness to pay a price premium (ibid).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the concept of evangelism marketing.
2. To know the different stages involved in evangelism marketing.
3. To understand the benefits of evangelism marketing.
4. To know the relationship between evangelism marketing with different parameters

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term “evangelism” is derived from three words, 'bringing good news'. Evangelism marketing is an innovative method of word-of-mouth marketing. Here the customers who are happy after using a particular product or service may convince others to make a purchase decision use the same. In this way the customers act as voluntary advocates for the product by spreading the merits of

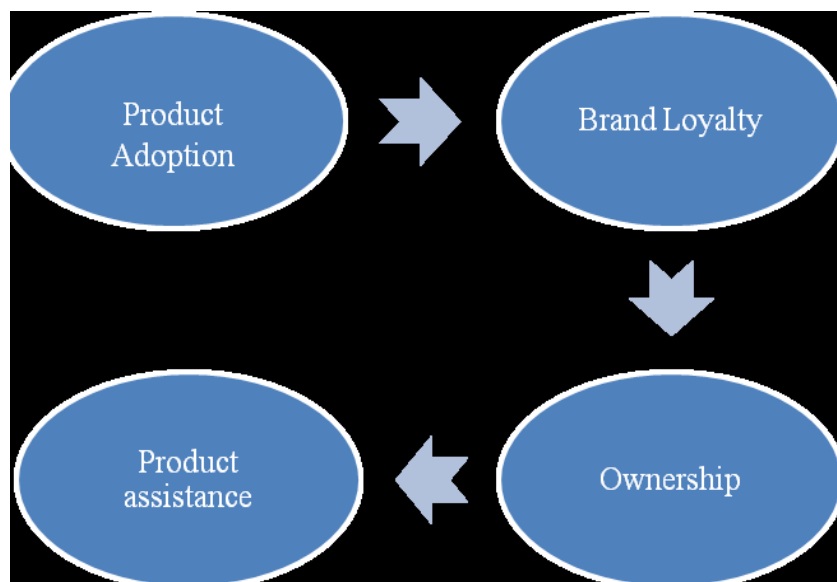


the product for the company. The target of customer evangelism is a pool of existing customers. As “evangelists”, happy customers engage others in positive communication around a specific service or a product in order to “convert” them. It is an organic process in which the audience is the evangelist’s own social network. A market research and consulting firm, reported that more than half of Face book users said their chances of buying a product increase after a Face book friend referral. Nearly 70 percent of survey participants said that a face book “friend” would exercise a positive impact on their purchase decision.

Building Brand Evangelists:

There are several stages to creating brand evangelists out of existing (or future) customers:

- 1. Product Adoption:** Consumers must be truly satisfied and impressed with the product or service.
- 2. Brand Loyalty:** Consumers must choose the brand over competing products or brands and believe in the benefits the brand or product hold.
- 3. Ownership:** The consumer must perceive a shared benefit with the success of the product or brand, and want to associate their credibility with the product.
- 4. Product Assistance:** The consumer must recommend the benefits to those in his or her network of consumers, typically to the people they care most about.



Inclusion of Evangelism Marketing as an Apparatus in Framing the Marketing Strategy

1. Design Social Media Forums.
2. Promote events for customers.
3. Include References and experiences of customers on internet sites.
4. Include unbiased and critical reviews about the product or service.
5. Encourage the existing customers to gift the product or service to other potential customers.

ADVANTAGES:-

- Low cost advertising compared to other marketing campaign efforts
- Studies have shown that brand evangelists spend up to 50% more revenue (individually) than a non-brand evangelist customer.
- Brand Evangelists actively look for ways to improve the brand or products – and provide feedback.
- Unbiased Feedback System



- Committed Customers
- Long Term Marketing Strategy
- Increased goodwill
- Management of expenses

DISADVANTAGES:

- Poor product design / poor customer service /product experience can lead to negative brand /Product association
- Lack of control over the marketing message and method of distribution.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVANGELISM MARKETING WITH DIFFERENT PARAMETERS

CUSTOMER EVANGELISM BRINGS HIGH ‘ROI’

A 2008 Study by Bzz Agent, a Boston word-of-mouth marketing agency, showed that the return on investment reaches about 400 percent. If a company spent 50 cents on generating a discussion ,it would profit 38 cents every time a consumer engaged in a eight minute conversation about the brand .

EVANGELISM MARKETING & THE NOTION OF “CUSTOMER RELIGION”

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THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN WOM MARKETING

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FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY

Further researches may give answers to certain issues like factors responsible for the acceptance of evangelism marketing as a marketing apparatus, the dependency of potential customers on information provided by internet sites, effect of evangelism marketing on consumers when compared to that of traditional marketing tools. All these issues need to be taken into consideration while selecting the evangelism marketing as a tool for boosting sales.

CONCLUSION

Evangelism marketing is an improvised form of word of mouth marketing, where companies depend on existing customers’ feedback as a marketing tool. An experience shared by a customer is influential than thousand advertisements. Small and limited budget may often depend upon evangelism marketing. It provides better return on investment to the organization. This research article summarizes the benefit an organization may derive from word of mouth communication of a customer and how it can be implemented using the internet platform. Further research in this marketing arena may serve good in the dynamic business environment



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