



SEGMENT-CENTRIC BRAND AMBASSADORS (SCBA) FOR BETTER BRANDING: A LEARNERS' INITIATIVE

Scaria Thomas

Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Christ Nager College, Kerala.

Abstract

Introduction of a new product into the market needs identification of its striking position, which is represented by the value of brand. The 'brand' helps to assess the striking position of the product and differentiates from its rivalries. The basic purpose of adopting branding strategy is to register the products in the minds of the consumers of different market segments. Since, the branding has greater influence over the segments of markets and minds of consumers, almost all the business enterprises has looking for better branding strategies, thus, competition of finding out innovative branding strategies. In this context, the learned management professional has made an attempt formulating an innovative branding strategy with a sole objective that to emphasize Segment-Centric Brand Ambassadors (SCBA) at different level of business operations and type of markets.

Keywords: *Branding Strategy, Market Segmentation, Brand Ambassadors, Type of Markets, Buying Behavior, Branding Strategies, Celebrities.*

Introduction

The anthology of economic sciences reveals that economic activity started from the household sector. Further it clarified that apart from the ability and willingness to buy / consume, the supply factors like price, availability are being other sources which influences the buying behavior of the consumers. In this process, the marketing strategies have been adopted as yet another crucial tool by the producers / sellers for the promotion of their products and services. There are so many marketing strategies are doing by the seller to make profit. Branding is the latest in the ever-changing marketing strategies. But, while looking over the history of marketing so many marketing ideas were used by the producers to differentiate their product from all other competitors. Later, this marketing idea emerged as one of the important concepts – “Branding”. Branding is a process by which companies distinguish their product offering from competition. Marketers develop their product into brand which helps to create a unique position in the consumers mind. Branding is a “name, term, symbol or design to identify the goods or services and to differentiate them from the competitors”. Brand name is a letter or symbol or group of letter, symbols to identify the product. The value of brand comes from its ability to gain an exclusive, positive and prominent meaning in the mind of a large number of customers. The uses of branding a product are: helps the producers to earn more profit by using branding culture of the modern world, and helps the consumer to spot out a particular specialized product / company's product by its name – Brand. Brand name shows and creates the goodwill of the product and company. A quick glance on the volume of literatures on marketing and branding, gave a birth for the discussion of importance of branding strategies and instigated the management professionals and researchers to formulate and develop innovative branding strategies for the sustaining the value and volume of business.

Branding Strategies: Current Scenario

In the current market scenario, almost all the business sectors have intense competition, where the marketing strategies of the firms are being used as the essential and effective criterion for facing such competitions. Marketing strategies are usually formulated by the firms concerned but, occasionally the strategies of rival firms also decide the strategy of the firms. In short, formulation of appropriate and effective strategies will be the essential ingredient, which decides the ways and means to identify the pathway to reach the competitive stage in the market. The snapshot of yesteryears revealed that there is a mammoth change in the nature, mode, approach and colures of market competition. To say a few, advertisement, packaging, promotion activities and the recent and most populous and fabulous in this list is ‘*Branding*’. Branding as an idea is not a new concept. For example, yesterdays and even now, we have a habit and custom of taking even a cup of tea from a particular shop, and the reasons may be unique making style, elegant art of delivery and others.

At latest, the business firms has torching the branding which is being one of the marketing strategies, so far, and recent days, the firms are formulating unique strategies exclusively for branding, thus, branding strategies. In other words, as like marketing strategies, now-a-days there is competition of brand and its strategies. In this crucial stage, the marketing researchers and professionals reveal that there is a need for evaluating the exiting branding strategies and urges that to look for innovative branding strategies.

Evaluation of Current Branding Strategies

The widely adopted and used branding strategies such as advertisement, promotion by celebrities, and attractive factors like packaging, sponsorship and log/emblem are taken for evaluation and discussion of current branding strategies.



Advertisement

In the techno-centric and cultured world, the advertisement has become a crucial strategy through which the products can be marketed and branded at the most possible way. Because, advertisement is a medium that easily transmit all the specific and special features of the product among the consumers and to the market. A few seconds / words advertisement influences a lot in the minds of watchers and readers, that's why, the business enterprises are investing in advertisement. For example, Vasan Eye Care's "NANGA IRKOM" which built trust on their services.

Promotion by Celebrities

The human always celebrate the winners and achievers, leaders and legends and others who are populous for their achievements or greatness. The business of business (wo)men is to capitalize all the possible scopes and aiming greater reach of their product to the market. If you look at the current branding strategies, irrespective of type of product, the celebrities are engaged as the promoters / ambassadors. Because, many consumers imitate and others follow the brand / product with the celebrity, who they like, why not love. For example, Boost made a faith on the consumer's mind through the cricketer, Sachin Tendulkar's presence in their promotion advertisements.

Packaging

For products, packaging as important as clothes for the human. The way in which a man or a woman dressed will be the signs of his or her personality, likely, the style and design of package of the product will shows off the features of the product such as perfection, hygienic, and health or safety. Hence, the packaging has been influencing the minds of the consumers by making a greater impact about the product and its features. For example, Coca Cola Cool Drinks with varied versions and designs of packs, Kinder Joy – attracts the kids for its innovative idea of packing a sweet.

Sponsorship

Recently, Corporate business enterprises are started sponsoring many public events, social events and entertainment programmes for advocating their brand name for a wider segment of the consumers. To quote few examples, AirTel SUPER SINGERS, Achi Masala NEEYA NANA, Idea STAR SINGERS, Pepsi and Sahara CRICKET and others. The repeated usage of brand names during the events / programmes will directly and indirectly registers in the conscious and sub-conscious minds of the consumers.

Logo / Emblem

The logo and emblem of the brands are may also be considered as one of the branding strategies, because, once logo / emblem is registered in the mind of the consumers, then whenever and wherever the consumers coming across the specific logo / emblem, incidentally they will recall the brand name. For example, Kingfisher Birds – KINGFISHERS, Tick Mark – NICK, Window – Microsoft, Apple – APPLE and others.

Segment-Centric Brand Ambassadors (SCBA): A Proposal

Albeit, the branding strategies already practiced in the business arena have many features, it has its own specific lacunas and problems.

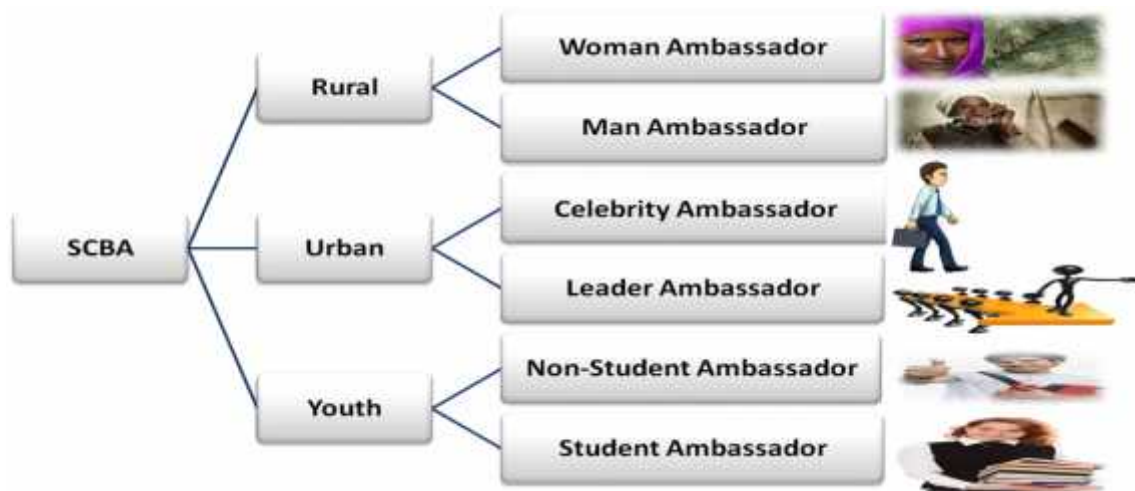
Firstly, a mono advertisement will not reach all the segments of the consumers, because, the consumers of each and every segment has their own constrains in receiving the content of the advertisement.

Secondly, the celebrities engaged as ambassadors may not liked by the all the segments of the consumers, for example, a kid of twenty-first century may not much attracted by the appearance, presence and culture of one ambassador who came from then generation. On the other, engaging celebrities as ambassadors becomes costly affair, that's why it's argued that it is not opt for the business enterprises at different levels of operations.

Thirdly, though good packed products attract the consumers quite simply, sometimes, the packing and its opening methods irritate some of segment of the consumers. For example, aged consumers or consumers from rural and less illiterate background may find difficulties in opening the new method of and style of opening the chocolates and biscuits and other packed sweets, snacks and cool drinks.

Lastly, branding by sponsoring or hosting the programmes and events may also sometimes fail to reach the consumers of all the segments. The specific constraint is that the viewers and listeners only can able to recall the brand or product which sponsors the programme or event. Further, if the content of programme or event goes wrong, it will create ill-will to the brand, too.

Thus, these critical remarks on the existing branding strategies instigated to think of some innovative branding strategy for taking the products to consumers of all the segments that is segment-centric and segment-specific branding strategy may benefit not only the corporate business enterprises but also small enterprises whose operations constrained to the particular segment. Hence, the *Segment-Centric Brand Ambassadors* (SCBA) is proposed for better branding in the multi-cultured, modernized, mechanized, technized and ever-dynamic world.



The SCBA classified the market(s) into three segments namely (i) rural segment, (ii) urban segment, which are based at its area / geographic region of operations, and (iii) youth segment, it is considered as an segment because apart from geographical segmentation of market, recent days, the youth has emerged as an separate and unique segment, for example, in India, more than sixty per cent of population are youth. The anatomy of SCBA is as follows.

Ambassador for Rural Segment

It is well-known reality that the consumers of rural segment are unique and different from their counterparts. The ambassador of other segments may not influence the consumers of rural segment, since their customs, habits and culture are varying with. With this understanding, the SCBA propels the ambassadors exclusively for promoting brand in the rural segment. Further, the rural segment can be defined and constrained to particular geographical region. The SCBA recommends an ambassador at each particular region. A *woman ambassador* for rural segment may be chosen based on some criterion like involvement in social activities, familiarity with women Self-Help Groups (SHGs), inter-personal skills, and level of education. A *man ambassador* for rural segment may be chosen based on level of education, inter-personal skills, contacts with public utility departments and centers, clean habits, respect over people's values and others. Because, the ambassadors those who very familiar and known for their goodwill could bring the good response from the consumers of rural segment, thus, the brand / product reaches the rural segment with effect of influence made by the rural ambassadors.

Ambassador for Urban Segment

The modern and ever-dynamic urban segment has different tastes and preferences, customs and habits, styles and patterns, and routes and codes. It is inevitable to have an exclusive ambassador for urban segment and they may be selected and engaged at different levels of urban centers, for instance, city-wise and town-wise ambassadors may be engaged in order to promote a brand / product in the particular urban center. The SCBA recommend the ambassadors for urban segment and they may neither a celebrity nor a leader who is familiar in that particular urban center. Since, the branding is carried out by the local celebrity and the local leader; it could well attract the consumers of that particular urban segment. The *celebrity ambassador* for urban segment may be chosen for their achievement in any fields like sports, arts, game shows, stage shows, fashion, and writer. The *leader ambassador* for urban segment may be chosen by considering the leadership abilities in public life, corporate life, social development, community development, peace and education, health and environment and likes.



Ambassador for Youth

As the youth are dominating the culture of world civilization in these neo-modern days, the business magnets and legends started focusing on the youth and thus, they are, now, emerged as an individual segment of market. In this state, the SCBA advocates the ambassador for youth segment and they may be represented by student community and non-student youth. The *student ambassador* may be a sport champion, artist, poet, academic achiever, grand master, model, student leader, fun-maker and others. The *non-student ambassador* may be a person known to the youth of the particular region and he or she may be a resource mobilizer, skill trainer, personality builder, positive thinker, risk taker, problem solver, and solution-centric leader.

Conclusion

The ever-changing market needs novel marketing strategies, which is looking for innovative ideas and strategies at various fronts including branding. In this line of expectations of the market, the Segment-Centric Brand Ambassadors (SCBA) is emerged with a sole objective to enhance the opportunities of promoting the products at different segments of the market. To conclude, the management professional– the author – belief and confident that SCBA will fulfill the scopes looking for, and capitalize all the potentials, and thus, SCBA will emerge as a practicable and be adopted by the business enterprises.

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