

Marketing Communication Strategy of Coffee Shop “1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung” in Increasing Customer Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of this research is to examine the marketing communication strategy of 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung in developing customer loyalty in a competitive environment. Descriptive qualitative method was used using interview, observation, and documentation methods involving purposive respondents who include the management, baristas, and customers. Findings show that the coffee shop gives importance to the following aspects of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC): public relations, events and experiences, personal selling, and word of mouth marketing. Discussion reveals that the above-mentioned strategies foster emotional attachment through brand imaging, engaging communities in creative activities, and establishing personal relationships between baristas and customers. It was concluded that in today's marketing world, the creation of significant emotional bonds and experiences is the key to success and not mere conventional business promotion practices. This study contributes to the body of knowledge of communication science by adding to the theory of marketing communication.

Keywords: *Marketing Communication Strategy, Integrated Marketing Communication, Customer Loyalty, Coffee Shop Industry, Experiential Marketing*

INTRODUCTION

In today's corporate world, it can be argued that the coffee shop industry is one of the most competitive, particularly in urban settings like Bandung. With this intense level of competition, it is imperative for the organization to create a solid marketing communication approach, which serves as an important instrument in providing information, persuasion, and reinforcement of their product to their customers. In the context of competition in the coffee shop industry, it is not sufficient to focus only on product quality but should include customer loyalty through an optimal physical environment and service (Han & Hyun, 2017). 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung is another example of a business in this highly competitive industry, which makes itself unique because of the unique idea behind the space as a place for creativity and minimalism designed as a center that young people can come to in order to work, discuss matters, and socialize. Marketing communication is employed by using different marketing communication instruments, such as public relations and personal selling in order to develop loyalty towards this particular coffee shop among its customers. As

defined by Sari and Ali (2024), customer loyalty refers to the level of commitment to a particular product or service based on its repetitive usage regardless of the presence of similar products offered by competing businesses. Moreover, sustaining such loyalty involves the provision of high-quality products along with a reputable brand image that motivates users to remain loyal and participate in word-of-mouth marketing (Pancarini et al., 2023). Therefore, the complementarity of an effective communication approach and a unique brand image is crucial for ensuring the survival and success of 1994 Coffee and Creative Space.

According to past literatures, many variables have been discussed in order to determine factors for the successful coffee shops. Nabila and Saifudin (2024) stressed on the importance of social media marketing for promoting coffee shops. In contrast, Nursyamsi et al. (2022) focused on the importance of Instagram in developing brand awareness. On the other hand, Shaputri and Abdurrahman (2019) focused on IMC as a key factor for the development of customer loyalty in cafes. As compared to prior literature, this study is distinct because it emphasizes the importance of emotions and natural Word of Mouth Marketing rather than digital marketing for developing 1994 Coffee. As stated earlier, Nabila and Saifudin (2024) considered social media marketing to be crucial; however, in this research, efforts would be made to see the impact of community experience and personal selling on the development of loyalty among customers. This research would focus on the importance of four aspects of IMC, namely, Public Relations, Events and Experiences, Personal Selling, and Word of Mouth.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the marketing communication used by 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung in order to build their loyal customers. In order to accomplish the research goal mentioned above, the qualitative research approach and the descriptive study design have been chosen as the most suitable ones. The use of these methods helps gather deep and valuable information about the particular phenomena of marketing observed in practice. The data collection was done through the application of the following methods: in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. Moreover, in order to get necessary information from people who know a lot about the communication process at this company, the purposive sampling technique was used. As pointed out by Sugiyono (2018), qualitative descriptive design enables thorough analysis of data in relation to the stated research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Communication Strategy

Marketing communication strategy is the most important thing in this research. Marketing communication is a company's effort to inform, persuade, and remind customers about the goods and brands they sell, directly or indirectly. Two main components consist of the term "Marketing Communication": Communication: The process by which ideas and understanding are given to individuals or organizations with individuals. Communication is the process of conveying ideas or information from the sender to the recipient through certain media so that they can understand the sender's intent. Marketing is a set of actions carried out by companies or other organizations to connect their customers with information about products, services, and ideas.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

According to Anang Firmansyah (2020), in his book, Marketing Communications, IMC can be essentially defined as "A customer relationship management process that drives brand value." However, IMC can be more specifically defined as "A cross-functional process for building and maintaining profitable relationships with clients and other stakeholders by strategically controlling and influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging purposeful discussions with them". Modern IMC strategies have evolved to emphasize a customer-centric approach where multiple touchpoints are coordinated to create a unified brand experience (Batra & Keller, 2016).

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a concept where a company integrates and coordinates various communication channels to send a clear, consistent, and compelling message regarding the company and its products (Kotler & Armstrong; 2005).

Customer Loyalty

According to research by Sari & Ali (2024), the level of customer loyalty to a brand, product, or service, demonstrated by their habit of purchasing or using that product despite competitors, is known as customer loyalty. Pleasant experiences, customer satisfaction, and the emotional bond formed between the customer and the brand influence customer loyalty (Gultom et al., 2020). Customer loyalty to a particular brand is influenced by many factors that affect the customer's relationship with the company. To maintain customer loyalty, product quality, pricing policy, brand reputation, and emotional bond are crucial. Furthermore, the level of customer satisfaction and trust is crucial for building lasting relationships because it encourages users to continue using the product and recommend the product or service to others (word of mouth). (Pancarini et al., 2023). True customer loyalty is increasingly driven by deep engagement and the brand's ability to provide a competitive advantage through emotional connection (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a qualitative approach with a descriptive study. Qualitative methods were used to obtain in-depth data, meaningful data that explains the data found in the field regarding the research topic. The descriptive method was used in this study to determine the research topic. Furthermore, the data from the survey results will be processed using a descriptive qualitative approach, which will explain and answer the questions formulated in this study.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that allows researchers to select informants who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to obtain rich and meaningful data from individuals who are directly involved in the phenomenon being studied.

The key informants included:

1. The manager of 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung, who is responsible for operational management and strategic decision-making within the coffee shop.
2. The head barista, who supervises barista operations and maintains product quality and service standards.
3. The co-head barista, who assists in operational supervision and service delivery.

Data in this study were collected using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the marketing communication strategy employed by 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung is the prioritization of building emotional relationships with customers by focusing on several aspects of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). Out of the eight elements of IMC identified by Kotler and Keller, the coffee shop prioritizes four major elements of IMC, which are public relations, events and experiences, personal selling, and word-of-mouth marketing, which are strategically employed to build loyalty and sustain the coffee shop's existence in the face of stiff competition in the coffee shop industry.

Public Relations in Building Brand Image

Interpersonal communication can be employed as a means of creating positive experiences and building emotional relationships. In this respect, Public Relations for 1994 Coffee can be employed as a means of promoting the brand, as well as a means of building the identity of the brand and establishing a two-way communication process.

The public relations policy adopted by the Staff department, especially the baristas, is one that could be described as an active public relations approach. Not only does this create a favorable reputation for the company, but it also helps to foster customer loyalty, which is evident from the regular patronage of the cafe.

This loyalty may not be based solely on the quality of the products but also on the values of communication that are used.

Two-way communication becomes characteristic of the "Symmetrical Model of Public Relations" when both the organization and its audience try to adapt themselves to each other through communication rather than by trying to persuade through a one-sided approach. Through making baristas members of the client's social circle, the brand creates "Brand Personality." It allows turning a regular coffee shop into a "social partner," which is vital in today's crowded market environment.

Events and Experiences as Customer Engagement Strategy

1994 Coffee's event and experience strategy has also been successful in gaining the attention of student groups and youth organizations. According to research, where the team interviewed supporting informants within the student groups, the main reason for choosing the location was the presence of these various creative activities. They believed it was a location where they could be productive, yet also socialize and explore their interests. This aligns with the concept of experiential loyalty, where unique brand experiences directly influence the customer's intention to return and recommend the place to others (Wu, 2017).

Moreover, the experience was also shared by the motorcycle community, which regularly visited the location. According to the interview, not only is 1994 Coffee a location where the motorcycle community could gather, but they also appreciate the community through documentation. For instance, when the motorcycle community gathers, the motorcycles are well-kept and recorded, then posted on the Instagram account of 1994 Coffee, with the relevant accounts tagged.

This helps to create a feeling of being cared for and appreciated within the community and provides a sense of emotional closeness and motivation to return to the experience. The experience provided is one that is not only pleasant but also meets the needs of the customers.

The idea is explained by the theory called "Experiential Marketing Theory," according to which customers do not only buy a product but buy the "experience" behind it. The idea of making use of community stories on Instagram and naming this brand "1994 Coffee" leads to the "Value Co-Creation." The consumer becomes the story of the brand. Consumers develop a feeling of "Psychological Ownership" about the brand since the community they belong to stands for the brand itself.

Personal Selling Through Barista-Customer Interaction

The relationship between the staff at 1994 Coffee and the customers has become such an experience that, in the words of some individuals, they seem to be "reunited old friends." As a result of this experience, the customers do not merely become customers, but members of a community where everyone feels welcome. In effect, through the personal approach of the experience, the customers become loyal not only to themselves, but even to their establishment as well.

Personal Selling Strategy of 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung was effective in fostering brand loyalty through the development of an intimate environment where the customers felt understood and connected to the establishment, as well as developing a positive attitude towards the establishment, in line with IMC theory, since the personal selling experience at 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung was very important in helping create such experiences for its customers.

The "Old Friends" phenomenon is one of the features of the concept of "Relationship Marketing," which focuses on maintaining the customer throughout his or her life instead of treating them merely as transactional parties. In such a case, the baristas act as "Brand Ambassadors," who indulge in complex interpersonal communication skills in order to bridge the divide between the firm and its customers. Consequently, the "Perceived Risk" level falls, resulting in high "Affective Commitment" loyalty.

Word of Mouth Marketing and Customer Loyalty

The first marketing strategy that 1994 Coffee is relying on to build customer loyalty is word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM). According to 1994 Coffee management, they entirely depend on this form of marketing,

not relying on online promotions and social media to promote their coffee shop. Their only focus is to provide a positive experience for customers.

The success story of 1994 Coffee in maintaining customer loyalty is attributed to the success of implementing word-of-mouth marketing. Unlike other coffee shops that rely on digital promotions to market their coffee shop, 1994 Coffee is able to provide a positive atmosphere for customers, thus encouraging them to share information and promote the coffee shop to their social network. This is in line with IMC theory, which suggests that marketing communication success is not entirely dependent on formal marketing communication strategies, but can be achieved through positive experiences and perceptions.

It can be seen that the power of WOMM for the 1994 Coffee shop is evident in the "Source Credibility Theory." In today's time, consumers tend to be skeptical about advertisements by firms. But recommendations made by friends or other members of society are considered highly credible since there is no monetary gain from the source itself. The focus on creating a positive atmosphere leads to creating Brand Evangelists, or loyal clients, who take up the responsibility of communicating their brand message.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aim of the research is to examine the marketing communication strategy used by 1994 Coffee and Creative Space Bandung in fostering customer loyalty. Based on the research findings, it is evident that the coffee shop is using some elements of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) such as public relations, event marketing and experiences, personal selling, and word-of-mouth marketing as the primary marketing communication strategies in building customer loyalty.

The activities carried out by the coffee shop regarding public relations are extremely significant, especially with regard to creating brand images and maintaining good relationships with customers and the surrounding community. The friendly communication carried out by the coffee shop has helped it create its brand image as an open and creative brand, hence creating customer loyalty.

This provides an opportunity to let the customer interact with the brand. Different types of creative events and experiences bring people together and provide experiences in which the customer can get emotionally attached to the coffee shop. This not only provides an opportunity to increase customer engagement but also to increase customer loyalty.

Personal selling through interaction with customers also plays a role in improving the experience for the customers. This is because the interaction and communication from the baristas make the customers feel comfortable and appreciated, hence improving customer satisfaction.

Word-of-mouth marketing also becomes an essential promotional strategy. Word-of-mouth marketing is derived from the experience enjoyed by the customer. If the customer feels satisfied with the service, ambiance, and activities provided in the coffee shop, he/she will promote the coffee shop to other people through personal interactions or social sites.

Generally, the application of the aforementioned marketing communication strategies justifies the importance of emotional connection, customer engagement, and community connection as a means of promoting customer loyalty in the coffee shop industry. Therefore, it is recommended that food and beverage businesses adopt the aforementioned marketing communication strategies as a means of staying afloat in the ever-changing market environment.

It is recommended for the future research to explore the impact of the marketing communication strategies by using a mixed method or a quantitative method of assessing the level of customer loyalty. In addition, it is recommended for the future research to compare the marketing communication strategies of other coffee shops or creative spaces as a means of having a broader scope of the marketing strategies employed by coffee shops in the present day.

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