

COMMUNITY-BASED MARKETING STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING MARKETS

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Abstract

Community-based marketing strategy is a marketing approach that emphasises building and managing an active community of consumers, users, or fans of a brand, with the aim of creating stronger bonds, increasing loyalty, and driving organic growth through positive social interactions. This approach relies on the creation of shared value between the brand and its members, where two-way communication and active customer participation in various activities are key. This strategy focuses on shared experiences, trust, and values shared within the community to drive engagement, positive word-of-mouth, and ultimately, sustainable market development over time. The research method conducted in this study uses the literature research method. The results show that community-based marketing strategies offer various benefits, including increased customer engagement, positive responses through word-of-mouth, and the ability to obtain real-time feedback that provides opportunities for innovation and fulfilment of customer needs more effectively. However, challenges such as the need for a large investment of resources and the difficulty in measuring short-term ROI mean that this strategy requires a patient and consistent approach. Community-based marketing strategies, with the right approach, can be the key for companies to develop markets in a more sustainable way and increase long-term profits.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Community in Developing Market.

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Introduction

In an increasingly competitive market, companies are required to continue to innovate in their marketing strategies in order to survive and thrive. Community-based marketing is one approach that has gained popularity due to its ability to build stronger and more tangible relationships with consumers (Adane et al., 2020). This strategy does not only focus on buying and selling transactions, but rather on building long-term relationships between community members who have similar interests or needs (Aleksandrova, 2020).

Marketing strategy plays an important role in the business world as a tool to achieve long-term success. In this fast-paced and changing era, companies must use marketing approaches that are not only effective for selling products or services, but also help in building brands, establishing relationships with consumers, and ultimately instilling brand loyalty (Algharabat & Rana, 2021). The right strategy helps companies identify and target the right market segments, position products effectively, set appropriate prices, and communicate product benefits. This ultimately allows companies to optimise existing resources and achieve efficiency in business operations (Arintoko et al., 2020).

In addition, the importance of marketing strategy also lies in its ability to anticipate market developments and consumer trends. By analysing market data and consumer behaviour, companies can adjust their products and services to remain relevant and attractive (Aripin et al., 2023). A dynamic and adaptive marketing strategy encourages innovation in product and service offerings, strengthens brand differentiation, and increases opportunities to create new markets. Success in implementing marketing strategies not only increases sales, but also business growth and competitive position in the industry concerned (Ashikuzzaman & Howlader, 2020).

The digital age and social media have accelerated the growth of online-based communities, which are able to gather individuals from various locations without geographical restrictions. This provides new opportunities for companies to reach a wider and more segmented market. Community-based marketing harnesses the power of word-of-mouth and peer-to-peer recommendations, which are often more effective than conventional marketing strategies (Bentley & Halim, 2024).

The development of community-based marketing strategies has shown significant growth since its emergence as a marketing concept that supports long-term value creation for brands and their customers. Initially, this strategy was mostly used by small brands or start-ups that wanted to build customer loyalty from the ground up without a large budget for traditional advertising (Balikuddembe & Reinhardt, 2020). However, thanks to technological advancements and easy access to the vast internet, community-based marketing is evolving into an approach adopted by businesses of all sizes. Online communities, such as forums, social media, and dedicated platforms, have

enabled brands to interact directly with their followers, providing a more personalised and two-way approach to communication (Bernardi et al., 2021).

The market now demands transparency and authenticity, where interactions are not only transaction-based but also the building of strong emotional relationships between brands and consumers. Community-based marketing addresses this need by creating an environment that allows community members to share experiences and support each other, while brands act as facilitators as well as contributors (Blapp & Mitas, 2020). This strategy not only helps in strengthening customer loyalty but also makes customers brand advocates, effectively spreading the word about the product or service through word-of-mouth (Bogale et al., 2020). In other words, the community formed becomes a valuable asset that supports business sustainability in a competitive market environment.

Therefore, although many companies have started to adopt this strategy, there is still a lack of in-depth understanding of how the implementation of community-based marketing strategies can be effective in developing markets (Butu et al., 2021). Aspects such as the value provided to the community, the authenticity of the company's initiatives, and the long-term maintenance of relationships are often poorly managed. Creating an active and engaged community requires a deep understanding of the needs and preferences of the community's heart (Campbell & Kubickova, 2020).

This research is designed to dig deeper into community-based marketing strategies and the factors that influence their effectiveness in market development. With a focus on literature review, this research aims to provide valuable insights for companies that want to implement or optimise this marketing strategy in their operations. This is particularly relevant given the current business environment that demands rapid adaptation and innovation for sustainability in the increasingly fierce market competition.

Research Methods

The study conducted in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method, often referred to as literature study or literature review, is an approach to research that collects, reviews, and analyses secondary data, i.e. information that has been published in scientific literature such as journals, books, articles, reports, and other related sources. The purpose of this method is usually to understand theoretical foundations, get an overview of current thinking in a field, determine gaps in existing research, or to identify research methods or approaches that have been used in previous related studies. (Arikunto, 2000); (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022); (Barlian, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Marketing Theory

Marketing is a systematic and planned process or activity in creating, communicating, delivering, and offering value to consumers. This definition accommodates various activities ranging from identifying market needs and wants, planning appropriate products, pricing, distribution, to promotional efforts (Castro-Arce & Vanclay, 2020). The main objective is to fulfil the needs and wants of the target market in a profitable way, so as to create an exchange that benefits both parties, both consumers and companies. Marketing centres on the concept that customer satisfaction is the key to long-term business success and requires a deep understanding of the market being served (Y. Chen et al., 2021).

The scope of marketing is very broad and includes various interrelated aspects. Starting from market research to gather insights about customers and competitors, innovative product development according to market needs, competitive pricing, distribution strategies to ensure product availability, to the implementation of promotions to build brand awareness and preference (J. Chen et al., 2020). Marketing also involves customer relationship management (CRM) to build and maintain long-term relationships with consumers. In today's digital era, marketing has evolved to involve digital channels and social media in its strategy, expanding reach and increasing the effectiveness of communication with the target market. The scope of marketing continues to evolve along with changes in technology, consumer preferences, and market dynamics, making it a dynamic and adaptive discipline (Choi et al., 2020).

The evolution of marketing strategy has undergone various significant transformations along with the changing times and technology. Starting from a production approach that focused on manufacturing efficiency in the industrial era, moving to a product orientation that emphasised quality and innovation, to the sales era where aggressive promotional techniques dominated to spur purchases (Chowdhury et al., 2020). With the development of market and consumer theories, marketing strategies wiselyUITableViewControllerEditingStyleInsert shifted to a more customer-centric approach to marketing, where marketing decisions are made based on consumers' needs and wants. The era of relationship marketing then emerged with a focus on creating and maintaining long-term customer relationships. Now, in a digital-dominated information society, marketing strategies continue to innovate by leveraging big data, personalisation, content marketing and social media platforms to create integrative and engaging experiences for customers, marking the shift to a more dynamic and interconnected era of contextual marketing (Coffie, 2020).

The conclusion of the evolution of marketing strategies shows that adaptation to technological changes, a deep understanding of consumer needs and wants, and a holistic approach to communicating and delivering value are key in achieving marketing effectiveness. From focusing on production, product quality, to customer engagement

marketing, each phase has broadened insights on how to best connect products with the market. In today's digital age, technology integration and content personalisation are becoming central to marketing strategies, leveraging data to optimise consumer experience and build sustainable relationships. Therefore, adaptability and continuous innovation are vital aspects of marketing strategies today and in the future.

Community-Based Marketing Strategy

Community-based marketing is a marketing approach that focuses efforts on building and empowering a community that is closely related to a brand or product. This strategy relies on the formation of relationships between consumers and between consumers and brands in a community of shared interests or values (Dangi & Petrick, 2021). In this approach, the focus is not only on buying and selling transactions, but on creating emotional bonds and customer loyalty through ongoing cooperation and interaction. Community-based marketing recognises the importance of word-of-mouth and trust as powerful promotional tools, leveraging the organic relationships formed within communities to enhance the reputation and success of a brand or product (Demissie & Negeri, 2020).

Characteristics of community-based marketing include a strong focus on two-way dialogue where all community members are engaged in authentic conversations and their active participation is highly valued. The community is empowered to share their opinions, ideas, and experiences about the brand or product, increasing their engagement and closeness to the brand. It is not only a vertical interaction from brand to consumer, but also a horizontal one where consumers interact with each other (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020). This marketing often uses digital platforms such as social media to facilitate community interactions, but can also include face-to-face events and activities. By listening and responding to community feedback, brands can develop products or services that are more relevant to needs and they can identify brand advocates, who are irreplaceable in the deployment of organic marketing initiatives (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022).

Community-based marketing offers several advantages that make it a very attractive approach for brands. One of the biggest advantages is the building of strong brand loyalty. Through ongoing participation and interaction within the community, consumers tend to develop stronger bonds with the brand, resulting in long-term loyalty (Erinle et al., 2021). This type of marketing also has the potential to utilise word-of-mouth and recommendations from community members, which are often seen as more persuasive and authentic than traditional marketing methods. By utilising consumer advocacy within communities, brands can organically increase their marketing reach and effectiveness, reducing reliance on paid advertising that is often costly (Fouladvand et al., 2022).

In addition, another advantage is the ability for brands to gain direct and valuable feedback from their consumers. Active community interactions provide direct access to authentic consumer feedback on products or services, including insights into what is liked or disliked, as well as ideas for improvement (Gerard et al., 2020). This allows brands to innovate and iterate more responsively to customer needs and wants, keeping the brand relevant and increasing customer satisfaction. With increased satisfaction, opportunities for new product integration or further development become smoother due to having an alert and responsive consumer base (Ghimire & Lamichhane, 2020).

However, community-based marketing also poses some challenges that must be managed. Building and managing a community requires a significant investment of time and resources. It requires ongoing effort and attention to maintain the community, support its activities, and ensure healthy and productive communication between its members (Giampiccoli, 2020). Another challenge is expectation management; due to the intense interaction with the brand through the community, members may have high expectations of brand responsiveness and innovation. Community building also requires an authentic approach; any impression of being manipulative or overly commercial can quickly backfire, undermining the trust and integrity that has been built (Giampiccoli et al., 2021). The implementation of community-based marketing therefore requires a careful, authentic and long-term orientated strategy to overcome these potential challenges.

Success Factors of a Community-Based Marketing Strategy

The success of a community-based marketing strategy depends on a variety of interrelated factors. First and foremost is authenticity and transparency in all interactions. Communities are built on trust, and for that, brands must consistently communicate honestly and openly with their community members (Giampiccoli et al., 2020). This includes being transparent about the brand's goals, listening to and valuing input from community members, and maintaining an authentic exchange of ideas. Communities build themselves on shared values; therefore, marketing efforts that are genuine and do not consider the community merely as a promotional tool are more likely to achieve resonance and ultimately, success (Gutierrez, 2022).

Furthermore, the provision of ongoing value to community members is also critical in ensuring the success of community-based marketing. This value can be in the form of informative content, entertainment, exclusive access to products or events, or the opportunity to engage in activities that have a positive social impact (Gutu et al., 2021). By consistently providing value, brands can maintain high levels of engagement, motivating community members to continue actively participating. This also helps the brand realise a symbiotic relationship with its community, where both parties find

benefit and value in the relationship, creating an ecosystem that strengthens the bond (Hartman et al., 2023).

Another important factor is adaptability and flexibility. In an ever-changing world, the needs and wants of community members may shift over time. Therefore, brands must be ready to adapt to new trends, technologies, and feedback from the community to stay relevant. This requires a flexible approach to community management and marketing strategies, as well as the ability to experiment with new ideas (Hong et al., 2021). Maintaining a close relationship with the community allows brands to more quickly capture these changes and react proactively, ensuring that marketing activities continue to meet or exceed the expectations of community members. As such, adaptability and flexibility are key in ensuring the sustainability and growth of the community, in line with the development of the brand (Hoque, 2020).

Challenges in Implementing a Community-Based Marketing Strategy

Implementing a community-based marketing strategy involves several challenges that must be overcome to be effective. Firstly, building a community from scratch requires significant effort and dedication over a long period of time. Communities do not form overnight; it takes time to attract members whose interests and values align with those of the brand (Humphries et al., 2020). Initial efforts often involve an ongoing investment of resources, with no guarantee of immediate results. This investment is not only time and money but also energy in managing interactions and nurturing relationships. One of the key difficulties is determining the right strategies to drive authentic member engagement and participation, coupled with creating enough compelling value for the community to be built (Kc, 2021).

Second, managing and maintaining engagement in the community is an ongoing challenge. Once a community has been established, the challenge is to keep it active and relevant to its members. This requires creating engaging content, activities that facilitate meaningful interactions, and effective conflict management, while maintaining an inclusive and supportive atmosphere (Khartishvili et al., 2020). In addition, adapting to changing community dynamics and member needs requires resources that can read and respond to changes quickly and appropriately. Difficulties arise when brands must balance maintaining community engagement with not over-marketing their products or services, which can undermine trust and authenticity in the eyes of community members (Kleinhans et al., 2020).

Thirdly, measuring the impact of community-based marketing can be tricky. The main challenge here is translating community engagement and brand loyalty into metrics that can be measured and show concrete ROI (Return on Investment). Most community benefits, such as increased trust and brand loyalty, are long-term outcomes that are difficult to measure precisely in the short term, often leaving stakeholders sceptical or doubtful of the value of this strategy (Kubota et al., 2020). Therefore,

companies must be smart in setting relevant KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and developing measurement systems that are able to capture the essence of community effects, from increased brand awareness to customer advocacy, to prove the effectiveness of their community-based marketing strategies.

In addition to the challenges outlined, there is another aspect that is also important in ensuring the effectiveness of community marketing strategy implementation: ensuring community sustainability. Keeping a community active and sustainable requires an approach that is able to adapt along with the changing times and interests of members (Kunjuraman et al., 2022). Communities that stagnate or no longer provide relevant value to their members risk losing engagement, which may eventually lead to members leaving the community. Therefore, brands need to continuously innovate and offer new activities or content that can spark interest and discussion within the community, while encouraging new members to join (Lasso & Dahles, 2023).

In addition to maintaining the community, creating an inclusive and diverse member experience is also a challenge. A healthy community is one that can accommodate differences, provide space for multiple perspectives, and encourage constructive discussions (Lee et al., 2024). This requires sensitivity and awareness from community managers to ensure that all members feel valued and heard. Mismanaging this issue can lead to internal conflict or even leave a negative impression of the brand in the eyes of the public. Therefore, building and maintaining an inclusive and supportive environment is a key requirement in community management (Mahajan et al., 2021).

Finally, the challenge of using data and technology to promote personalisation while maintaining members' privacy cannot be ignored. In this digital age, personalisation of content and offers is key to increasing member engagement. However, this must also be done with compliance with data privacy regulations in various jurisdictions in mind. Privacy breaches or unethical use of data can undermine a community's trust in a brand in an instant. Therefore, brands need to find the right balance between personalisation and privacy protection, affirming their commitment to ethics and data security.

Meeting these challenges in community marketing requires a measured strategy, flexibility in execution, and a long-term commitment to authentic relationship building and value. By addressing these challenges, brands can harness the power of community to build deeper relationships with customers, strengthen loyalty, and ultimately, drive sustainable growth.

Conclusion

Community-based marketing strategies have proven to be effective in growing markets by building deeper and more sustainable relationships with customers. By focusing on creating and maintaining strong communities, brands can increase

customer loyalty, help spread positive word-of-mouth, and ultimately, increase sales. Communities provide a platform for members to interact, share experiences, and collaborate, which increases their trust and attachment to the brand. This strategy also allows brands to get direct feedback from their most loyal users, facilitating smarter innovation and faster response to market needs.

However, this strategy also faces some significant challenges, including the need for a large initial investment in time and resources, as well as difficulties in measuring immediate effectiveness in the short term. Marketers need to show patience and persistence to build active communities and engage them in an authentic way without appearing to take advantage. Success in this strategy requires a continuous and adaptive approach to maintain community relevance and personalisation of the experience without compromising members' privacy. By addressing these challenges, community-based marketing strategies can be a very powerful tool in sustainable market development.

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