

Beyond the brand, social interaction as key determinant of impression management for customers' satisfaction and better business prospect : a study on street traders

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ABSTRACT: *The present study examines how the street traders were operating their trade with their own style of impression management. The social interaction and hospitality had been the key tool of their impression management by which they had become their own brand. In present day marketing system with tremendous competition they were in their own prospect while they were in total uncertain position. Although they had no profession education they had learnt from their self strategies of their trade to reach the consumers. Their human action specially facial expression, methods of greeting had become the tools of customers and the consumers were dependent. So, only the brand establishment through media would not be the method of impression management. The social interaction and hospitality at personal level may be changing trade of successful marketing.*

Key words: *Impression management, social interaction, street traders, brand, marketing.*

1. Introduction : Social interaction is a human action that can be nourished by an individual to impress other in multilayered relationship in the society. The rapport and relationship of an individual in family and outside the family depend on his/her impression. It is an idea, an effect or an image created or cultivated in mind. It includes the physical appearance- from clothes and make up, facial expression or posture, etc. Such actions of an individual are referred as 'impression management', a process whereby individuals seek to control the image others have of them (Rosenfeld et al, 1995). Goffman (1959) has pointed out that impression management involves attempts by individuals to establish the meaning or purpose of social interaction and those action are a sort of mutual ritual that helps to smooth and control social relations to avoid embarrassment because individuals as performers play different roles to construct their social identities.

The people have multiple selves that are strategically resented to gain favour with different audiences or situations (James, 1980). Goffman stated that impression management served as a social lubricant greasing the skid for smooth interaction while in terms of the social psychologists it as serving more specific, goal oriented purposes such as gaining power and influencing others.

In present context open global marketing system is dominating the business and the urbanization welcome its essence to the society. Here the 'brand' is the key issue to the consumers/customers. The tele-media, print media and other types of media have played an important role to testify the consumers' choice. Now a day the brands indicate the social, economic status as well as social identity of an individual and their family. To set an impression people's irrespective of their status imitate others. The impression management is controlled the needs and demands of the consumers and they are arrested by the market. The people make them brand depended.

The changing demand of the consumers has given wide scope of marketing in various forms and the marketing centres are now also the entertainment as well as recreation centre. The urban life and social relation within the family and outside the family have given immense space of the changing trend. In urban or semi urban area the shopping malls, a market place for multi-purpose plays an important role in the life of consumers. The concept is 'pass the leisure with joy and comfort'. Further in spite of outlet of brand items in shopping malls a chain of brand shops is located in the locality.

Beyond these common retailing shops in the locality the street trading is also meeting the daily needs of people in a particular area. It is mainly for the non-brand products. These fully temporary establishments under open sky have developed without any legal consignment on the roadside. Comparing with others establishment it has no possibility to provide comfort as desired the consumers. It is mainly dominated by the business of tea, snack, eateries, vegetables and so forth. With tremendous threat of eviction and uncertainty in street trading the social interaction with consumers as impression is their key pillar of prospect and existence side by side in new brand based marketing system.

The present study has been focused to determine how the social interaction is promoting the street trading comparing with other mode of marketing while it has no brand or not selling brand items and no provision of comfortability to the consumers.

For the purpose of the study the street traders of an area of South Kolkata aside by Eastern Metropolitan Bye pass (EM Bye Pass) had been targeted where a densely populated new urban housing colonies are located alongwith all others mode of markets. The street vendors were meeting the desired daily need of a mass regularly through supplying of tea, snacks, vegetables and others. The extensive observation and interaction with both traders and consumers were the source of information. The behavior of traders and consumers were recorded and the business prospect was assessed also.

2. Who are the Street Traders?

Total 50 street traders were sampled purposively for the study. All of them were settled after migration from rural with different social and economic background. Among them 30% was under the age group of 18-30 years and 60% of the street traders was between the age group of 30-40 years. Rest of them was within the age bracket of 40 years and above. According their gender variation 70% was male and 30% was female. The educational level was recorded that only 2% was graduate and they were male. While altogether 80%, out of which 20% female had experienced with high school education and rest of them had primary education.

3. Nature of trades :

Among these traders 60% was operating tea stalls, eateries and 10% of them were vegetable sellers. Other portion was the fish, meat, pan & cigar and flowers sellers, etc. They were very much ordinarily operating trades without any infrastructure and others. They had no provision of comfort to the customers.

4. Quality of trading & behavior of trades:

The street traders were dealing with both categories of consumers- regular consumers and floating consumers. Eventually their pattern of social interaction with facial expression was so much impressive that had turned the floating to regular. Their nature greeting and personal interaction including familial happiness or unhappiness were reflected when the consumers reached to the place/shop. The style of service delivery was readily to the customers and the customers were adjudged about the products. In other words the hospitality is main focal point of their interaction.

5. Consumers' behavior towards the traders :

The consumers were generally busy and they maintained a time bound scheduled. But they were arrested by the weakness of the interaction of the traders and their hospitality. Their satisfaction level was high which was denoted when a consumer had to wait to get the service from the particular trader. Sometimes, the traders were kept closed the shop with out any information. The customers became annoyed towards the traders. The hospitality of the traders had been binding together and it was reflected when the particular traders enjoyed the support from the consumers.

6. Prospect of the trade:

Uncertain and unauthorized trading is a threat to the street traders. But they did not afraid about their prosperity of business. The interaction as well as their impression had become the key capital. That's why they did not think to get the customers. In any case they change their place the consumers would visit the new place to meet their needs. Their business in terms of profit is well running through which they maintain their daily needs for comfort living.

7. Conclusion :

The street traders are not selling any bran item and they are very much poor in terms of their infrastructural facilities required at least for consumers comfort. But their social interaction has become their impression of their trade. They have unconsciously learnt how to cash the impression management in the trade. In their impression management social interaction and hospitality based on their verbal communication and facial expression are the key tools. They become their own brand and the consumers are dependent on them. So, in present day marketing system the establishment of brand through using varied media would not be the basis of impression management. The marketing personal may learn the methods of social interaction and hospitality which the street traders are following. This system would be a new way of sustainable marketing of a product.

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