

UNVEILING MANIPULATION TACTICS: STRATEGIES FOR BRANDS TO ACQUIRE MORE CUSTOMERS

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ABSTRACT

In today's market, which is very competitive, brands use a variety of strategies to get and keep people. But some of these strategies may be close to being dishonest, which raises moral questions. The point of this study paper is to look into the psychological processes behind the tricks that brands use to get more customers. This paper looks at case studies, psychology theories, and ethical issues to show how effective manipulation techniques are and what they mean for ethics. It also gives brands ideas on how to attract customers in an honest way and build long-lasting relationships based on trust and honesty. This paper tries to expose typical brand manipulation techniques and offer methods for acquiring ethical customers. Brands may strengthen their ties with consumers and encourage enduring loyalty by being aware of these strategies and implementing moral business practices.

Keywords: manipulation tactics, getting new customers, image, moral issues, branding, trust

INTRODUCTION

In the modern hyper-connected world, brands are under constant pressure to differentiate themselves from the plethora of rivals. This pressure frequently results in the application of deception strategies meant to sway the purchasing decisions of customers. Although these strategies work well in the short run, they might negatively impact a brand's reputation and consumer trust. This essay aims to investigate moral client acquisition methods and examine the many deception techniques used by businesses.

There is a very old argument about whether or not marketing that doesn't give you useful information is misleading. Because some marketing strategies are seen as manipulative and others are not, both marketers and customers need to figure out how to tell if a marketing strategy is manipulative or not and if manipulative strategies are actually morally wrong. This piece gives some guidelines for trying to understand what trickery is and when it's okay to use

deceptive marketing strategies. Market trickery is when someone tries to stop the market from working freely and fairly by making it look like the price or market for a good, investment, commodity, or currency is not what it seems to be. As a form of social control, psychological manipulation involves changing someone's behavior or thoughts by using sneaky, dishonest, or indirect means. Marketing professionals try to get people to buy things. A brand is a name, word, design, symbol, or some other thing that makes an item or service from one seller different from those of other sellers. Brands are used in advertising, marketing, and business to raise recognition and, more importantly, to create and store value as brand equity for the item in question, which is good for the brand's customers, owners, and other stakeholders (Divyanarayan Pandey & Bharti Shukla, 2020).

Changes in Manipulative Marketing

Brand manipulation is not a new idea; it has been around since the beginning of selling things to people. In the past, traders and sellers would trick their buyers by telling them that their

These products are cheap and of high quality. If a customer buys a lot of them, they offer discounts to encourage them to buy again in the future. The idea of manipulation is very old. The only changes are that it now takes different forms, such as lower prices to more affordable prices, standard products to custom-made products, and markets from locally to globally. In today's world, trickery is used more and more to get what people want.

When a customer gets something, they don't just look at the price; they also look at the quality, the packaging, the availability, the knowledge the product gives them, and how much it's worth to them. So for a brand to be in the right place on these points, it needs to think about what it takes to build a relationship with the customer so that he trusts the brand. So, brands use manipulation to get people interested in and wanting their products. This can be done through ads, deals, and sales. Patanjali is a great example of this because it is trying to build its reputation as a "natural brand" by promoting how naturally they make their products, how they only use natural chemicals, and how much cheaper they are than any other brand (Dabur). Patanjali has been able to grow its market share around the world over the past few years by using this strategy.

How useful Manipulation is as a Branding Technique

Many brands use tricks to get people to pay attention and help them get a bigger part of the market. Even though it's wrong, companies still use manipulation to get and keep people. The goal of this study is to show how companies are changing customers' stimuli in a way that makes them change better.

The manipulation of buyers is an important part of marketing because it helps them buy your goods and trust you. The strategy is really how you trick your customers into signing up for your database. Companies that do well are aware of how they trick people with their marketing. Since

they are doing it because it meets the needs of the customer and has a good effect on the customer, they don't think it is wrong.

Ethical Techniques for Getting New Customers

Transparency and Honesty: Companies should place a high priority on being transparent in their marketing communications, giving precise details about their goods and services while abstaining from dishonest tactics.

Value Proposition: Rather of depending on deceptive short-term strategies, concentrating on providing consumers with true value can help develop trust and loyalty over time.

Education and Empowerment: Providing customers with information about what they are buying can help reduce the use of deception. Providing tools and educational information aids in the decision-making process for customers.

Authenticity: Credibility and trust are fostered by genuine brand message and interactions. Brands have to make an effort to remain constant in their beliefs and behaviors.

Customer-First Strategy: A true dedication to customer happiness may be shown in marketing initiatives that prioritize client requirements and preferences over sales targets.

Emotional Manipulation: Companies frequently use strategies like guilt, fear, or nostalgia to influence consumers' emotions and influence their purchase decisions.

Artificial scarcity and a sense of urgency might cause people to act impulsively out of concern that they won't be able to take advantage of a limited-time deal.

Social evidence: Customers can be tricked into thinking that a product or service is better or more well-liked by using social evidence, which can be obtained through reviews, influencer endorsements, and testimonials.

Advertising that misleads: Consumers' opinions of a product's worth might be swayed by overstated promises, unclear pricing, or misleading images.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Victor Danciu wrote a paper in 2014 called "Manipulative marketing: persuasion and manipulation of the consumer through advertising." It was published in "Theoretical and Applied Economics Volume XXI (2014), No. 2(591), pp. 19–34." showed how the businesses use the tricks, methods, and systems of

ads to trick people into buying things. In the same breath, it makes some ideas for how to lessen the deceptive behaviors. How well these solutions work will depend on how well companies follow some rules when they advertise in places where they and their customers share goals and interests.

Mengzhou Zhuang's 2018 paper "Manufactured opinions: The effect of manipulating online product reviews" in the Journal of Business Research 87:24–35 found that people either do manipulate online product reviews or aren't aware of the practice. We think that the balance is reached because of signs of trickery, consumers' doubts, and their knowledge. Based on our

study of hotel occupancy data, we found that adding good reviews and removing bad reviews has an inverted U-shaped effect on sales. Also, weak names are more likely to be hurt by too much adding. Our lab tests show that adding changes a customer's desire to buy, but it also makes them suspicious, which has a bad mediating effect. Deleting is harder to spot because it is done in a more subtle way. Beginners are easier to trick than experts because they are more easily fooled. So, opposite to the saying "fake it until you make it," adding too much can make customers doubt you, which can fail.

People should be given the tools they need to analyze research, and customers should be taught how to use these kinds of marketing tools, according to Vizard S. (2016). The researchers told the media and the public to make sure that all study papers have thorough notes. Fetscherin M., & Heinrich D. (2014) said that customers needed to think about themselves and their behavior in ways they hadn't thought about before. People should start to look at ads from the point of view that they might be trying to trick them, because that might wake us all up.

Lopez Martinez, Anaya-Sánchez F. J., & Molinillo S. (2016) said that it is easier to change the stock price of smaller companies than of bigger ones because other market experts don't keep a close eye on them. Marketing does involve some lying, but this isn't always a bad thing. When used correctly, manipulation in marketing can be a powerful way to make people more aware of a brand. According to Mason, R.B. Mason, and Staude G. (2009), "The results suggest that using complexity theory to create marketing strategies could be helpful in unstable environments."

So, the more successful company may have used a destabilizing marketing mix. According to Leong Yoe Penhg and Qin Wanhg (2010), companies have changed their focus from getting new customers to keeping old ones (stayers) in order to build long-term relationships with them. A switcher thinks that different marketing tactics have a much smaller effect on their choice of service provider than a stayer do. The results are useful for both practitioners and academics.

The 2019 editions of Conor Drummond, Thomas O'Toole, Helen McGrath, and Alok Kumar Pal, Bharti Shukla are now out. Because things are becoming more digital, online marketing methods like social media marketing have become more important. Its goal is to improve marketing skills by finding new ways to connect with digital content. There are four stages of social media marketing that have been found: connecting, engaging, organizing, and working.

Dongyoung Sohn and Doyle Yoon's research from 2008 shows a connection between how much people think they are investing in a relationship, how good the relationship is, and how loyal they are. This suggests that the basic process of building relationships online is the same. The model goes on to explain the roles of interaction and traditional relationship investment methods, focusing on how the online shopping setting is different from other places. Today, there is more and more fierce competition, so many businesses need to build long-term, profitable ties with customers and win their trust. Munninga D. G., Moorman M., & Smith E. G. (2011). Some methods didn't have a big effect on customer loyalty, and most of the customers that were being targeted changed their habits all the time.

OBJECTIVES

The study's objectives were to: -

- Find out how people who buy a brand feel about it.
- Find out how manipulative marketing of brands affects people who buy them.

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Data

Analysis

On a 5-point rating system, 1 represents a strong disagreement and 5 represents a strong agreement. What do you look for in a product or brand?

- According to the study, 58.8% of respondents said a product has to be real and trustworthy enough for them to pick it above competing offerings.
- According to the study, 50% of participants felt that a well-made, long-lasting product is the better choice. 34.4% of respondents strongly agreed.
- On the other hand, 50.6% of the participants concurred that the perfect product for them would comprehend and satisfy their demands. 35.6% of respondents strongly agreed.
- According to the study, 66.9% of respondents strongly agreed that a product must offer good value before they would buy it.

On a 5-point rating system, 1 represents a strong disagreement and 5 represents a strong agreement. Would you buy the same brand or product if the price increased?

- On the other hand, 56.9% of respondents said that they hold off on purchasing a product until it is on sale.
- 52.5% of respondents to the study had no opinion about switching to a different brand in the event of a price increase.
- In contrast, 47.5% of respondents stated that in the event of a price increase, they would rather stick with the same brand rather than switching to another.

On a 5-point rating system, 1 represents a strong disagreement and 5 represents a strong agreement. Do you occasionally base your purchases on the buzz generated by the businesses in their marketing? Do you think there is a distinction between a product's marketed and real-world qualities?

- According to the study, 61.9% of respondents said they made product purchases based on the marketing hype produced by the firms.
- According to the study, 51.3% of participants concurred that the items vary from one other in real life and in the manner they were marketed. I like businesses and items that often give cash back and discounts.
- Positively, 53.1% of respondents said they preferred items with cash backs and discounts.

- According to 60.6% of respondents, people hold off on purchasing a goods until a particular occasion.

Findings

- The key conclusion of the survey is that 90% of consumers regularly purchase the same brand because they have grown to trust it over time. This indicates that the brand is effective in establishing a position with the consumers through its persuasive ads, commitment to quality, and similarity to the client.
- The customers are positively impacted by the brand image. 73% of consumers said that they only purchase a brand based on word-of-mouth recommendations due to its high level of recognition in the marketplace.
- A majority of 65% of respondents stated that seeing a company's TV ads had increased their desire to purchase the brand since the advertisement had left a favorable impression of the product.

CONCLUSION

Customers and consumers want a product from a brand to be reliable, affordable, well-designed, and, above all, value for the money. The brands develop their strategies in accordance with their understanding of the prevalence and reach of social media within their target demographic. Businesses are well aware of the patterns in which customers make purchases, and they take appropriate action by manipulating variables like price increases, promotions, and discounts. These corporations occasionally rely on deceptive marketing hype and brand loyalty to sell more, undesirable items from their lineup in order to raise sales income and pay expenditures.

The purpose of the study was to determine how marketing manipulation may be utilized morally to establish a favorable impression in the minds of consumers. Numerous well-known companies have demonstrated that deceptive marketing works effective marketing tactic to promote your goods. Since they are manipulating with the appropriate mindset and technique, these well-known businesses are truly enjoying the process. Thus, this study demonstrated how effective brand modification is in attracting new consumers while keeping hold of existing ones.

In an increasingly manipulative marketing environment, organizations need to give ethical customer acquisition techniques first priority in order to foster loyalty and trust. Through an awareness of the psychological underpinnings of deception and the use of open, principled strategies, companies may establish authentic relationships with customers and ensure sustained prosperity.

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