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# THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT MANAGEMENT

**Malhar H. Shah**

SIBM, Bangalore

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## 1) ABSTRACT

### INTRODUCTION

The increased use of mobile and Internet means an increase in opportunities to market the product among larger strata of customers. According to Internetworldstats.com, around 28% of the world uses Internet, i.e. more than 1.96 billion people over the world across different age groups use Internet. According to International Telecommunication Union, more than half the people on the earth have a mobile phone. The study in this paper depicts the instances in which technology has been successfully used to market a product in the past and the future prospects of using the technology for effective marketing of the product.

### INSTANCE 1: SUNSILK

Sunsilkgangofgirls.com was a website launched by Hindustan Unilever to promote its shampoo 'Sunsilk'. The website was a rage among the girls and women, where they shared their thoughts, got beauty tips, etc. From a marketer's point of view, the platform gave them the requirements of the end-consumer, promoted their brand and reduced the cost of promotion.

### INSTANCE 2: MOUTHSHUT.COM

The effective use of websites such as mouthshut.com can really give a great platform to a company to reach to its consumer as well as respond to their complaints regarding the product. When a dissatisfied consumer vilifies the product, the company can reach him/her and solve his problem.

### INSTANCE 3: 3 IDIOTS PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

The promoters of 3 idiots had launched an unique and interactive website called idiotsacademy.zapak.com where the actors of the movie were found online which gave a huge initial publicity to the movie. Hence, By effectively using

an interactive website, an organization can engage with the consumer.

### INSTANCE 4: USE OF MOBILE SERVICES

The use of a mobile medium for effective consumer engagement is high. Mobile services are used in:

1. Used for customer feedback in case of a service.eg-mobile networks for tracking the customer satisfaction levels
2. Used by Reality shows to know the choice of the audience
3. Can be used for telemarketing to consumers

### DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION:

Studying the above examples where companies have effectively used technology to reach the end-consumer, we can say that technology has evolved to be a strong tool to get an emotional connect with the consumer. Technology can be used as an effective and a much cheaper way to reach the target audience. Hence, I would like to conclude that there is a strong scope for an organization to grow at a much faster pace if it can utilize the technology that has evolved today effectively.

## 2) INTRODUCTION

**“I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand”**

-Confucius

With the increase in the use of internet to mobile phones in the day to day use of a large majority of population, ranging from teenagers to adults and businessmen; there is a huge opportunity to use the medium of technology to connect with your customer. Moreover, with the evolution of marketing in the direction of experiential manner, a customer expects to engage in a deeper relationship with the brand that he buys and an increasing number of brands have started catering to such expectations.

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Keeping these aspects in mind, the marketers have started to look around for innovative ways to explore the sea of opportunities that the evolution of technology has brought in the marketing world. Technology has brought around a paradigm shift in the way a marketer looks forward to understand the needs of the consumer and deliver his product to them. And with experiential marketing, the marketer looks to give the consumer an in-depth understanding of the product with the effective and efficient use of technology.

In this paper, various instances have been cited in which technology has been used to engage the consumer by various companies and the impact it had, and based on these instances, deductions have been made as to how the technology can be used to enhance the experience of a customer for a brand.

### **3) LITERATURE REVIEW:**

According to the Internet, around 28% of the world uses Internet, i.e. more than 1.96 billion people over the world across different age groups use Internet. According to International Telecommunication Union, more than half the people on the earth have a mobile phone. More than 500 million people are there on the social networking site Facebook as on July 2010 and More than 75 million people across the world are present the popular micro-blogging website twitter. Out of the total of 81 million Internet users across India, there are more than 13.1 million users of Facebook (As on September 2010) and more than 2.3 million users of Twitter (As on January 2010) in India. There are more than 617.5 million mobile subscribers in India as on May 2010, i.e. more than 50 out of every 100 people in India have a mobile phone.

Also, According to a survey made by Jack Morton worldwide, 53 percent of the consumers said experiential marketing enhances their brand perception; 90 percent said it makes them more receptive to other advertising and a high percentage say it drives a quicker purchase.

But, with the increase in the use of technology by the consumer, there is a problem of the virtual feeling in the consumer i.e. the consumer does not respond to a request as easily as compared to when faced personally. A consumer when SMS/mailed/called to promote a particular product is highly unlikely to respond to it as when compared to when personally conversed with. Moreover, to give the experience of the brand to a consumer via technology is altogether a huge challenge to the marketer.

### **4) OBJECTIVES:**

The objective of the paper is to understand the use of technology and its various forms in experiential marketing. Various cases have been analyzed in which technology has been used to give the consumer an experience of the brand, an opportunity to indulge with the brand and decide whether to be a part of it or not.

### **5) METHODOLOGY:**

The methodology adopted, as briefed earlier is based on case analysis. Various cases have been studied and depending on these cases, inferences have been drawn.

### **6) DISCUSSION/CASES:**

#### **Case 1: Domino's Pizza:**

When a prank video of a Domino's Pizza employee adding unsanitary ingredients to sandwiches became an instant hit on YouTube, the chain didn't respond in the traditional way with a statement issued through the mainstream media. Instead, Domino's delivered its message directly to the same audience by posting its own YouTube video, an angry denunciation of the two employees involved followed by an apology from Domino's USA President Patrick Doyle. The company also activated a Twitter account, used its Facebook page to respond to the buzz and received help tracking down the employees from tech-savvy blog readers.

The incident provides a vivid example of why businesses and marketing experts are increasingly turning to the popular and fast-moving social networks. Firms are learning that using the various forms of new media can establish a direct dialogue with customers about products or services. That approach can generate buzz, which can be as effective as an expensive advertising campaign or traditional media coverage. AC Nielsen reported that the number of social media users has increased 87 percent since 2003, and has now surpassed e-mail users.

For businesses, the social-media phenomenon is rewriting the rules about customer service and outreach. The marketers can no longer ignore websites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. More and more companies and brands have started making accounts on these websites. Such websites are used as a communication channel to the consumers.

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## Case 2: Mouthshut.com

Websites like mouthshut.com can be used as an effective tool to know the consumers' choices, demands, likes and dislikes, etc. Consumers have the right to freely express their anger and dissatisfactions as well as satisfactory experiences on this site.

A marketer can use the platform as an effective tool to approach the dissatisfied consumer and try to solve the problem with immediate effect before a bad word-of-mouth spreads about the brand. Such reviews can actually help to gauge the satisfaction levels of the consumer with the brand which will help the company know whether it is going in the right direction or not. If a consumer is bad-mouthing the brand on such websites, the marketer should immediately approach the consumer and address the problem that he/she is facing and solve it.

Websites like mouthshut.com are a very strong source for the consumers to voice their grievances as well as their positive experiences. Such sites can help the marketer in spreading positive word-of-mouth about the brand if the product that he is offering is really good and liked by the consumer. Hence, technology in form of Internet can help in a positive Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) to the marketer by engaging the consumer. Such relationship building can also be carried out with the vast amount of online consumers that a marketer can find on social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter by seeking the feedback of the consumers on such sites.

## Case 3: “3 Idiots” Promotional Campaign (website):

The marketing of the movie was one of the best marketing campaigns ever carried out in the Indian film Industry. Aamir Khan used all forms of marketing to promote the movie right from TV Advertisements, Experiential marketing (He actually visited small villages in disguise and met lower middle class and poor people. By doing so, He arose the emotions in people apart from giving him a good amount of media coverage and public interest) to a perfect use of Internet to engage with youth.

The website of the movie was a highly interactive one where the consumers could play fun quizzes, chat with the stars of the movie, etc. The movie website was made on the theme of the movie which was light and targeted towards the youth of the country. The actors occasionally came on chat with the people on social networking sites and the website of the movie. They also uploaded the movie stills and behind the scenes photographs on social networking sites.

All these promotional tactics to such an extent were used for the first time in Indian film industry. It helped in creating a buzz and excitement before the film release and helped the movie in making a blockbuster at the box-office and the largest grossing Hindi movie till that point of time.

## Case 4: “Sunsilk”

“Sunsilk” was one of the first companies to use the medium of Internet to connect to the consumer. “Sunsilk” launched a website called “sunsilkgangofgirls.com” as an interactive site where, a young lady, its target consumer, could find everything ranging from beauty tips by experts to special blogs. It was an instant hit among young ladies who were active on such websites and regularly posted on it. It created an instant buzz and increased the Brand awareness of “Sunsilk” in the market.

## Analysis And Applications:

There's a huge change that is taking place in today's marketing environment. A consumer has started demanding a more personal, engaging and a meaningful experience of a brand before buying it. This evolution is coined as “Experiential marketing”. It is now increasingly being adopted by companies of all sizes and for all kinds of products. To enable and ensure the successful adoption of the same, the companies have started a renewed emphasis on evolving use of technology for engaging the consumer.

As technologies become more sophisticated, so do customer demands for interactive experiences. Not long ago, customers were impressed by any form of interaction—a website that allowed zooming in on a product image. When websites allowed for products to be looked at from all sides, customers were duly impressed. It had the effect of being interesting and engaging for a short while, but as customers became used to these experiences, their expectations grew. Today customers expect to interact with products in such a manner as to reveal their behaviour, features and advantages.

According to the Experiential Marketing Research 2007 survey conducted by the International Experiential Marketing Association, the top three human associations related to experiential marketing are sensory experience, interaction and relationship—all of which are closely intertwined. Companies seeking to employ successful experiential marketing therefore, must:

Provide sufficient information

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Deliver consistent product information across sales channels;

Create a truly interactive experience; and

Tap into those emotional qualities that drive the customer's decision-making.

Now, the application of technology in consumer engagement /experiential marketing can be as follows:

### 1. Internet / Social Networking websites / E-mails:

The most important tool to give the consumer an experience of your brand is through Internet. Internet can be used in the following forms as a tool for engaging the consumer:

- **Social Networking websites:** Sites like Facebook and Twitter can be used to give an experience of the product to the target consumer as well as to maintain a relationship with the consumer. Such sites are cheap and an effective tool to promote the brand.
- **Brand website:** Sites of “3 idiots” and “Sunsilk” is an example of how a brand can engage with the consumer on its own website.
- **E-mail:** E-mails can be sent to consumer to enhance the knowledge of the consumer of the product as well as to continue the relationship of the brand with its consumer.

### 2. Mobile phones:

With an increase in the number of mobile phones as well as the emergence of 3G technologies in India, there is a huge scope for mobile marketing in India. Mobile phones are no more just a calling device. Mobile phones are increasingly used as a substitute of laptops these days. The upgrading of features in the mobile phones has enabled the marketer to market his product to all the mobile phone users across India.

- The marketer can ask for a feedback regarding a brand by asking the consumer to SMS on a toll-free number. If a customer is highly satisfied/highly dissatisfied with the product there is a very high chance that he will respond to the SMS. In this way, the marketer can build a relationship with the consumer.
- The marketer can now promote a product by video-calling the consumer and showing the advertisement of the brand instead of calling.

### 3. Use of Mobile Technology/3D Technology:

In US, Panasonic had virtually failed in its static ad campaign when it launched the tractor campaign across US to launch its Plasma HD TV, wherein it invited the consumers to experience the new Plasma TV in the trailer connected with the tractor. Instantly the campaign became a hit and more than 60% of the visitors made a purchase within 30-days of sale. Panasonic is now planning to sell its 3D TV in a similar fashion.

Today's advanced technologies provide for a level of interaction that transcends beyond what many expect. Customers can examine products “virtually” in a three-dimensional environment, with the ability to rotate, zoom, measure and, most importantly, interact with the product's features and options any way they choose. This type of interactive functionality is being used online and offline.

Over the past decade, technology developments dedicated to fully representing products in a digital environment have focused on the following characteristics:

- Making the digital product look as close to the actual product as possible
- Making the digital product behave in the same way the actual product does (e.g. - A 3D video made using AUTOCAD and other softwares of a Fully-furnished apartment which is under construction)
- Making the digital product experience look natural.

While the requirements stated above are challenging, today's advanced interactive 3D technology is paving the way for new methods of delivering compelling product and solution sales experiences. By “virtually” showcasing products, consumers can view “endless aisles” of products and from every angle, manipulate them to take a given action, and investigate them to reveal the internal components that show how and why a product actually works. Three-dimensional digital representations let customers see how products operate and can demonstrate how to install and maintain them. What's more, with an interactive 3D solution comes the ability to seamlessly integrate product information, messaging and branding all into one compelling and memorable customer experience.

Fuelled by the demand for new ways to reach increasingly sophisticated and selective customer audiences, marketers are rapidly adopting dynamic, experiential encounters with rich interactive technologies. Many are now relying on

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virtual product experiences, enabling them to deliver experiences that are consistent and compelling, helping them to better reach their audiences and make relevant emotional connections to customers. This leads to more informed buying decisions and, ultimately, enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### **7) CONCLUSION:**

Traditional marketing practices are increasingly becoming ineffective in this world of increasing competition. Moreover, a huge amount of money is spent on advertising a brand on communication channels like TV and Newspapers. Moreover, consumers these days are not willing to purchase a product before understanding it. Experiential marketing is replacing the traditional methods of marketing. Marketers are relying more and more on technology to connect with the consumers as seen in the numerous cases.

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