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Use of humor in personal selling

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ABSTRACT

Every marketing strategy needs to be creative and new. Depending on the company's long and short-term goals, target market and resources, it chooses what kind of marketing and advertising works best. Whether the company chooses Tele-marketing or billboards, the end sale usually happens through personal selling. Some of the most memorable advertising campaigns in recent history, regardless of company size and marketing budget, and whether broadcast, print or online-only, have involved humor – so it is high time that personal selling incorporates humor too. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the usage of humor in personal selling.

Keywords— *Personal Selling, Humour in Marketing, Unconventional Marketing, Sales Pitch*

1. INTRODUCTION

Personal Selling is the art of being able to convince a prospective consumer to purchase the product, service or idea being pitched, all the while making sure that the consumer feels that it is something that they would want. subtlety is one of the best ways to catch a consumer's eye and make an impact. The use of humor in various marketing strategies has been seen to have a major impact in the sales of that product.

In today's fast-moving, ever changing world, it is vital that we stay updated in every aspect possible. From FMCG to technology, every sector has had to make major changes and upgrade itself. The advertising world is no less. From flyers and pamphlets, to radio and TV ads, to online pop-up ads to the current digital marketing strategies and concepts like zero marketing, the constant change in trends has clearly kept marketers on its feet.

2. RELEVANCE IN TODAY'S MARKET

One thing that remains the same throughout this change is that marketers or salesmen are expected to do - to sell an emotion and a concept; an idea of their life.

Marketers are no longer required to just sell their consumers a product or service; they are expected to draw an image and make them visualize what their life might be like.

There arises the need to create a bond with the customers in the short span of time and understand not only what they are looking for, but where they come from and where they wish to be.

Marketing today is all about making an impact – an impact that lasts.

Personal selling is just as important as any of the other strategies mentioned above. It is a traditional and vital form of advertising. As it is a one-on-one form, it takes more time and effort to create this said impact, however is just as worth it.

Moreover, this has to be done tastefully and handled with tact. Under no circumstance are the customers allowed to feel like we had pressurized or pushed them into this situation. At the end of the day, the idea and the buying decision should be the consumers and theirs alone.

3. CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

A severe challenge faced by today's marketers while selling this idea or experience to the customer is how to make it appear fresh and new. A direct conversation is definitely direct and the best approach but making a sales pitch appear to be a normal, harmless conversation that people actually enjoy – that is what poses to be the biggest challenge at the current moment.

It has to be done tastefully. The more subtle, the better. If one can make their customer laugh or ask follow up questions and actually deliberate, their mission has been accomplished. The consumers will automatically turn a keen ear and show a higher interest in what is being said.

The element of surprise is a boon – the customers should always expect the unexpected. Keep the customers on their feet. The normal approach of greetings and queries has turned monotonous and to the regular shopper – annoying even. Which brings us to the golden key – customization. Whilst products and their features are being customized to match the consumers' needs and preferences, so should the approach to sell or pitch to them as well. Depending on the person, the sales person must make a call on the type of approach to be used.

If it is clearly a serious customer, humor must either be used in very little doses or even none at all. It needs to be someone who'd appreciate humor, for it to work. It crucially depends on the situation as well. If there is a tragic or very solemn occasion, humor might come across as insensitive.

Timing is everything. It must be cross checked during market research and make sure it does not hurt any sentiments nor is factually incorrect. Special caution must be taken, if it is a religion or culture-based joke.

Two rules to be kept in mind after the pitch – 1. Don't over-do it 2. Don't explain it. It makes the experience duller than it should have been and doesn't sit well with most of the target markets.

It should also be taken care of that the usage of humor in a sales-pitch must not be the only marketing strategy that is employed. That alone would leave a huge impact but is not enough to depend on in order to improve the condition of the company, increase revenue from operations or even launch a product.

If a salesperson is able to deliver a good experience, it is more likely that the promotion via word of mouth would turn out to be much stronger and more impactful.

4. CONCLUSION

Some of the most memorable advertising campaigns in recent history, regardless of company size and marketing budget, and whether broadcast, print or online-only, have involved humor. It is high time we understood and integrated humor in personal selling when the humorous message coincides with ad objectives. Once a good bond is established with them, anything said after that is going to be much more meaningful, thus creating a greater impact on the consumer, which is the sole essence of personal selling.

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