Marketing Through Likes and Shares-A Case Study

Dr. SuryaRashmi Rawat

Symbiosis Law School, Pune, Symbiosis International University

Abstract: *According to The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), Marketing is the management process ofidentifying, anticipating and satisfyingthe customer requirements profitably. From the definitionwe infer that the success of marketing depends upon proper identification and anticipationof the customer demands. The question now arises, as to how do we do this? There are various ways of identifying and anticipating the customer demand. In the present study,the author has made an attempt to understand it through the study of role played by Social Networking Sites in deciding the fate of politicians in the recently held Assembly elections - 2013.The research is based on secondary data drawn from sources such as books, statistics available in different websites and visiting different Social Networking Sites (SNSs)including the most popular ones like Facebook and Twitter.Study of different Social Networking Sites led to the understanding that in the present information era, SNSs have become the most efficient and effective ways to marketing. Their speed and reach is beyond the comprehension of contemporary thinkers. Are the SNSs going to take the marketing techniques scale new heights? Those who take the first leap will get the first mover advantage and the laggards will be sooner or later out of business.*

Key Words: *Marketing,Social Networking Sites, Likes&Shares, Ps of Marketing, Communication*

I. POLITICAL MARKETING –AN INTRODUCTION

Politics is an art of influencing people and their thoughts in a country, state, locality or the work place. Some authors believe that politics is nothing but the effective marketing tactics through which we tend to sell ourselves or our people.From gathering masses and addressing them publicly, to communicating through print media, to the diverse forms of electronic media ranging from radio, television and now the much ostentatious Social media has absolutely revolutionized the Political Marketing. When President John F Kennedy reached out to the people through Television way back in 1960s people must have celebrated it as an occasion of having reached the zenith of technology but in less than 50 years, in the year 2008, President Barack Obama proved them wrong by reaching out to the population in a much direct and more interactive manner through the Social Media. His political marketing taught the marketers how to optimizethe utilization ofSocial Networking Sites.

India and Political Marketing

Like West, in India too there is no dearthof examples of political marketing through Social Networking Sites, specifically Facebook and the Twitter. BJP poster boy, the Visionary- Mr.NarendraModi tops the list of fan club with 7Million likes on FB and 3 Million followers on Twitter. The Delhi Dare Devil Mr.ArvindKejriwal of AamAdmi Party (AAP)is the runners-up with 815K likes on FB and 272K likes on Twitter. But the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) appears to be tilted towards AAP due to active involvement of people belonging to the age group of 18-24 years in this movement. Recent election campaign in Delhi is an excellent example of political marketing through SNSs. AAP not only registered the significant victory through this campaign but also managed to carry out the referendum to form minority government. Modi and Kejriwal are not leaving any stone unturned to reach, communicate and clarify their unadulterated stance before the public directly.They are using every possible means to reach out to public viz, rallies, speeches, press conferences, protests, SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Google hang-outs, YouTube videos, Skype video calls etc.

II. 4PS OF MARKETING THROUGH SNSS IN INDIA

According to Danah M. Boyd, Nicole B. Ellison (2007)**,** *"Social Network Sites are the Web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."*

Let us now try to see how the 4Ps of marketing work in SNSs.

2.1. Product
In the study in hand, the author has referredMr.NarenderModi and Mr.ArvindKejriwalas the product. We shall be studying as to how are these products selling themselves? What are the channels of distribution employed by them? How do they plan minimum and effective budgets to achieve their objectives through SNSs?

2.1.2 Place
Mr.NarenderModistarted his journey from his home bastion Gujarat, excelled there, became Chief Minister thrice, won the faith of people on his potential to promise and translate those promises into action and then started eyeing the mighty throne in national capital New Delhi in a phased manner. In this bid, he is considering each and every part of the countryas relevant and position-able, despite his image barrier in some parts of the country like Hyderabad and Bangalore. Most significantly, where ever he goes he stays connected with his fan following through SNSs by continuously updating his status and rebutting the allegations and aspersions casted by his opponents.Mr.Kejriwal is also toeing the same line; he chose to begin from the legislative assembly of Delhi focusing on the Gen Next and now is gradually planning to go national. In the similar manner even thebusiness needs to introduceits product in a specific location, capture it well and then gradually expand in the other adjacent areas.

2.1.3 Promotion
MrModi and MrKejriwalare making the best use of SNSs in letter and spirit. As we know, Social Networking Sites can be used to describe community-based Web sites, online discussion forums, chat rooms and other social spaces online.These two political stalwarts areusing this platform to the full to promote themselves and their party by using all possible services that SNSs can render. On regular basis they keep updating their status, stand and opinion. SNSs are being used as active and interactive mediums for immediately replying back to the queries of audience on regular basis. The best advantage of it is that by getting connected to one single member of the network you become visible and accessible to all the other friends of this web user and that too without paying a single penny. Another significant point to note here is the fact that by following people through a web of big networking groups, one gets connected to hundreds of users in their user web.

2.1.3.1 Defined and Focused Objective
Setting down a defined and unambiguous objective rather than too many unconnected objectives is something that really works. Referring to AAP's success in Delhi we conclude that their single objective was loud and clear - 'India against Corruption'. What worked in their favor was the right kind of objective at the right time. It was introduced at a juncture when Indian population was fed up of corruption.

2.1.3.2 Communication
Communication plays a vital role in promoting a product. Communication does not mean being excellent with English, it means being in sync with the language of the land. It means speaking the way the audience understands better, thinking the way they think, understanding well the customs, culture and practices of the people. It also includes excellence in articulating ideas to the audience. This is exactly what MrKejriwaldid, this is what MrModi is doing, "Understanding where the shoe pinches andrendering a healing touch". This can only be done when;one has the clarity of purpose, policy, procedures and objective to achieve them.

2.1.3.3 Target market
The target market was also rationally selected. It worked in Delhi because Delhi had a good strength of educated population using SNSs. The double income couples in metros havemoney to spend but have no time to attend rallies, speeches, press conferences and protests, thus reaching them through SNSs worked well..The advertisements of yesteryears throughTV and Newspapers may fail to catch the adequate attention of the population today due to time and accessibility constraints but promotion of goods through Social Media like Facebook, Twitter etc is bound to produce exceptional results

2.1.4 Price
In this section the researcher tried to find out the economic viability of this mode.

2.1.4.1 CostEfficient
It is the fastestand the most cost efficient mode of capturing big audience. Through sharing of videos and opinions one can create a buzz in the market before the actual launch of product. Through the SNSs one can go in for focused marketing with respect to the age groups, genders, educational qualification and social status. The point that must be noted here is that SNSs are offering all these services almost free.

2.1.5 Market Segmentation
Segmentation of the market should be done in accordance to the kind of product and the type of consumer. Segmentation may not always be a very good idea;AAP promoted itself through one single agenda the "anti-corruption" campaign for all the strata of society and walked away with the cake. Multiplicity of objectives and irrational segmentation in the name of caste, creed, regionalismand religion may not always fetch good returns. Businessmen must realize that undifferentiated marketing with "one size fit all" approach also works many a times. So there is no point going with differentiated approach always and specifically when it is not required at all.

III.   EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS
The SNSs are also affected by the factors of external business environment. In this section an attempt has been made to study its impact.

3.1.1 Competitors
Never underestimate the strength of your competitor, like congress and BJP did in Delhi. The competitor howsoever small or big must be taken seriously in business. You may be an established player, economically sound but stillthe fact that the competitor may have some unique strengths which can pose you a serious challengecannot be ignored or rejected. May be, he has some cost effective ideas which are easy to execute, promising great results. Success of AAP with a mere budget of Rs. 200 Millon is anincredible example of the same.

3.1.2 Consumer
Merely sitting in the AC Rooms and crafting new products on the basis of statistics drawn from surveys conducted by some not so reliable sources will never fetch good results. It is very important to reach out to your customer and find out his real needs. Fortunately, SNSs offer thisfacility to stay back in the AC cubicles and yet understand thecustomers well by going through the likes, shares& comments of the consumers with respect to your products. Their post purchase views are very important and thus should be understood seriously and responded well. Accept your faults, reply back to their queries and clarify their doubts rather than getting upset. Keep some incentives for genuine feedbacks; create brand loyalty by listening to consumer reviews and responding positively. Do defend your product if you feel the feedback is concocted but do not hesitate to accept the flaw if it is actually there. Rather accept it, remunerate the person and incorporate the changes required. It will not just add to your product's quality but also built up brand loyalty.

3.1.3 Pursuing Consumers
In today's world when market is flooded with wide variety of products and there is a mad race amongst the businessmen to confuse the population, the consumers appear to have lost the interest in routine advertisements showcased generally in Television and other like modes for choice of products. So it is important for the business house to reach out to the public and share their product's unique attributes through a reliable platform. May be in the beginning population won't respond but gradually they will. The statistics reveals that there has been a suddendecline in the percentage of population casting their votes, but the social media campaign by the parties through Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Linkedlnmade people realize the strength of their vote to change the system and encouraged them to move out of their living rooms and casttheir vote.YouTubewas also used to its full potential by ensuring that they were updated regularly. It is interesting to note here that the biggest loser in Dec 13 elections, MrRahul Gandhi (VP of the Congress party) led congress campaign had no social media presence, neither on Twitter nor on Facebook.

IV. STRENGTH OF MARKETING THROUGH SNSS

Delhi elections and the Government formation has been a great learning for the marketers too in channelizing their energies towards proper utilization of the SNSs.

4.1.1 Effectiveand interactive

These examples have taught the marketing world a lesson to get connected to its consumers and potential buyers in a more effective and interactive way through SNSs. It offers a unique opportunity to not just introduce anew product but also add on the additional features to the product as per the suggestions of customer-the king of market. Here the **customer's input** may come in the form of post experience reviews posted by them on their wall. It is better to develop a new product or add new attribute to one's own product on the basis of these reviews, rather than relying on other kinds of survey result which people respond thoughtlessly.People either do not respond or simply respond with stereotype answers for the questions. Impression management a flaw in human behavior is a major challenge forcing people not to respond the way they think but either fill stereotype responses or acquire the color of environment i.e., respond the way they are expected to respond.

4.1.2 Transparent

Make the consumers your evening supper partners by sharing every relevant detail with them and asking for their suggestions for improvement. This is what AAP did, they shared details of every single penny spent during the elections with their audience through Facebook and Twitter and it really worked. Not just that, they also stopped the collection of money for election by making a statement through twitter immediately after reaching the set target, again winning strong loyal followers. According to an article in Business Standard, "… the campaign raised approximately Rs. 200 Millon[Estimated: ~$4.6M] through marketing, and most of that money was raised through online marketing. A word of caution, it was not the email marketing in the form of a daily blast to millions of faceless Indians, it was digital marketing, tested and clearly targeted."

4.1.3 Ethical practices

One should never make the mistake of underestimating the potential of consumer and competitor. Consumer today is exposed to different sources of information, so assuming that he will not understand the false claims would bea big mistake. There should be no difference in what one preachesand practices. The unethical practices will simply make the business loose the market share. Few likes and shares in the SNSs and you are finished, so the business has in fact no choice but to adopt ethical practices to stay in the market. The recent unrest in Delhi caused due to its law minister MrBharti's episode, seems to have shaken the popularity of AAP. Lesson to be learnt is that one should not make utopian promises.Commit what is feasible and then fulfill those commitments; this is the best way to be a market leader today.

4.2 Opportunities

According to a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB International, India had 205 million Internet users by October 2013 and is expected to reach 243 million internet users by June 2014 nearly becoming the second largest Internet base in the world. As of nowChina leads the user list with more than 300 million internet users with the US holding second position with a strength of 207 million internet users as per the statistics released by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB International on the 13th of Nov 2013. These facts cannot be ignored. It is offering a big challenge aswell as an excellent opportunity for the politicians and above all to the business community.

Questions:
Q1   What do you understand by marketing through shares and likes?
Q2   "Business had more to learn from the legislative assembly elections 2013 than any other component of business environment," Comment.
Q3   Enlist down the role played by Social networking sites in advertising.
Q4   "Social media marketing is all about ethics and values," Explain.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Book

Philip Kotler, Kevin Keller (2011). Marketing Management.Prentice Hall; (14 edition)

Journals

[1] Danah M. Boyd, Nicole B. Ellison (2007), " Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (RSS) (pg. 211)doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

[2] Harris, J. and Gupta, P.(2008) "You should buy this one!" The influence of online recommendations on product attitudes and choice confidence," Int. J. Electronic Marketing and Retailing, Vol.2, No.2, PP.176-189.

[3] Norman, A.T. & Russell, C.A. (2006). The pass-along effect: investigating word of- mouth effects on online survey procedures. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11(4). Available online at: http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue4/ norman.html (accessed on December 13, 2009).

[4] Thorson, K.S. & Rodgers, S. (2006) Relationships between blogs as eWOM and interactivity, perceived interactivity, and parasocial interaction. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 6(2). Available online at: http://www.jiad.org/article79.

[5] Sun, T., Youn, S., Wu, G. &Kuntaraporn, M. (2006). Online word-of-mouth (or mouse): an exploration of its antecedents and consequences. Journal of Computer- Mediated Communication, 11(4). Available online at: http://jcmc.indiana.edu/ vol11/issue4/sun.html (accessed 18th Jan 2013).

WEB SITES

http://www.iamai.in/PRelease_detail.aspx?nid=3222&NMonth=11&NYear=2013

http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/S/social_networking_site.html accessed on 18th Sep 2013.

https://www.facebook.com/

https://twitter.com/