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Collaboration, Connectivity And Rational Attachment Between The Customer And The Brand Through Marcom Tools

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Abstract

Integrated Marcom is the combination of all the marketing tools, approaches and resources which the firm uses in an efficient and effective manner which in turn maximizes the impact about the product or service brand on the customer mind and ultimately results into maximum profit at minimum cost. This research study brings out a combination of use of the marketing tools and identifies a new design highly preferred by the respondents. The highly preferred new design will explain how each of the marketing tools should be used by the firm to effectively perceive the customers about its brand. The result also shows that public relation which is a form of Marcom influences the customers more as compared to the other Marcom tools used in the study leading to customer brand engagement.

Keywords: Marcom; Brand Engagement; Advertising; Social media; Direct-marketing; Sales promotion; Public relation

Introduction

Communication integration is not a new concept and, in fact, the concept of integrated Marcom emerged as early as the 1930s (Thorson and Moore, 1996:13). Earlier, the companies used traditional Marcom elements to influence the customer towards their brand; it has broadened its use by using contemporary Marcom elements to influence the customers in a wider range. This research study will explore how the combination of the effective use of the traditional and contemporary Marcom elements can influence the customer's mind and make them brand loyal. With the help of the Conjoint analysis; a survey based statistical technique, a market research was done to determine what combination of a limited number of attributes of the marketing tool used in the study is most influencing the customer's decision making towards the brand and also shows how

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customer's value different attributes of the marketing tool. And, with the use of the conjoint analysis; the result of the study will mathematically analyze and identify the highly preferred potential design of the combination of the attributes of the integrated Marcom tools based on real insights from the data. Hawkins et al. (2011:230) states that Integrated Marcom has "emerged as a strategy for gaining competitive advantage". Thus, companies should make the best use of the Integrated Marcom toolsas a strategy to survive in the highly competitive environment. This helps the firm to better cater to the expectations of their customers and develop business strategies that provide a competitive edge. This is because when the customer's expectations are met, it maximizes the firm's profit level. In order to make a customer a brand centric, the firm should deliver detailed messages about their brand to its customers and prospects. Detailed messages, according to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:78) and Dahlen et al. (2010:34) are messages that are sent via the traditional elements of the Marcom mix, namely, advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships.

Theoretical Framework

Marketing strategy is the essential part of business plan for reaching out to people and converting them into customers of the product or service that the business provides. Integrated Marcom is the use of marketing strategies to make the best use of the Marcom tools such as Advertisement, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion and social media to target customers and make sure that the customers are aware of the product or service. The products or services are of low and high level of involvement which isnot consistent when marketers chose integrated Marcom to create and maintain a relationship among the product brand and its customers.

Integrated Marcom

The 1990s saw integrated Marcom becoming one of the most topical marketing issues (Percy, 1997: ix). Moreover, it was in the 1990s that integrated marketing communications emerged as a discipline (Kerr et al., 2008:514; Holm, 2006:24). The names that were suggested for the new concept included integrated communications (IC), total communication and Integrated marketing communications with the latter emerging as the most favored term (Kerr et al., 2008: 514).Integrated marketing communications is the use of the strategies of marketing to bring out effective communication of the consistent message of the firm's brand to the

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stakeholders. Various Marcom tools are used together to improve communication and build better relationship between the firm and the stakeholders. Integrated Marcom requires the marketers to identify the boundaries around the promotional tool and to consider which promotional tool will effectively bring out the campaign's message to the customers.

Customer Brand Engagement

Customer brand engagement is a process of creating emotional and rational relationship between the customer and the brand. Brand engagement is an important concept. The firm has to maintain better relationship with its stakeholder which in turn leads to brand engagement. Brand building is considered more challenging for service firms than for product providers. This is due to the inseparability of the firm and the customer, as well as the heterogeneity of the service discharging process (Berry, & Parasuraman, 2004; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). Further, product brands, which as a rule are tangible, rely on their physical attributes to help the customer to engage with the brand. More challengingly, for brands that are mostly impalpable, the firm itself should make the best use of its resources and link to brand building. (Kaltcheva et al., 2014). Further, many service companies offer services that has service intricacy, incertitude and perceived risk related to the service outcomes, require high involvement from the customers (Eisingerich & Bell, 2007; Percy & Elliot, 2012). At the same time, these services can also be coupled with customers' negative motives, where the goal is to solve or avoid a problem (e.g., insurance services) (Percy & Elliot, 2012). Given these challenges (i.e., impalpability, high involvement, antagonistic motivation), based on customers' interactions with the service providing firm beyond quid pro quo (purchase and usage), a successful attempts towards brand building was possible (Bowden, 2009). In contend, knowing the underlying engagement processes involved in developing therelationship with the customers beyond quid pro quo, and how to energize engagement in the right way, can aide service firms with their brand building (Kaltcheva et al., 2014).

Methodology

For the study, the data was collected from the respondents using the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was randomly distributed among the customers to find out the perspective of how integrated Marcom tools influence the customer towards brand engagement. The research study focus on the Marcom tools (such as advertising, direct marketing, social

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media, sales promotion and public relation) and how the combination of the use of the marketing tools can be best used to make a customer brand engaged.This was found out using the conjoint analysis.

Results

Demographic characteristics

Majority of the respondents were male (66%). Most of the respondents are educated, urban and wealthy, belonging to the age group between29-39 years of age.

Conjoint Analysis used to bring out the highly preferred design

A total of 16 designs were used to estimate the relative importance of each variable and the utility value of the level within the independent variable. These 16 designs of combination of the marketing tools are used for model purpose and the other 3 were added as holdout design to practically check out whether the assessment applied for evaluating 16 designs are still applicable for evaluating the 3 holdout design.

Table.1: Utilities Scores

Marketing Tools	Variables	Utility Estimate	Std. Error
Advertising	A1	0.060	0.562
	A2	0.625	0.659
	A3	-0.685	0.659
Direct Marketing	D1	-0.140	0.562
	D2	-0.325	0.659
	D3	0.465	0.659
Social media	S1	0.040	0.562
	S2	-0.240	0.659
	S3	0.200	0.659
Sales promotion	SP1	-0.100	0.562
	SP2	0.345	0.659
	SP3	-0.245	0.659
Public relation	P1	-0.340	0.562
	P2	0.835	0.659
	P3	-0.495	0.659
(Constant)		8.620	0.526

Source: Primary Data

Notes: A1-'It makes people aware of the brand's existence', A2-'It establishes connection which attaches the customer to the brand' and A3-'It provides an opportunity of experience

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which leads to brand engagement'. D1-'It grabs customer attention', D2-'It acts as a catalyst to the first interaction between customer and firm' and D3-'Its builds interaction to develop brand engagement'. S1-'Social media interaction increases connection with the product/service brand', S2-'It makes it easier for current and potential customers to associate themselves with the product brand and S3-'It helps build brand awareness'. SP1-'It offers incentive to encourage the customer attention', SP2-'I engage with the product brand because of its promotion' and SP3-'Brand promotion makes consumer always engaged'. P1-'It brings out awareness of the new product of the brand', P2-'It helps in tracking the recent information about the product brand and P3-'It influences brand engagement'.

Table.1 shows the scores of the utility and their standard errors for each factor level. A higher utility value denotes higher perception and lower utility denotes larger negative.

Since, the utilities are all expressed in a standard unit; the total utility of any combination is derived by adding together all the utilities.

For example, the total utility of a marketing tool with

Design 1=A2-D3+S3-SP2-P2+constant are: utility (A2) + utility (D3) + utility (S3) + utility (SP2) + utility (P2) + constant or 0.060-0.325+0.40-0.245-0.340+8.620= 8.17.

The table.2 shows the total utility for all the designs and holdout designs.

Table.2: Total Utility Scores

Particulars	Total Utility
Design 1	8.17
Design 2	8.14
Design 3	7.70
Design 4	8.15
Design 5	8.57
Design 6	8.00
Holdout 7	9.92
Design 8	8.72
Design 9	8.55
Design 10	6.93
Holdout 11	7.86
Design 12	10.08
Design 13	9.19
Design 14	10.14
Design 15	9.03
Design 16	8.89
Design 17	8.14
Design 18	7.52
Design 19	9.03

Source: Primary Data

Note: Design and Holdout are the combination of each of the Marcom tool's variables.

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The higher is the utility factor, the higher it is perceived by the customer and that combination is more preferred by the customers compared to the other designs. From the above table.2, it was found out that design 14 is highly preferred by the customers and design 10 is the least preferred one. Design 14 explains how each of the Marcom tools should be used to effectively perceive the customer. Let us take the highly preferred design i.e. design 14 and see about the variable of each of the Marcom tools which can be effectively used by the firm to perceive the customer about its brand. Customers feel that advertising establishes connection which attaches them to the brand, direct marketing acts as a catalyst to the first interaction between the customer and the firm, social media interaction increases connection with the product or service brand. Customers engage with product/service brand because of its sales promotion and public relation marketing tool helps the customer in tracking the recent information about the product or service brand. When each of the Marcom tools is used effectively by the firm, it leads to customer brand engagement.

Relative Importance

Table.3: Importance Values

Marketing Tools	**Averaged Importance Score**
Advertising	19.093
Direct Marketing	16.719
Social Media	18.436
Sales Promotion	20.354
Public Relation	25.399

Source: Primary Data

The utility values have a range (highest to lowest) for each factor which provides a measure of how important the factor was to the overall preference. Factors which have greater utility ranges play a more significant role than those factors with smaller utility ranges.

The Table.3 provides a measure of the relative importance of each factor known as an importance score or value. The result shows that public relation which is a form of Marcom whichinfluences the customers more as compared to the other Marcom tools towards customer brand engagement. It can be observed that there is some difference between the

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most preferred Marcom tool and the least preferred Marcom tool. The Table.3 also shows that Direct marketing plays the least important role in customer brand engagement. Sales promotion plays a significant role but not as significant as Public Relation. Perhaps, this is because the range of the Sales Promotion is not that large as Public Relation.

Correlations[a]

Table.4: Correlation Coefficients

Particulars	Value	Sig.
Pearson's R	0.655	0.003
Kendall's tau	0.458	0.007
Kendall's tau for Holdouts	0.333	0.301

Source: Primary Data

Note: a= Correlations between observed and estimated preferences

Table.4 shows two statistics, Pearson's R and Kendall's tau, which shows the measures of the correlation between the observed and the estimated preferences. It also shows Kendall's tau for just the holdouts. The holdouts (three in this research study) were rated by the respondents but not used in the conjoint procedure for estimating utilities. But, it computes correlations between the observed and estimated rank orders for these Marcom tools to test the validity of the utilities.

In the above Table.4, it can be observed that the value is significant which simply represents the amount of correlation between the observed preference scores and the conjoint design estimated preference scores. The significance of correlation indicates that the Marcom tools do a good job of predicting the respondent's preference for different variables of the Marcom tools towards the product and service brand.

Conclusion

Integrated Marcom is essential to the firm as well as the customers. The marketers use Marcom tools to retain the existing customers and attract the new target customers towards their product/service brand. The result shows that public relation which is a form of Marcom influences the customers more as compared to the other Marcom tools (advertising, direct marketing, social media and sales promotion)towards customer brand engagement. Marcom tools makes customer aware of the products or services available in the market. Integrated

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Marcom helps in building a relationship between the customer and the firm. It makes customer to engage with the firm's brand and maintains better relationship among them.

In the broader context, the research shows how the dynamic use of the combination of the attributes of integratedMarcom tools brings out a highly preferred design (a design in the study is the combination of each of the Marcom tool's variables) by the customers. The design 14 explores the perception of the customers about the Marcom tools and shows that when the marketers use the Marcom tools in an efficient and effective manner that can make the customers remain brand loyal. Customers' expectations are to be considered while making the best use of the marketing tools. The study has explained in detail that customers feel that advertising establishes connection which attaches them to the brand whereas direct marketing acts as a catalyst to the first interaction between the customer and the firm; social media interaction increases connection with the product or service brand and it is also brought into the light that customers engage with product or service brand because of its sales promotion; public relation marketing tool helps the customer in tracking the recent information about the product or service brand. As noted each of the Marcom tools plays an efficacious role in attracting the customers towards their product or service brand.Finally, when it is used effectively by the firm, it leads to customer brand engagement.

Limitations and Further Research

Although this research brings out the highly preferred design and shows which marketing tool influences the customer more, its limitations also should be acknowledged. A primary concern is that the Study has taken into consideration only some of the marketing tools (advertising, direct marketing, social media, sales promotion and public relation). Therefore, it is suggested that a further research can be done using only the traditional marketing tools or the contemporary marketing tools or the combination of both. More globally, a better understanding of the how the integrated Marcom (contemporary) influences the customers towards brand engagement would help the service firm to understand customer's behaviour.

Moreover, further research is required to understand why direct marketing is least preferred by the customers. Including more variables in the direct marketing might help explain why it is least preferred.

Finally,the results of the study provide the insight for further research on contemporary marketing tools. Many brands seek to develop online relationships with their customers; this is because through online the firm can reach the customers easily. Firm can develop a good

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relationship and maintain cordial relationship with the customers through social media and encourage them to forward their brand contents online to reach a larger number of audiences and turn them into the brand customers.

Managerial Implications

This article suggests several implications for the service firms and the marketers. The findings provide valuable information about which factors of the marketing tools influences the customers. The significance of correlation indicates that the marketing tools did a good job of predicting the respondent's preference for different variables of the marketing tools towards the product or service brand.

The result shows that social media interaction increases connection with the product or service brand, a service firm can build their brand more effectively by focusing more on social media. Combination of the use of the Marcom tools should also be designed to trigger the customers' psychological immersion- that is, the design should be able to capture the customers' mind towards the brand.

Companies should also be able to segment customers according to their primary brand attitudes, to encourage certain behavioral outcomes from the customers. The companies should focus more on the use of the marketing tools, when the customers are satisfied with the information provided through the marketing tools; that may increase the number of customers' willingness to pay for the brand. This research study has found and suggested a highly preferred design for the service firm. This design may affect the overall innovation and engagement with the brand.

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