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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A BRIEF AND SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF EVOLUTION OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION EFFORTS FROM BEGINNING TO THE PRESENT AGE

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ABSTRACT

In the present business scenario, marketing communications has a very significant and specific role to play. Indeed, marketing communication is an effective and essential tool through which organizations disseminate ideas and information about their brand and product to the large masses. Communication is the first and foremost need of any business and plays a cardinal role in marketing. Marketing communication comprises of multiple efforts majorly Advertising, Direct marketing, Branding, Packaging, Online presence, Printed material, PR activities, Sales presentations, Sponsorships, Trade show appearances, and Integrated Marketing Communication. In the early phase of marketing communication only print media of conveying a message was mostly used but in today's times emails, SMS, radio, blogs, television, company websites, social media, and digital marketing have taken the forefront. The present study focuses on phase development of marketing communication and brings forth a systematic description and understanding of its evolution from beginning to the present age.

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INTRODUCTION

As mostly taken in generic sense marketing appears to be many things created, innovated, and distributed to many people. To some marketing may be an action of personal selling. On the other hand, some believe that marketing is advertising of the product. In broader sense marketing comprises of many more activities and their associated tasks. Researchers like Strydom, Jooste and Cant (2000) worded marketing as an intricate process of planning and executing the pre-conceptualized idea where pricing, distribution of ideas, products and services are spread out through marketing communication to create exchanges that supports to meet individual and organizational goals. To a general understanding marketing indicates that a company and its various products should satisfy buyers' or consumers' need and wants at profitability. The basic objective of any business is to create and nurture customers and the overall effort focuses on to keep them loyal to reap the repeat business. Such relationship flourishes into increased sales and leads to cultivate profits. Further, the term marketing mix encompasses the entire important element of composite effort called marketing.

It includes the oft quoted four Ps that are involved in planning and execution of the whole marketing activity and program. The four Ps concepts, that appears to be the planned approach of the marketing activity. The epoch making four Ps theory comprising product, place, price and promotion further led from selling to integration was propounded in 1960 by Neil H. Borden, who was a famous Professor of Michigan State University (Boyd and Levy, 1967). However, the theory proved to be obsolete in today's business context. The drastic development in the global economy, its process and approach and the jaw dropping scientific inventions and innovations has of course redefined marketing communication.

The Growth of Marketing Communication

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed drastic upheavals in uses, applications and functions of marketing communication which was enforced by various considerable and researchable factors. In his valuable study, Koekemoer (1987) brought out following factors that paved the way to the modern marketing communication practices. Among these factors the major contributors were targeting audience, companies accessing to the consultation of marketing communication specialists, the revolution in the growth of manufacturing of the products and associated services, and the wide spread propaganda of brands. However, a decade ahead Yeshin (1998:6-8) added the most influential factors of marketing communication as bulleted below:

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- Increasing manufacturer separation from the consumer
- Relative decline in personal selling
- Changing face of distribution
- Growth in technology
- Increased use of market research
- Increased improvements in living standards
- Use of credit facilities
- Wider reach of the media
- A growing acceptability for the use of marketing communication.

The Phase of Production Orientation (1960s)

It was the duration of 1960 that witnessed the gradual development of marketing communication. This phase was also regarded as the production stage where the function of production was given the prominent place considering significant as a successful enterprise (Cant and Machado, 1998:1). The focus on marketing communication is so recent an incident that in most books on marketing published in the 1960s the word communication did not appear apparently even once (Tousley, Clark and Clark, 1962; Westing and Albaum, 1964 and Stanton, 1967). In general practice the term selling used to address all the contextual connections between products and consumers. The overall efforts that constituted the process from the point of production to the sales was designated as the marketing mix which majorly included the product, the brand, the package, personal selling, advertising as well as the price and the channels of distribution adopting to new marketing and selling strategies (Tousley *et al.*, 1962). Tousley discretely remarked that all the above described components focused at one thing, the product that was finally sold to be to the targeted customer. During 1960s, so far the existence of the term 'brand' was concerned, the term used to describe the definite approach leading to brand identification to facilitate the process and pace of buying and selling (Tousley, *et al.*, 1962; Westing and Albaum, 1964). Further, during the last phase of 1960s the term 'promotion' acquired high significance but still emerging and struggling to gain its full strength (Boyd and Levy, 1967; Stanton, 1967). During this phase the strategic fusion of promotional mix was regarded as the most result orienting combination of significant tools like advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and other promotional tools and these all further supplemented to achieve the aspired goal of sales (Stanton, 1967). According to the definition given by E. L. Brink and W. T. Kelly (as quoted in Boyd and Levy, 1967) "sales communication is the coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to set up channels of information and persuasion to facilitate the sale of a good or service, or the acceptance of an idea". This period of evolution witnessed marketing promotion including collecting information, sincere persuasion and wielding influences. The specific trait about this phase was using the methods of promotion that focused majorly on personal selling and advertising (Stanton, 1967). Surprisingly, the terms like selling and marketing were considered as synonymous in meaning and applied sense. This period was succeeded by the sales orientation and paved the way for more rigorous selling activities. What triggered this change was the reason that the production of various goods did not follow the demand ratio rather being produced at bulkier masses finally led to more production and less supply and thus the equation broke down. As Strydom (1998) observed that this unprofitable situation attracted refocusing on marketing activities and stirred the

management perception to re-strategize marketing approach as a whole.

The Phase of Sales Orientation (1970s)

The upper most demand of this span was focusing and executing sales and associated activities. The core aim of all marketing activities was to make an effective sale. The mass producers of products were determined to reap the best possible profits. As a result the manufacturer gradually grown highly competitive to make products with an intention to reap the best profits through showcasing them on stores distributed through chain and promotion (Schultz *et al.*, 1994). The available media sources played a vital role in promoting the products through advertisements and making mass oriented awareness activities. However, the promotional mix was still in vogue as a combined effort of personal selling and advertising (Boyd and Massy, 1972; Gist, 1974). During this period the promotion element started including the prominent marketing activities like sales promotions and publicity (Baker, 1998; Downing, 1971 and Robin, 1978). To serve to the overall objective of promotion it was attempted that the promotion majorly should consist of focus to pursue. (Johnson, House and McDaniel, 1974). Such promotional efforts were strategic communication smartly made to the potential customers and consumers (Robin, 1978:219). Therefore, the efforts of personal selling, non-personal selling and the promotion mix were few of the major topics on which any analysis of the promotion strategies focused during 1970s (Shaw, Willenberg and Stanley, 1971; Downing, 1971 and Robin, 1978). However, the major topics addressed during this period were promotional efforts and persuasive communication.

The Phase of Marketing Orientation (1980s)

The duration of marketing orientation existed during 1980s. During this phase the focus shifted towards marketing with the due weight age to marketing mix. The significance of this period was that the marketers started realizing that there is a huge difference in marketing and selling and associated activities of both of these (Holtz, 1982). This thought further reshaped the fact that to account success in market the products has to be customer's need centered in place of focus and efforts, molding or reshaping their needs and wants. The revised focus resulted in various approaches as sales messages, price, quality, and packaging and also re-strategized the methods and modes of delivery including dissipation of information about this newness (Strydom, 1998). This period saw customers with more developed tastes and grown sophisticated needs with better equipped with financial capacities, on the contrary market responded well by making them available a large variety of products and product ranges. During this period the discussions made over the elements of promotional mix invariably included communication or marketing communication taking the communication process into the consideration of finalizing marketing plans and strategies. (Baker, 1985 and Assael, 1985, Koekemoer, 1987). The focus basically remained on the basic elements of the promotional mix were regarded to be advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and publicity (Kotler, 1984; Assael, 1985). Besides it was amply realized that the customer should be the in the center focus of all marketing activities (Cant and Machado, 1998). As a result of this, the place of customer grown significant and was given prime place among the marketing concept and thus became one of the key business

and management component during the period 1980s. In addition to that the most of the companies began “customer care” programs in order to provide an effective and practical training to the employees. It was considered that marketing communication is a strong means of catering to the needs and wants of customers which later on emerged as effective tool of marketing having holistic approach encompassing the promotional mix (Koekemoer, 1987).

The Phase of Relationship Marketing (1990s)

There were innumerable factors that facilitated relationship marketing. Out of all the most important considered that companies have now understood that customers by this time had grown in terms of tastes and demands. Schultz *et al.*, (1998) depicted this phase as the empowerment period. By this time the customers had grown intelligent enough to exercise their specific needs and wants. The customers were now aspiring for value and depicted that the value based products are high quality products provided the precise supply of customer service (Belch and Belch, 1998). Besides, the role of media expanded to a great extent and the demand of media grown to a great level. The media played the resource to provide two way information distributions (Schultz *et al.*, 1994). Such application of media proved to be a potent source of information between the customer and the marketer. This way media contributed a very active role in dissipating information from one end to another including the exchange of information between the buyer, seller and producer. Relationship marketing was much emphasized by the contemporary companies because translating the concept into the financial gains it was researched out that retaining the old customer was a far easy and economical job than to hunt the new one to increase sales. Companies believed that to generate the repeat orders was comparatively easier than to cultivate the new rows of customers. Relationship marketing succeeded to open the new vista of all existing marketing strategies. As a result of it, the keen marketers focused to develop relationship with the existing customers where the focus was laid on to understand customers’ requirements and supplying the best services. Relationship marketers jointly agreed to cultivate, nurture and develop long term relationship with the customers including other stakeholders to mutual growth and shared benefits (Belch and Belch, 1998). A study by Cant and Machado (1998), worded the importance of customer relationship by delving deep the long term benefits of the approach. They agreed that it should be an intended effort to develop long term relationship with the customer where the retention of customers for long time, the benefits related to products, quality customer service, customer contact and punctually following the commitments made to customers are highly significant. Lepla and Parker (1999) reconfirmed the concept declaring “If you understand that your best customer is the one you already have, then creating a rational system for deepening customer relationships is the logical next step”. It is significant to observe that the approach and efforts made towards the strong relationship building with the customers triggered off the wide acceptability and significance of marketing communication. In addition, the focus was on to integrated approach because marketing communication proved to be the strongest and effective tool to develop relationship.

The Phase of Integrated Marketing Communication (late 1990s – 2000s): Integrated marketing communication stands for a multidimensional approach to internal and external

communication of an organization. IMC comprises of all the trends, patterns and techniques of marketing and its concerned communication to keep the target audience i.e. existing and future customers and consumers aware and updated through constant supply of information. The process of communication begins long earlier than its stage to the final delivery of messages to the stakeholders. It includes analyzing, evaluating and understanding customer’s priorities, needs and wants and then further it is tailored to the best possible extent to transport the message. The overall all responsibility of such communication is to build positive and strong relationship with existing stakeholders including cultivating trust and creating a bond by exchanging dialogues (Keegan, Moriarty and Duncan, 1992; Belch and Belch, 1998). Burnett and Moriarty (1998) brought out a discernible difference between planned and unplanned messages. They explained that the planned messages are transported through the five formal marketing communication techniques, namely direct marketing, personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relations, including packaging, sponsorships, licensing, customer service and point-of-purchase. In present times, marketing communication is experiencing multiple dimensional changes by the multilevel acceptance of electronic communications like the World Wide Web and its wide usage through the Internet resources.

Integrated Communication (IC)

The modern marketers have believed that the integration process should exceed marketing in order to congregate the multidimensionality of communication. This practice most of the times protects and preserves an organization’s corporate reputation (Drobis, 1997/1998). In a study Barker and Du Plessis (2002) explained integrated communication as a process of evaluation and analysis of communication to create and manage combined, multifaceted, multi-featured communication processes integrating information, collaboration, business process design, feedback and associated incentive systems to develop and improvise work force performance and enhance productivity in the workplace which finally and strongly contributes to achieving organizational communication goals with focused objectives. It also includes the integration of communication activities like the way the phone or email is responds (Lepla and Parker, 1999). Integrated communication has its significance in modern organizations because such communicational relationships strengthens relationship with the customer where the absence of such approach leads to the deterioration of customer relations and company’s credibility and reputation (Drobis, 1997/1998). However, the integrated communication process involves relationship management including internal and external affairs of the business of an organization and its associated reputation (Duncan and Caywood, as quoted in Thomson and Moore, 1996).

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