

E-marketing engagement practices authors name word count: 3017 report example

[Business](#), [Company](#)



According to Brodie et al. (2011), consumer engagement has been gaining increasing importance today and has been discussed widely in the academic literature related to marketing and customer service. Patterson et al. (2006) defines customer engagement as the extent to which business customer relationship involves the emotional, cognitive and physical presence of customers. Due to substantial development in technology, many business organizations have taken advantage of the opportunity and made significant attempts to engage with its customers through electronic means. Due to increasing number of internet users and the advent of advanced telecommunication devices, it has become mandatory for businesses to have an effective e-marketing strategy in order to survive the competition and technological developments (Chu, 2011).

Steiff Schulte Lifestyle is a well-known German brand which specializes in the provision of a wide range of products made from the finest Alpaca and Mohair fabric (Steiff Schulte Lifestyle, 2014). This paper will investigate the e-marketing engagement practices of the company and compare it with one of its competitors. Based on the analysis, this paper will provide recommendations on how the company can improve its e-marketing engagement practices.

Current e-marketing engagement practices of the business

Steiff Schulte has made some efforts to increase their presence online. The company has used the following e-marketing engagement practices:

Online Advertising

Online advertising is another marketing tool which involves companies advertising on the internet. It includes advertisements being placed on

search engine results pages, in emails, websites and social networks (Bland, 2007). Steiff Schulte has focused heavily on online advertising to convey its marketing messages to its target customers via internet. Online advertising has enabled Steiff Schulte to increase the number of visitors at their website and eventually an increase in their sales. Such advertisements prove the company's online presence. The simple hyperlinked images are displayed on the websites which takes the visitor the company's main website page. The company currently uses simple banners where the online advertisement just appears in the form of a graphic image on the website pages. Such banners enable the company to create awareness of the brand and its offerings which is an important marketing objective of the company. The appearance of such banners also reminds the consumers about the brand and its products. The terms such as finest Alpaca and Mohair fabric also attracts and persuade the visitors to buy the company's products, thus leading to an increase in sales.

Search Engine Marketing

As there are millions of users who use search engines to look for the products and services online, they have become an important part of e-marketing engagement strategy (Bashar, Ahmad and Wasiaq, 2012). Search engines are known as the web based programs that enable people to search and find what they are looking for. The most popular search engines are Google, Yahoo and Bing (Ranga and Ranga, 2014). Steiff Schulte has used search engine marketing to ensure it is able to reach a wider market. On searching winter wear or Alpaca fabric, Google displays the name of Steiff Schulte within the search results. These are organic search results that

appear as a result of primary product of a search engine (Lieb, 2009). Hence the person searching and inputting the related key word will be suggested the name of Steiff Schulte and its link. Steiff Schulte has ensured reliability and consistency which enables the company to gain the confidence of the potential customer searching for winter wear. However, Steiff Schulte hasn't used any paid search methods like Pay per Click (PPC) advertising. This involves advertisers bidding for placement of their adverts and paying the search engine each time when their advert is clicked on (Mordkovich and Mordkovich, 2005).

Social Media Channels

Social media channels are becoming increasingly popular and many businesses have targeted these channels to take advantage of the marketing opportunities (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite, 2012). Social media enables massive sharing of content. It is being used by businesses to obtain real time feedback from customers as well which not only saves cost but also provides business with valuable information which helps them to improve its products and customer service (Farooq and Jan, 2012). Steiff Schulte has also used a number of social media channels to market its products. The company has a page on Facebook where it provides details about the business as well as its offerings. The company constantly updates its customers about their new coats, designs and colors. It posts pictures on the page along with the link of the product. The customers posts on the page, their queries or opinions about the products. They are instantly replied and the valuable customer feedback is noted. The company also has posted a video on YouTube where

a number of the latest design fur coats are modeled. The current video has 61 views and 4 likes. However the social media channels are not used extensively. There is just a single video posted by the company showcasing its fur coats. Additionally, the company regularly tweets on Twitter which is another social media channel to grab attention of its customers online. It keeps people informed about their new offerings, distribution and promotional offers.

Steiff Schulte’s competitor: POPSUGAR

POPSUGAR Inc. is a global technology company which sells online, through mobile and at the customer’s doorstep. The company provides a wide range of fashion products. The company also offers fur coats with Alpaca and Mohair fabrics through its fashion website, ShopStyle (POPSUGAR Inc., 2014a). The e-marketing engagement practices adopted by POPSUGAR Inc. are as follows:

Competitors’ e-marketing engagement practices

POPSUGAR uses email marketing to reach its current and potential customers globally. The company has launched its direct mail campaign known as “magalog” which is an online catalogue that will bring the company’s winter/holiday product offering to fashion brands seekers. The business highly focuses on building long term relationship with its customers. Hence it has a separate dedicated e-mail marketing program which is focused upon the development and deepening of customer relationship building via email. The email program is optimized for maximum performance and provides high quality content to its customers. The email

marketing manager at POPSUGAR Inc. not only develops and enhances the email channel by integrating customer segmentation and innovative merchandising techniques but will also bring and launch new ideas to expand the company's subscriber base (POPSUGAR Inc., 2014b).

Online Advertising

The company has extensively used online advertising to create brand awareness globally. POPSUGAR operates through its website known as ShopStyle. The website has enabled the company to generate highest revenue and enabled corporate expansion. This reflects the success of the company through its online presence (POPSUGAR Inc., 2014a). Furthermore, the company uses banner advertisements to create awareness and increase traffic on their website. The advertisement banners are shown as the user is searching for fashion brands. However, the company has not extensively placed banners.

Affiliate Marketing

The company has an affiliate marketing campaign too in order to expand their customer base quickly through referrals. Affiliate marketing involves business rewarding customers for recommending the brand to friends. This is done through word of mouth marketing. The company through its affiliate marketing strategy requires the customers to sign in and get paid for every referral making a purchase over the website. This scheme attracts the customers and makes shopping from their website better than other online websites, thus leading to customer preference. This way the company reaches its potential customers really fast and is able to expand its

customers' base (POPSUGAR Inc., 2014a).

Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing is also a key important aspect of the company's e-marketing engagement practices. As millions of users uses search engines, this is the most effective way to reach the market (Moran and Hunt, 2008).

The company has used all the popular search engines to devise an effective search engine marketing strategy. It uses organic search results as well as paid search results to place their adverts. On searching fashion brands or coats, the search engine displays its online website, SHOPSTYLE in the organic search result list. It includes links to the company's website and its' social media channels. Along with this, the company also has used paid search results where sponsored result is displayed along with the organic search results. The company has used Pay per Click advertising, where the ad is displayed about its online fashion store, SHOPSTYLE and on every click, the company pays to the search engine. The organic and paid search results are shown below:

Social Media Channels

The company has made extensive use of the social media channels to target its market. Social media marketing has become a key aspect of all online businesses due to the increase in the number of users (Evans, 2010). The company has utilized social media channels to the fullest and designed an interactive way to reach its customers. The company's page of Facebook provides details about their new stock and promotional offers. Instead of using the Facebook page for queries and posting details of new stock, the

company has made wide use of attractive, eye catching pictures displaying their coats and other offerings. Additionally the company keeps posting new promotional offers for example chances of winning free gifts on liking the post and tagging friends. This enables the company to maintain the interest of its customers (Lee, 2014). Furthermore, the company uses Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn to market its products. Apart from that, the company also has an application available at Google Play and iTunes store to target customers online via mobile. The application allows the company to interact with its customers and give them a dedicated customer experience.

Analysis of Steiff Schulte's e-marketing strategy against their competitor

Steiff Schulte has made some efforts to have an online presence in the market. The company has made use of some e-marketing engagement practices such as email marketing, search engine marketing, social media channels and online advertisements. On comparing the efforts of the company with one of its competitors which also provides fur coats and other products, it can be seen that Steiff Schulte need to add more e-marketing engagement practices plus it needs to improve its existing e-marketing engagement practices. The existing practices of the company are not very eye catching and interactive. The company is more relied on traditional methods and has not used any advanced and modern ways of e-marketing. POPSUGAR Inc. on the other hand has used very attractive and eye catching ways of designing their marketing content for its e-marketing strategy. This is shown in the pictures below:

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The company needs to update its marketing content in all of its e-marketing engagement practices, making it more attractive, appealing and innovative. The company's email marketing strategy is not that strong as its competitors. POPSUGAR Inc. has a separate email marketing program which focuses on the development of customer base and customer relationship building whereas Steiff Schulte relies on sending pictures of its coats and basic information to its customers. On the other hand, its competitors have utilized affiliate marketing campaign which allows customers to sign in, enabling customer information to flow in the company and refer other friends to visit the website. Steiff Schulte does not have such marketing campaign online which makes its e-marketing strategy weaker.

POPSUGAR Inc. has made more use of social media channels and used appealing ways to grab attention of the users. Comparatively, Steiff Schulte does not have utilized social media to the extent of its competitors. The company only has one video on Youtube with very view number of viewers. Comparatively, ShopStyle has million viewers globally due to their appealing nature of marketing content. Overall, the company needs to improve its e-marketing engagement practices and make them more promising and effective to obtain a competitive advantage.

Recommendations to Steiff Schulte to improve its e-marketing strategy

The company is recommended to make the following changes in the e-marketing strategy in order to improve its competitive position in the online market:

The company needs to add Affiliate marketing strategy to its e-marketing

engagement practices. Affiliate marketing will not only enable the company to attract customers but will also enable the business to expand its customer base online. The company will need to provide an option to its customers on its website to sign in. Visitors signing in will provide the company with valuable customer information and their interests. The process will require the visitor to refer to their friends. If any of their friends will make a purchase due to the referral, the company can provide its customer with a discount on the next purchase (Goldschmidt, Junghagen and Harris, 2003).

Secondly, the company must improve its email marketing strategy.

Considering the competitor's strategy, the company must use a team of experts to design an interactive and appealing online catalogues. Such catalogues must carry attractive pictures displaying its winter wear with the URLs. On clicking, the potential customer will be taken to the web page where a purchase can be made. Such improvements will enable the company to impress the customers and attract them towards their website. It will lead to an increase in the traffic on its website and will probably lead to an increase in company's sales. Since it is a small scale business, it cannot have a separate team to manage its email marketing campaign.

Social media has been the most influential online marketing forum in today's business environment (Lee, 2014). Steiff Schulte needs to take full advantage of social media channels to boost its sales and enhance brand image. The company already has a Facebook page, however it need to improve and re-launch to enhance its brand value. The marketing content posted on its Facebook page is not very attractive and appealing. Customers can see pictures of their coats worn by some of the customers or the family

of the seller. The company needs to develop and adopt an appealing concept towards marketing. As it sells fur coats, it needs to use images reflecting fashionable and trendy styles. Mobile application can be developed showcasing the recent trends and product range. The company needs to redesign its page and marketing content to attract its customers.

Furthermore, they need to make more extensive use of other social media channels such as YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, , Instagram, Pinterest, iTunes store and Google Play (Barker et al., 2012) to be in line with the competitors.

The marketing content needs to be designed in a way that it reflects latest fashion trends and superior brand image. The company needs to develop more appealing videos and post on Youtube. Looking at the number of views of the existing video of the business, it can be said that the video has not been that appealing as all it shows is family members of the seller wearing the coats and walking. Improved graphics, audio and fashion concept needs to be implemented and posted on the social media channels. This will attract more people and increase business sales.

Lastly, the business needs to make use of online advertising more effectively. Rather than just using organic search results, the company must also implement Pay per Click advertising strategy. The advertisements will need to be designed in an appealing manner reflecting superior brand image. Placing these advertisements on various search engines and other fashion and coats selling websites will lead to increased brand awareness. This will lead to higher sales for the company (Stokes, 2014).

Performance Review Plan

Tracking the affiliate marketing requires full monitoring of the whole process from the customers being sent to the company's website to the desired action. Without the monitoring and tracking of the entire process, the business will be unable to reward the correct affiliate (Stokes and Blake, 2011). The company will need to use an affiliate tracking software to track their program. The tracking software will indicate the number of sign ups and the number of referrals actually making a purchase over the website. Each of the affiliate will have a unique identifier in the URL which will allow the system to track sales. The system will collect and store all the information even when a sale is not made. The performance can be measured by looking at the number of customers signing in to avail the advantage of the affiliate program and the number of sales led as a result of this program (Stokes and Blake, 2011).

As the company will be improvising its online advertising, it will be important to measure the effectiveness of the company's efforts. It is easy to track the performance of online advertising. The business will be monitoring the number of times its online placed advertisements were seen as well as the number of times it was successful in sending the visitors to the business webpage of teddy bear coats. The users will be traced by their IP addresses and the ad servers will ensure that the user views the adverts placed by the company (O'Guinn, Allen and Semenik, 2008). To measure effectiveness the company will need to compare the number of times its advert was viewed with the number of visitors taken to the business main web page. If the advert is viewed a greater number of times but only few visitors were taken

to the web page then it will reflect that the company's online adverts are still not very appealing. However an increase in the number of visitors will indicate success of the improvised online advertising campaign.

The social media channels will be the most important part of the marketing strategy. Measuring the effectiveness of this campaign will be highly important. The business can monitor the success of its social media channels by comparing the number of viewers, subscribers, fans and likes before and after. An increase will demonstrate company's success of the social media marketing campaign (Stokes and Blake, 2011). Facebook insights are accessible to the page administrators and enables tracking of how people are interacting with the business marketing content and the page. YouTube records the number of times a video is viewed, liked and shared. The number of likes, views and times the video is shared will indicate success. Effectiveness of Twitter messages can be measured by the number of times people clicked on the links or retweeted the marketing message. URL shorteners will need to be used to monitor the number of people clicking on the links (Stokes and Blake, 2011).

Conclusion

The implementation of the proposed marketing strategy shall enable the company to achieve its business objectives and it will help align its marketing strategy. It will be through the use and effective implementation of the proposed marketing strategy that the company's goals and objectives shall be met. Devising the strategy is always not enough. Performance appraisal is another challenge that companies face to ensure that there

resources have been invested to meet the desired goals. It is through the effective performance appraisal strategy that has been formulated for the company that it will be able to know their future direction.

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