

Customer's trust building by brands- a classic case of neglect of traditional media communication at the cost of user generated content.

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Abstract

The differences of behavior are evident as a generation changes. The practices become old school and the beliefs undergo transformation with new knowledge added every day. The earlier generations enjoyed more family time and closeness with their relatives. They were never under stress for achieving sales targets or extreme levels of consumerism. Things changed and with change in technology came a revolution which touched everyday lives and means of communication which thereafter resulted in a change in consumer behavior and lifestyle. It is a belief that the Millennials are the generation to which all advertising messages are mainly focused at, as they are said to have the purchasing power. Having said that this is evident it's a group which has a variety of devices and mediums for communication and information access. As a matter of fact, millennials tend to trust their friends and networks about a product claim than the actual brand. This has required many corporate to implement user-generated content strategies into their collection. Now brands have a belief problem when it comes to Millennials. They are the biggest generation of clients, but they're also the brands. They are tech-savvy and aren't tricked by product advertisements or product posts on brands' Facebook Pages. And it is seen that only 1% of Millennials assume that a gripping ad would make them trust a brand more. To reach this group of digital populace, brands need to tap into the content they automatically trust and engage with which is but of course user-generated content.

The traditional media has always been recognized by its agenda setting characteristic. The Press, T.V and radio have not only contributed to building national revolutions, promoting justice, liberty and equality but also at times dictated the public opinion. The role of Indian newspapers could never be ignored when it comes to India's freedom movement. Television campaigns have always dominated the scene of American Presidential elections. And radio has been a main source of news and entertainment in the third world countries. Slowly the traditional media started getting commercialized to earn its revenue and many news organizations played with ethics to maximize profits.

Few years back the general public had to depend on television or newspapers for all their information needs. The information so obtained was not hundred percent original but the low media literacy levels restricted any questioning on the credibility of such pieces. Many news organizations and companies used fake news or publicity to gain mileage over their competitors. Since most big T.V or newspaper companies were owned by business houses the stories which appeared there were crafted as per the wishes of the business owners or politicians.

On the marketing front the scene was not different as the companies used traditional media for building brand image and portray a favorable picture of their products in order to increase consumption. It has been observed that at times they resorted to use of false testimonials or paid celebrity endorsement to increase their market share. So a lot of content was developed by companies with advertising agencies and placed in media. Ranging from print newspapers, magazines, Television, FM channels, outdoor, internet and mobiles the list of mediums is long from which advertising communication content is accessed.

The Link to Agenda setting theory-Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 in Public Opinion Quarterly originally suggested “that the media sets the public agenda, in the sense that they may not exactly tell you what to think, but they may tell you what to think about.”

This theory is proposed to apply to the news media, though in certain cases it has been useful to other areas of the media and messages which they broadcast to the audiences. Therefore linking it to television, radio and newspaper advertisements is in practice. Whenever an advertisement is seen on traditional media it is commonly about product benefits and talks about claims that the brand owning companies make. Hardly the consumer’s feedback after product usage was earlier considered while making the advertising campaign. Many consumers even disclosed that certain product benefits which were shown in the advertisement were fake and misleading.

Consumer dissatisfaction -

Dissatisfaction results from consideration what falls short of one's wishes or expectations. . “Stanton has provided one of the best definitions of consumerism, as follows: (1) the reaction of consumers to their dissatisfactions and unrealized expectations and (2) their efforts to have these perceived injustices remedied (Stanton, 1971). Based on these definitions, one might theorize that consumer dissatisfaction and consumerism result from market offerings which fall short of consumer expectations. It may be that corporate advertising and promotion mixes are indulging in creating markedly high expectations for products which result in consumer dissatisfaction upon purchase and use. This clear gap between promise and performance may be mostly responsible for rising support for legal enforcement of minimum performance standards. Buskirk and Rothe plainly say publicly: "It is this sense of frustration and bitterness on the part of consumers who have been promised much and have realized less, that may properly be called the driving force behind consumerism" (Buskirk and Rothe, 1970).

Therefore misleading ads may result into legal issues and problems for brand owning companies. But in the years which have gone by most of them at some point or other had resorted to such type of advertising campaigns ignoring the ethics. This happened primarily with advertising campaigns on Print or television where a dialogue or two way communication was not possible. However many FMCGs and auto companies who are now using new media have done away with the practice and are encouraging customer feedback both positive or negative. And if there are gaps in performance of a product as reported by customers, then it is taken into account and used as a source of information for innovation. This creates a more significant word of mouth for the brand.

Ways of misleading customers

The advertisements if misleading can not only go against the consumer’s right to information but can also affect brand image. In India things like false promises, blown up results, hiding important information are few examples of content that makes advertisement misleading. The highest apprehension is that false & misleading advertisements now have a wider canvas. One can see them in the print and other convectional media such as radio, and you can see them on TV influencing a large number of people & impacting the illiterate as well.

The consumers are mislead by companies in many ways like using deceptive advertising, not disclosing additional charges and the overall cost to the customer. Such advertisements are commonly found in the airlines, mobile telephony industry and memberships for clubs, the packaging of products may also use alien high sounding words without a proper explanation of the terms and such terms may even be used for products that have nothing to do with such thought.

Legal scenario in India

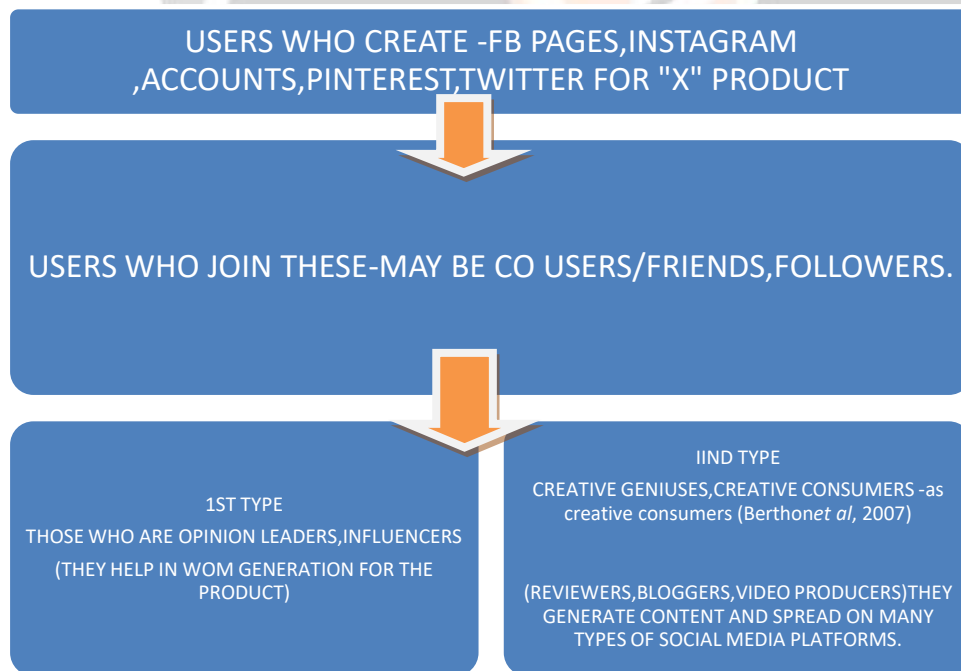
There are several laws in India that relate to advertising. The most important one is Consumer Protection Act, 1986- Section 6 of the Act grants consumers the right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, as the case may be so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices. Section 2(r) of the Act, under the definition of the term "unfair trade practice", covers the gamut of false

advertisements including misrepresentations or false allurements. Right against such unfair trade practices pertaining to false advertisements may be sought under the Act.

User generated content-

User-generated content is called by many names but has one major payoff – genuine engagement. Kozinets, 2008 identified pro-active and encouraged patterns of consumer feedback, referring to ‘eTribalized branding’. A closely linked phenomenon to user generated content is the User generated branding which is rooted in the academic framework of the identity-based brand management approach (for example, Burmannet *al*, 2009). In the new era not completing the brand promise is taken into account quicker, more consequently and with farther reach. The consumers resort to generating negative e word of mouth which goes viral in minutes. Therefore the pressure for internal brand management is increasing. User generated content is defined as the managing of all kinds of freely created and publicly distributed brand messages carry out by non-marketers. This UGC might represent both kind of communication like customer complaint and brand fan dedication. It might be thought of as text, image, audio or video that is distributed not only via internet platforms such as blogs, review, video and pages or comments or opinion polls on social networking sites, and also via mobile devices . (Wunsch-Vincent and Vickery, 2007).

It is seen that a satisfied customer becomes so involved in the brand that they share it with their networks, and they become the best marketer. This happens with the help of many different types of users. This is demonstrated with the help of an Illustration-



[Source-OWN ILLUSTRATION]

Millennial way of E-tribalization

The Millennial are a group which are different from other previous generations in many ways. They are more open about their needs and desires and have an opinion about the products they use which they often make public with the help of various new media platform. Internet connected computers and the communications they enable are driving vast social changes. It is said that people mostly Millennials are retribalizing in cyberspace: or they are E-tribalizing. Internet allow people around the world to forget about the limits of geography and time, find people and gather together in groups based on a wide variety of cultural and sub cultural interests and social connection. This concept of “retribalization” is derived from the statement of great Researcher Marshall Mc Luhan who discussed about the phenomenon of a global village (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). It was in relation to this global village that McLuhan identified the retribalization process, the re-association of man in, “a new state of multitudinous tribal existences” (McLuhan, 1969, 2004).

As many of these connections are based upon consumption activities, these E-tribalized groups are of great significance to marketing and business professionals. So the companies who carefully are aware of them and the opportunity they present will be able to position themselves strongly in the market and address to fundamental changes that are occurring in the ways people make purchase decision on which products and services to consume, and how they really consume them. **Once a people attach and interact with others online, it is likely that they will become a regular member of one or more of these communities, and always turn to them as a source of information.** In many ways these communities will in the future replace physical encounters, or information from traditional media, as they are becoming an important addition to social and consumption behavior. Product loyalists or consumers are adding online information and internet based social activities into an extended range.

Trust in the fellow user's word-

The common practice today is that everyone uses social media to talk about brands. As per a survey conducted by a market research agency OLAPIC in 2017 in U.S, (surveyed 1000 U.S residents about the preferences of brands) which is a very modern market as compared to poor third world countries, it was observed that 76 percent of consumers believe- the content that regular people share is more honest than advertising on traditional mediums from companies or brands. And that the millennial customers trusted UGC about brands more, than the Baby boomers consumers.

Build a balance

It is a time when companies must advocate the usage of brand campaigns with a mix of both traditional media content and user generated content for creating winning brands in the markets with long sustainability. Brands like Pepsi and I phone never try to ignore the television marketing campaigns but there online presence and customer engagement is also taken care of. Indian brands like Westside, Café Coffee Day and Airtel are also no way behind. They are innovating their television campaigns at the same time keep in touch with customers online. This surely helps in creating a positive word of mouth and a strong brand with hugely loyal customers.

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