Brand Marketing Through Customer Relationship Management

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In today's competitive business environment, customers are making their buying decisions not just on the basis of product comparisons, but on the basis of relationships they have with the company. In fact, ensuring customer satisfaction is the key to success and companies are actively engaged in studying and exploring the conceptual foundations of managing relationships with customers. A brand derives strength from its experience with its customers and customer relationship management or CRM is all about providing customers a great experience. CRM is increasingly used to learn about customer's needs and behaviour, as good relationship is very essential for successful brand marketing. CRM is now recognized as a powerful tool, for brand marketing to have an edge over the competitors.Customer Relationship Management is the establishment, development, maintenance and optimization of long-term mutually beneficial relationship between customers and companies. Successful CRM stresses on understanding the needs and desires of customers in order to develop stronger relationships with them. It is all about creating a competitive advantage by being the best in understanding, communicating and developing existing customer relationships along with creating and keeping new customers .CRM is immensely beneficial to the brand marketers as it helps not only in retaining customers but also enables more effective marketing. It will also result in expansion of market share and profits of the brand. A good experience of business transaction with the brand will increase the customer loyalty and tendency to purchase again and again. A bad experience with the brand, on the other hand, will transfer the company's business to its competitors. Thus, CRM is the commitment of the brand to put customer experience at the center of its priorities.

BENEFITS OF CRM

In today's dynamic business world, if CRM is implemented effectively, it will result in immense benefits to the brand marketers as well as to the customers. Now days, it has become a vital element for success. Benefits of CRM can be divided into two categories i.e. (i) Benefits of CRM to brand marketers (ii) Benefits of CRM to customers.

BENEFITS OF CRM TO BRAND CUSTOMERS

Following are the benefits of CRM to brand marketers:

- **Improvement in sales revenue -** The sales revenue of the brand is improved through CRM. Keeping the customers satisfied and happy will ensure that they stay with the brand, thus maximizing their contribution to the business. By being customer centered, the brand can increase its sales revenue.
- **Increase in profits -** When CRM is applied; the profits of the brand will increase due to lower defection rates of the customers. When customers enter into a relationship with a brand, they are willingly foregoing other options and limiting their choice. By staying with the brand, the customers enhance profitability of the brand.
- **Reduction in cost of marketing -** If CRM strategy is adopted for marketing the products, the marketers will have a good relationship with the customers. The customers will be satisfied and readily accept the product. Thus, less cost will be incurred in advertising and promotions.
- **Better understanding of customers -** CRM enables the brand marketers to have better understanding of the customers. They can easily anticipate what customers want in terms of the product and services provided by the brand.

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• **Targeted customer contact -** Improved customer knowledge will enable the brand marketers to target their customers precisely. Marketing efforts can be optimized and fully exploited by targeting only the right prospects and potential segments. CRM will help marketers to identify their target customers and not waste their time.

• **Improvement in customer satisfaction –** With the help of CRM, firstly the customers will choose the right product offered and also if they face any problems, they will be easily solved. Thus, with CRM the level of customer satisfaction will be raised. * Strong customer loyalty - With the help of CRM good relationship is developed with the customers. This will result in increase in customer loyalty for a brand. Thus, CRM develops a strong customer loyalty and good brand image.

• **Increase in customer retention -** CRM helps in increasing retention of existing customers by improved after-sales service and support. As the existing customers will be fully satisfied, they will buy the same brand, thus CRM helps to retain old customers.

• **Identifying, attracting and acquiring new customers -** A fine tuned CRM would be able to add a large number of customers to the existing customer base. The brand marketers would be able to add more and more customers to the captive customers. CRM allows the brand marketers to focus their limited marketing resources on the most promising target markets with the highest potential value.

• **Proximity to customers -** The growing expectations of the customers have lead to the brand marketers to innovate, serve and satisfy the customers in a better way. The ability to successfully manage customer relationship is a decisive advantage in today's competitive world to increase proximity to customers.

• **Helps in identifying cross-selling and up-selling opportunities -** CRM helps in identifying opportunities for cross-selling and up-selling of higher value added services to existing customers based on their past purchasing behaviour.

• **Sensitized and productive workforce -** CRM provides integrated view of a brand's customers to everyone in the company and thus, ensures that everyone in the organization is focused on the customers.

BENEFITS OF CRM TO CUSTOMERS:

Following are the benefits of CRM to customers:

• **Decreased cost for customers -** Because of CRM, as marketing expenses of a brand will decrease in the long run; brand marketers can offer the same product at a little lower cost, which will be in the benefit of the customers.

• **Improvement in customer satisfaction -** CRM ensures that the customers experience positive interaction with the brand. Customers form long lasting impressions of how they are dealt with. Thus, a good experience with the brand will result in satisfied and happy customers.

• **Timely delivery of products -** The awareness level of customers has increased manifold. Now the customers are well informed about different types of products and brands available in the market. Therefore, companies are increasingly practicing CRM. This is resulting in effective and timely delivery of products to consumers.

• **Personalization and closeness -** Customers in this competitive age expect constant access to a company. They demand immediate response. They want personalization and closeness for meeting their needs, placing new demands on the company, which CRM alone can satisfy.

• **Availability of wide variety of products -** CRM helps the brand to understand the customer's demands and manufacture new products according to their expectations. With heightened competition and easy to access information, customers have a wide variety of choice of products and services that are specifically tailored to meet customer's needs.

DIFFERENT CRM STRATEGIES FOR BRAND MARKETING

In today's fiercely competitive times, developing close relationship with the customers is very important for the brand marketers. They are exploring different strategies for CRM with the objective to improve

marketing productivity and efficiency. CRM strategies for brand marketing can be broadly classified into four categories as follows:

(1) CRM through direct interaction with customers.
(2) CRM through indirect interaction with customers.
(3) CRM through advertising.
(4) CRM through alterations.

(1) CRM THROUGH DIRECT INTERACTION WITH CUSTOMERS:

Following are some of the CRM strategies being practiced under this category:

Sales Promotion - If sales promotions are done effectively, they not only drive sales, but also add to the overall brand-building proposition. Pepsi's 'Toss ka boss' which tapped into the consumer's passion for cricket by giving winners a chance to accompany then Indian captain Sourav Ganguly, to take the toss, is seen as a very good example of a promotion with brand value and creativity. It helped increase sales during the promo period and the positive effects on brand were much more long lasting. Another promo that kid stuff did for Cadbury's Schweppes orange drink 'Crush' had one day exercise in 6 cities, where people would come in with an orange and exchanged it for a 'Crush'. They got 75,000 trials per city. This led to the establishment of taste linkage between oranges and 'Crush'. The Sony Spiderman for Sony Cyber-shot digicams is one of the intelligent promotions with the aim of overcoming the low mind share that Sony digicams had. A promo was designed around the release of Spiderman in India, where one million Spiderman masks were distributed among kids. The 25-day promo reportedly witnessed 20,000 walk-ins across 40 Sony World Outlets and sales of Sony digicams apparently doubled.

Giving After-Sales Service - Consumers may be replacing products far more frequently but that has not changed the importance of after-sale services, particularly in the consumer durables industry. At LG Electronics India, their after-sale service is seen as one of the differentiators of their business from the competitors. The Company's marketers are of the opinion that happy consumers may pick the same brand again if they are satisfied with the after-sale services. By providing after-sale services, the company goes a long way in giving assurance to the consumers and earning their brand loyalty.

Giving Great Brand Experience - By providing a world-class brand experience, the marketers try to pull in customers and get them to stay at their outlets just a bit longer. Cafe Coffee Day, Pizza Hut, Mocha and Pizza Corner are incorporating interesting ways of giving their customers heightened brand experience. Pizza Hut conducts many activities under the theme of 'customer mania', when the crew performs jig and then is a special birthday rap for customers at their outlets to create an atmosphere of the brand as a place for food and entertainment. Cafe Coffee Day, Coffee Chain has experimented with various add-ons, such as book cafe, a garden cafe and even cafes with art galleries, across its national network. At Mocha, the aim behind launching interest groups like back packer club, film club, arts club, movies screenings and events is to go beyond their marketing tools, where the marketers create a bond and customer loyalty for a brand.

Providing Impeccable Service And Unparalleled Facilities - A great ambience and environment may enable the brand to grab the attention of customers. Taj is known as the premier hospitality provider, spanning numerous cities and towns. These Taj Group Of Hotels stand for a philosophy that aims at providing impeccable service and an unparalleled facility so that every stay is a memorable one.

Mass Customization - Mass customization enables production of goods and services for a relatively big market, which fulfills the needs of each individual customer with regard to certain product characteristics at cost, which are not very different from those of standardized mass production of goods. Procter and Gamble have launched **reflect.com,** which enables users to customize beauty care products. They are configured and dispatched by a dedicated team and there is a help line to answer queries put by the customers. Nike charges about 5 percent more than for its standardized products. Nikeid enables customers to design sneakers on line and customize it. Adidas can charge premium up to

50 percent for its customized products. HLL once enabled consumers to develop new colour shades for its Elle 18 brand of cosmetics. Candico India, a confectionary manufacturer roped in young kids not just to devise new flavors but have used their inputs to develop marketing strategies. Thus, nowadays companies are inviting customers to co-create customized products for themselves.

Customer Summit – Customer Summit or C-Summit has been a very effective marketing tool and it is an opportunity to build close rapport with customers. Information technology (IT) major Hexaware recently held a customer meet in Phoenix, Arizona. For Hexaware, it was a very effective marketing tool, which has paid itself many times over. Hexaware maintains close relationship with the clients at all level. C-Summit aids in taking this relationship to a higher level. It provides an opportunity to build close rapport. C-Summit is a way of showing that the company cares. Infosys during the year 2006 participated in or held over 50 events across U.S, Europe and the Asia-Pacific regions. Wipro Infotech also have customer meets regularly. They provide a unique platform to address the target audience in a direct and personal way. It gives the company and the prospective customers an opportunity to meet one-on-one and understand what the company can do for its customers. It establishes a direct connection with the customers and improves visibility in the target segments.

Blog Marketing – The companies of India have realized the importance of popularity that can be created through word of mouth leading to the usage of blogs. Through blogs, companies are able to successfully promote their new products by providing insights on potential new products. They can also get feedback on existing products. They can spread messages and aim at influencing the thought process of consumers. Thus, blogs effectively facilitate communication with the customers.

Audio-Books Strategy – This is the latest strategy on the part of companies for re-inventing branded content. In the latest strategy, BMW, the car manufacturer, linked up with Publisher Random House to produce a series of stories that visitors to **bmw-audiobooks.com** can download as free podcasts. This way, the company tries to reach the audience with entertainment. Four authors with varying styles of writing were chosen and each had to include a BMW car in their plot line, albeit subtly. BMW's audio-books strategy is another innovative marketing communication.

Modern Trade – Marketers have been quick to grasp the benefits that modern trade offers for niche and premium categories. Every type of marketer whether banks, credit card companies are trying to grasp the opportunity to interact closely with target audience. Be it co-branding activities with retailers, the selling of wall space within outlets, signage, end of aisle spaces, carry bags, trolleys or even in-store T.V. Modern Trade enables brands to connect directly with consumers. At Shopper's Stop there is a separate team at the headquarters with one key person who is at the store handling in-store marketing initiatives, Similarly at Pantaloon, there is an in house team of around 18-20 people that liaises with advertisers as well as brands. For retailers it means the earning of regular revenue and for brand it serves as a medium to directly interact with customers. Modern trade is able to provide an atmosphere that enables consumers to experiment with products, which they wouldn't try otherwise. Modern trade accounts for 14 per cent of the Dabur Company's total food sales and it is likely to grow .The format is also beneficial for innovative point-of-sales including targeted promotions that can cross-sell a company's product from different categories. For e.g. deodorants and gel categories, benefit from the use of testers and small size 'starter pack' display complete relevant price and product information.

Masstige Strategy – Masstige is a premium-mass or in a literal sense, a combination of mass market and prestige brands. This strategy is fast finding favors with consumers who have aspirational tastes, but down to earth value consciousness. Masstige products with all kinds of value ads are behind the success of premium offerings of LG and Samsung Top-end LCD TVs. These masstige products are not out of the reach of consumers. It is a strategy that enabled Motorola to create a growing niche in the market. It also the inspiration behind Kingfisher Airlines. Pond's is positioned as a premium skin care brand. It is being positioned across the globe as anti-aging, skin lightning lotion and also day cream with a slight premium on price. It is happening across a broad range of products from beer to bottled

water to cell phones.

(2) CRM THROUGH INDIRECT INTERACTION WITH CUSTOMERS:

Following are some of the CRM strategies being practiced under this category:

Using Consumer-Tracking Models-Marketers are using consumer-tracking models to market their brands effectively. HLL has two broad consumers tracking models, i.e. Living Standard Measurement and Consumers Windows Programs. P&G segments the SEC data and tracks ownership of durables to identify its consumers. Whirlpool combines readership survey data with T.V audience measurement research. Samsung uses 3D module of mind share. Coke and Pepsi use a mix of SEC, TAM and a couple of proprietary research modules.

Wide Availability – Making the brand available across a variety of segments also helps in building strong relationship with its customers. The brand Colgate has retained the numero uno position in the most trusted brand survey. The brand's success can be attributed to the affordability plank also. Its distribution channel is very effective; ensuring last mile connectivity with end users. The brand reaches around 3.5 million retail outlets and is available across a variety of segments.

Cause Related Marketing – Cause related marketing is practiced on the rationale that consumers as human beings are kind hearted. This practice is characterized by an offer from the company to contribute a specified amount to relevant social cause, for mutual benefit when customers engage in revenue providing transactions with the company. A sanitary napkin brand, 'whisper' announced a contribution of Re.1 on every pack of sales for blind relief society. This helped in improving 'whisper's' market share. The HLL announced a contribution of Rs.0.50 on the sale of each of its 'Life buoy' brand soap to a diarrhoea project.

Co-Branding – In today's competitive times and multiplying of consumer touch points, the challenge of reaching out to consumers is becoming increasingly difficult. Collaboration enables the companies to not just reach to one another's customers effectively but it also allows them to grow in stature as genuine value providers. Thus, collaborations enable the company to enhance customer base. Jet has tied up with KLM, North West, Gulf Air and Qantas for its loyalty program and if a Jet customer flies through any of these airlines, he receives frequent flyer points. Air Deccan has tied up with Café Coffee Day. Under this, the coffee retail chain will supply in-flight food and beverages on Air Deccan flight. In turn, passengers on Air Deccan can avail the facility of discounts on purchase of merchandise like coffee powder and gift packs at all Café Coffee Day outlets in airports.

Associating With Mega Blockbusters – Brand's associations with mega blockbuster films is a winning marketing formula for them. Following are the brand tie-ups with movies in 2006:

(i) Lenova, Durian Furniture and Allen Solly have tied up with Madhur Bhandarkar's film, Corporate.
(ii) Compaq Presario and Sony Ericsson have been associated with Karan Johar's film, Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna (KANK).
(iii) A marketing stint was done by 'It'z Cash' with Malamaal Weekly.
(iv) Phir Hera Pheri tied up with ESPN Star Sports around the FIFA World Cup days – a well-timed move.
(v) Pidilite and HPCL were associated with Krrish's theme, 'If you have power it shows'.With associative marketing, brands gain immensely by riding on the hype engulfing a film on postproduction stage. It enables the brand to associate with images which otherwise cannot be used in brand advertising. Associative marketing attracts Rs.55-60 crore.

Using Swish Calendars - Life style brands are using swish calendars for round the year exposure. Today calendars are emerging as a big touch points for some of the biggest life style marketers in the country. Some of the well known names in fashion photography, haute couture and modeling, from India and abroad are being roped in for the assignments, with much publicized shoots being held in exotic locales, such as Mauritius, Phuket, South Africa and Australia. These calendars help the marketers in goodwill generation and brand building among the respective target audience. This started in India

by Kingfisher. The popularity that the kingfisher calendar generated has resulted in many more life style marketers coming up with their glossy/swimsuit calendars, each launch accompanied with extensive coverage. Companies who are using this brand marketing include Gladrags, Marriott, Monte Carlo, Moschino Campari and Theson Verve.

(3) CRM THROUGH ADVERTISING

Following are some of the CRM strategies being practiced under this category:

Mass Media Advertising - The idea of mass media advertising is to enhance category growth by getting non-consumers into the fold or introducing existing consumers to newer uses. Whether it is World Gold Council (WGC), Diamond Trading Company (DTC), National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) or Tea Board. The intention is to gain a mind share by making a splash. NECC advertised heavily in the late eighties and early nineties. One of its effective innovations involved distributing 20 lakh egg recipe booklets in seven Indian languages. NECC has also regularly monitored the market, focused advertising to target children, expectant and nursing mothers. Platinum Guild International (PGI) stressed the need to educate consumers. They initiated innumerable tailored contact programs allowing them to contact with jewelry designers and learn the value of platinum jewelry. WGC has launched a nation wide jewelry design competition. It has also organized shopping festivals. Its collection 'G' and 'Gold Expression' brands launched two years ago are growing at 40 percent. It also works closely with retail brands such as D'damas, Tanishq, Prince Jewellers, Malabar Gold and TBZ to jointly promote gold and jewelry. PGI claims to organize annual training sessions for jewelers and sales people and has instituted the Platinum Excellence Awards. DTC built the Diamond Vivah Collection and Celebration Diamond in 1999. It has grown to be 100 crore brand in 6 years.

Financial Result Advertising – Now a days, Annual Reports are seen as an important component to the entire brand building exercise. A good financial result advertising will not only depict the financial figures in a clear and easy to read manner but also tell the reader what made the result possible. The unique feature of a company or what sets it apart from others in its field should be brought to the fore through these ads. Sasken, which previously used its reports to publicize its financials, made a departure from the past and incorporated in the annual report using claymation pictures of historical greats like King Asoka, Emperor Shah Jahan and Mian Tansen to communicate values and ethics that the company is committed to. Polaris used the novel as a format for its annual report. Greenply, on the other hand used its new look annual report, which is modeled down the lines of plywood sample to communicate the overall revamp that it has undertaken. Dabur packaged its annual report as a facsimile of a newspaper.

Making of Advertising Funded Programme (AFP) – AFP are telecast on T.V, radio, mock elections and possibly even a cartoon strip and board games. India's first serious AFP, Wheel's 'Smart Shrimati' has been consistently among the top five programmes on DD. This programme is popular with the rest of the family and there is great extent of unaided recall brand imagery and brand associations with it have also been strengthened. At present there is a Smart Shrimati comic strip, board game and radio show on air. There was huge involvement generated by this show and brought the brand 'Wheel' center stage.

Top Promotions

Brand	Campaigns
Rin	Star Hunt
Pond's	Sapnon ki Rajkumari
Pepsi	Pepsi T.V.
Intel	Kismat in chabi
Coca-cola	Gyarah Hindustani

Source: Economic Times, Oct, 11, 2006, page 7, Promo Survey 2006 Key Highlights.

(4) CRM THROUGH ALTERATIONS :

Following are some of the CRM strategies being practiced under this category:

Product Innovation – In a competitive era, the survival of companies depend upon 'non-stop innovations' and the organization culture should encourage this aspect. For example, iPOD of Apple. Apple's fortunes are on the upswing. Gillette has also globally stood for innovation for decades. Gillette is able to command premium pricing for its products in the market, which reflects in the performance of its share on the stock market. Nokia with its innovative product portfolio strategy captured the aspirations of Indian consumers by not only providing good quality functional products but also enhancing style to its products. Nokia provides a variety of models under one mother brand, be it top of the line model, 9210i or the very adaptable 'Made for India' sturdy 1100 model with a flashlight, etc.

Packaging Innovation – Innovations in packaging also help in brand building. Marico's image has been overhauled. Tin was replaced by plastic as the packaging medium for oil. This shift to plastic resulted in huge gains in market share to about 30-40 percent as against the tin days of 10-15 percent. Due to ploughing back of profits back into advertising and packaging, innovations has helped the company from a fuddy-duddy image to a known brand. This has led to the birth of products like Parachute Jasmine and Parachute hair cream.

Additive Branding – Additives are the catchy acronyms coined by the marketers to lend the spectacular unique value that a particular brand claims as its USP. These catchy add-ons convey the uniqueness of the brand to make it memorable in the minds of the consumers. Brand Complan went the additive way by advertising its '23 vital nutrients for growing children'. A large number of additives these days are acronyms for technology or scientific terms, LG Television's XDP (extra-digital picture) or Clinic All Clear's ZPTO (zinc pyrithione) or Samsung's DNIe (Digital Nature Image Engine) are all examples of additive branding.

Repositioning – Marketers go for brand repositioning when it starts looking jaded and old fashioned. The marketers need to refresh the brand. For both Intel and Onida, it is all about moving from one positioning to another. According to sales and marketing personnel at Intel, the idea behind the change to 'Leap Forward' from 'Intel Inside' comes from the desire to be known as market driven platform oriented company, as against to a purely microprocessor manufacturer. The line aims to reflect who the company is and what they make possible. The idea was to keep the essence of the old brand message and build it forward. Today it is $35 billion brand. The devil's campaign of Onida in the 80's was loosing sheen and incremental sales were declining. Therefore, in the 90's it was done away with only to be resurrected. Now the devil of Onida is devoid of envy and has acquired a more agreeable personality.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS :

Over the years, brand marketing has evolved from a production oriented process to a customer centric approach. In fact, today marketing has slowly but steadily moved towards retaining the customers for longer time frames to ensure customer loyalty and greater profitability. Therefore, building long-term customer relationships with customers is the key to success for the company. CRM is the customer centric business culture, which helps in effective marketing of the brand. In a fiercely competitive environment, CRM has emerged as the core marketing activity for companies. A large number of factors have contributed to maintain relationship with customers, such as increasing pressure of competition, intense brand struggle, frequent introduction of new products, shrinking life cycles of the product, highly informed and more demanding customers, decreasing customer loyalties, etc. Thus, CRM demands building trust as a binding force for value added relationships, which benefit both the company as well as the customers. CRM has become the bridge by which companies get, keep and grow customers. In turn, these relationships translate into increasing sales revenue and profits.

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a major role in student's decision to pursue professional and technical education in the region of dehradun. As it can be inferred that there is no significant difference in the salary expectation of the student pursuing MBA and B.Tech courses.

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