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Negative marketing- Strategy analysis

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ABSTRACT

The concept of negative marketing strategies has been analysed and its positive and negative impacts have been discussed through the study of various strategies adopted by marketers such as (1) Being Controversial (2) Higher positioning (3) Creating negative experiences (4) Sharing negative experiences. The purpose is to understand better, the effectiveness of this method of marketing.

Keywords— Negative marketing, Marketing strategies, Consumers

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current market conditions, marketing has witnessed various forms. One of the contemporary marketing strategies, which attract the marketer's attention, is negative marketing. Studies have shown that the human mind has a prejudice toward negativity, and a small amount of negative element which they encounter, can create a long lasting impact. Including that one negative element in the marketing campaign, to position their product in the mind of their consumers, and tap into their emotions of annoyance, rage and other negative emotions, creates a buzz about their product.

Negative marketing has found its place in the marketing strategies of various companies like Airtel, Trivago, and Gillette etc. The concept of "any publicity is good publicity" is the basis of the negative marketing strategy. This strategy suggests that negative marketing can increase product and brand awareness and consequently, can have a positive effect on the sales of the company.

2. WHAT IS NEGATIVE MARKETING?

Negative marketing is a technique used by marketers to tap in the market using twisted and risky methods which might or might not work in their favour. Negative marketing can spark a light in their consumers mind to either praise or criticize their company. It is a strategy that is considered as unethical by most marketers and is only practised by a few. It involves putting their competitors in a bad light by comparing or establishing their brand at a higher position. It requires market research of understanding their consumers' emotions and giving them an experience in an effort to connect with them.

Negative marketing does not have a clear definition; it involves a lot of various strategies that can be implemented by the marketer. Broadly it involves creating a controversial experience for the consumers so that it sparks a thought in their consumers mind regarding the brand, it can either create brand loyalty or destroy the reputation. It is like starting a gossip about oneself to come in the limelight. For e.g., Airtel started a negative marketing campaign which was detested by most of Indian market, it started Sasha Chettri whose main role was to portray the outreach of Airtel network by gaining attention of general public. The campaign became really annoying after a point of time and people started catcalling the protagonist by calling the '4G girl'. It created an everlasting impact in the consumer's mind.

2.1 Strategies for negative marketing

Negative marketing is a very risky strategy that marketers can use to promote their brands but nonetheless it can create a positive impact if used smartly. There are various strategies that marketers can adopt in their plans and use judiciously. Some of these strategies are:

1. Be Controversial: Nowadays people dig for controversies and is it gives them something to discuss on. If the advertisement is controversial it automatically creates a buzz in the mind of consumers and enhances a brand image in consumers mind. Nevertheless, the company must always be ready to deal with the controversy and defend their case instead of losing all their

reputation. The controversy need not be related to a political or social issue but it can be as simple as comparing two brands. One of the most recent examples of a controversial ad campaign is the Gillette ad where they called out on “toxic masculinity”, the ad created a spark in consumers who either praised their efforts or criticised it to the extent that they decided to boycott the brand altogether.

2. Higher positioning: Positioning refers to placing the brand in a position that the company wants to create in the consumers mind. This strategy is used to place one’s brand in a position higher than its competitors. It can do so by changing the current position in market and establishing itself in a place of authority or by putting its competitors down and showing how they are better than their competitors. For example, how the war of Coca Cola vs Pepsi has been going on since years and both the brands wants to prove that they are better than the other.
3. By creating a negative experience for consumers: These are the experience that people want to involve in but hate at the same time. These experiences irritate and nags them but also at the same item consumer abiding to basic human psychology enjoys discussing about it more and that sparks a discussion about the brand and retains in the mind of consumers. For e.g., the Trivago India advertisement that aired on national television has been stuck with consumers as they enjoyed making fun of the protagonist in the advertisement and it created a new trend of memes on social media.
4. Shared negative experience: When companies tap into the consumers emotions and try to bond with them on personal level it creates brand loyalty and bond between consumer and brand. It is unexpected for the consumers, they might have experienced it before and would think that there is someone who can emotionally connect with them. But it is not necessary that the it always creates a positive impact and hence the marketers must always be careful about the content and intentions that they’re trying to portray. For e.g., The recent Kendall Jenner advertisement of Pepsi created a lot of controversy even though it was for a good cause.

2.2 Positive effects of negative marketing on consumers

Targeting emotions and rages of a consumer instantly build up the connection between a product and consumers. These strategies help the product to gain popularity by advertising in way which gives rise to consumer’s rages and emotions. Generally, the thing which people hate or which seems irritating on spot attracts their attention.

Since consumers get attracted towards the product due to negative marketing, this diverts their mind from the competitors. As soon as consumers see the advertisement, it revolves in their head for a span of time and during that span, they are unable to focus on product’s competitors. For example- if company y did negative marketing of their product and consumer used to like product of competitor x more than competitor y then consumer will be focused on competitor x’s product more than that of y due to diverted attention of consumer from y to x.

This gained attention gives publicity to company and even stream the product on all social networking on a faster scale which gives mass reach to a product in short period of time. This will not only increase awareness of consumers about the product but also attracts more publicity as compare to competitors.

2.3 Negative effects of negative marketing on consumer

Taking up the annoying element in advertisement may frustrate the consumer because seeing again and again that art which I not liked may cause irritation and eventually it can lead to the situation of distrust. Consumers like to consume those products which please them and such frustration might not please them. Negative market focus on emotions and rages of a consumer which can even if ignore the basic element and benefit of a product which addresses consumer’s problem, this can lead to aggressive emotions of consumers.

As per psychology, good moments or positive elements of a situation or advertisement is retained for a longer time than that of negative annoying situations, this might give attention and publicity for a while in short period but not effective in long term. Negative marketing can even add up to the cost of the product as searching for the annoying elements requires more research which would increase cost of research and development department. Even, it will take a long selection process to find a suitable character for that annoying part and all this will add up to cost which can make product costlier for a consumer.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, negative marketing is tool which should be handled with utmost care and precision by the marketers. On one hand, it is useful when the company decides to create a buzz about their product; however, it can also lead to a vicious circle of controversies and the loss of the customer base, thus, creating a negative brand image. This unconventional method of marketing can be understood under different perspectives; under certain circumstances it has contributed in the positioning of the product in the consumers mind and thus effecting sales positively however conventional wisdom might not support the idea of negative being positive i.e. negative marketing creating a positive outcome.

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