

What Marketing Strategies are required to build a Branded Restaurant?

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Abstract: The customers are becoming aware and expect value for their money. It takes lot of efforts and well-focused marketing strategies in order to build a branded restaurant. The restaurant needs to offer discounts, provide value addition and customization, and conduct various marketing campaign on social media in order to build a brand. In addition to it, restaurateur has to interact with the customers and focus on various guerilla-marketing techniques by using the well-maintained database of the customers.

Keywords: marketing strategies, branded restaurant.

1. INTRODUCTION

The strategies that can successfully build a branded chain of restaurant can be well explained through the following points:

Social media marketing:

Marketing on social media, mainly, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can build strong image of the restaurant. For example,

California Pizza Kitchen launched a campaign: 'What we do for love' and asked its followers to share photos showing the craze things they do for love. The winner was offered free pizzas for a year.

McDonalds promoted its tagline "I'm Lovin' It" during the Super Bowl using Twitter and Facebook.

Value proposition:

It is very important for a restaurant to provide value to every segment of the society. The customers get attracted by restaurant, which provides them maximum value. The restaurant can provide value to the different segments of the society in the following way:

Families: They perceive maximum value when they are offered child-friendly and nutritious menu.

Women: They perceive maximum value when they get creative, low calorie food.

Teenagers: They perceive maximum value when they get trending food items like: pizza and burgers.

2. GUERILLA MARKETING

It includes marketing in unconventional ways in order to increase the sales. An effective customer database is build and used wisely in this approach.

Birthdays:

Through the database, the restaurant can wish the customers on their birthdays, and provide a present in the form of a discount coupon. This increases the probability of the customer to celebrate his/her birthday in that particular restaurant.

Anniversaries:

Through the proper database, the restaurants can send message to the customers on their anniversary. The restaurant can arrange a special dinner for both of them on such a day, this technique makes the customers feel special, thus, enhancing the brand image of the restaurants.

Mother's Day and Father's Day:

On such auspicious days, mothers and fathers expect their children to do something special for them. The restaurant can use the occasion for building its brand image by sending invitation to all the children in its database for the special celebration. The restaurant can be decorated in such a way that it looks like it is done for a mother or a father. This will make the restaurant responsive, enhancing its brand image.

Thank you cards:

A thank you card to the customers at the end of their dining experience will make their perception about restaurant as good. Thank you is always linked with positivity, which will position restaurant as a strong brand.

Overall 'Dining Experience' should be made memorable:

For a branded restaurant, each and every small thing plays a vital role: from the welcome greeting to the thank you goodbye. If dining experience of the customers is good, they will feel satisfied and would like to come again to the same restaurant. They are the people who are more likely to refer the restaurant to their friends, increasing the footfall at the restaurant.

3. SELLING CUSTOMIZED FOOD

Selling the customization means providing the ability to the customers to build their own meal. This ability provides a feeling of belongingness to the customers; in addition to it, the customers feel privileged to get an option to build their own meal. Thus, this facility helps in enhancing the brand image of the restaurant.

For example, in order to increase the sales, Pizza Hut introduced 'Flavor of Now' menu in which customers can customize their pies '2 billion different ways'.

Value Addition:

It is important to increase the customer satisfaction instead of just providing them with discounts. Value is not just decrease in the price or the amount of food served in the plate, value is a broader concept that includes everything from the presentation of the food to the quality of food. The customers are ready to pay more for the food, which they perceive to be of better quality.

In order to build a strong brand, restaurants should make customers to perceive that they are getting maximum value for their money. If the customers are satisfied, the brand image of the restaurant will enhance at a fast rate.

Talking directly to the guests and spending money on them:

When a manager or the owner of the restaurant directly interacts with the customers, they get insight about the opinions of the customers. Moreover, customers feel good that they got the opportunity to share their feedback with the person with authority. The customers start feeling attached to the restaurant. It is important for the restaurant to spend money on such guests by providing them free meals and discount coupons. This makes them feel privilege and provide them a sense of happiness.

Making the chef as a primary marketing vehicle:

In order to build a strong public image of restaurant, the food should be of good taste and quality. The people will start loving the food prepared by the chef and thus, will start getting indirectly attached to the chef. Restaurant can market the food by the name of chef who is loved by the customers.

For example, San Francisco based Kimpton Hotels spend 75% of their marketing budget in order to get word out about their chefs and menus.

Menu:

Right Portion, Right Price: For a restaurant, price plays a very important role. The satisfaction level of the food is linked with the price and quantity of the food. In order to provide maximum satisfaction, the customers must feel that they got the right quantity of food for the money. If they are satisfied with the portion, they will spread good words about the restaurant that will help in building the strong brand.

Privileges to certain section of the society:

The restaurant can receive lot of support from the common people if it gives privilege to that part of the society, which is respected by everyone. In such a case, whenever customers think about that particular restaurant, good thoughts come in their mind due to the privilege given to such section of the society.

For example, Golden Corral on Military Appreciation Monday provided a free dinner and beverage to any person who has served in the U.S. military.

Deep Discount:

When there is low demand due to the recession or deflation period it is advisable to form promotion involving deep discounts. The customers love discounts and if the discounted meal is under their budget, they will definitely come to the restaurant.

In a scenario of low growth rate of economy, 'Discounting serves as a tactic, not a strategy'.

Calling customers and making them feel special:

Making the customers feel special plays a very vital role in building a branded restaurant. The restaurant can use analytics in order to determine the favorite dish of the customers and call them to inform whenever their favorite dish is prepared. This will give a feeling of belongingness and customers will feel special.

Good word of mouth:

Good word of mouth determines guests – 'intent to return'. Good word of mouth is one of the most important aspects in building a brand, considering that most of the people visit a new restaurant on the recommendations of their peers. Therefore, it is important that each and every customer who steps out of the restaurant is happy and spread good words about the restaurant in his/her peer group.

Partnering with right companies:

Growth hacking is an important concept, which can significantly increase the sales of a restaurant. It is very important for the restaurant to partner with other companies, which can help it to build its image and enhance revenue at the same time.

For example, the restaurant can partner with various tech or startup event-organizing companies and take the contract for providing the food at such meets. This provides the opportunity to the restaurant to build their image by directly reaching to a large number of customers, and at the same time enhance their revenues.

Customer – relation management:

It is important to maintain casual relationship with the customers as it gives greater perceived value to the customers. This results in increase in the emotional preference about that particular restaurant when customers make the dining decision, thus, building a brand image.

Conducting in-store contests in order to drive check in:

The contests serve as a source of marketing for the branded chain of restaurants. For example, the customers can be asked to team up and visit as many locations of restaurant as possible in order to receive offers and digital badges. The first team to visit all the restaurants can be awarded.

4. NICHE MARKETING

Niche marketing refers to marketing to a carefully selected segment of the society; it is also called as target audience. It is focused on attracting 'ideal guests'.

Four things must be considered when defining ideal guests:

Experience: These guests value the overall service of the restaurant and are the repeated customers.

Motivation: Restaurateurs like to serve food to these guests, as they are always happy with the service provided to them.

Potential for building revenue: There are various other services that can be offered to them for increasing the revenue.

Marketplace: These people must fit to the particular demographics of the restaurants, and the restaurant must be able to meet their needs and match their budget.

Emails from restaurants:

As per the research, 78% of the customers said that an email from the restaurant would motivate them to go to that restaurant. In order to build a brand, the restaurant must send emails to their customers about the menu and offers that can be availed. Customization that includes the name and preference of the customer should be taken into account when sending an email to the customer.

Referral Sources:

In order to enhance the brand image, the restaurant should have a clear understanding of its target audience. The restaurant must know the source from which it is getting its target audience.

If the target audience is women, the restaurant should use local beauty salons or clothing stores.

If the target audience is families, the restaurant should use campus and school programs in order to make them visit the restaurant.

Education:

In order to build a brand image, it is important for the restaurant to educate its customers about the trending topics and news. If the restaurant makes use of trending issues or topics, the customer involvement will increase. For example, the restaurant can make use of India vs. Pakistan Asia Cup Cricket match, for driving the traffic and enhancing its public image.

Increase the frequency of existing customers instead of acquiring new ones:

As per the research, the cost to acquire new customers is five to fifteen times more than the cost of increasing the frequency of existing ones. The restaurant customers are least loyal and therefore, it takes lot of time and efforts to increase the frequency of their visit.

Customized marketing messages:

Adding the name, discount coupon and customer's preference in the message can help in building a strong image of the restaurant. As per the research, 87% of the customers would order if they were provided a discount coupon for their favorite dish. If the customers are identified by their name in the message, it increases the probability of customers ordering from the restaurant by 64%.

Opinions posted by friends and relatives:

The recommendations from the peer group play its role in building a brand image for the restaurant. The restaurant must reply to the opinions posted by the customers on various restaurant discovery platforms, like Zomato. The restaurant should regularly monitor the opinions and form the future strategies keeping in mind the views of the customers.

Mobile ordering and Payment:

Mobile ordering and payment service provides ease and convenience to the customers. The technology is increasing at a fast pace, and almost everyone has a smart phone, therefore, restaurant should have a platform for where the customers can order their food and make payment for the same.

GPS technology to recognize customers in the nearby areas:

The restaurant should use GPS technology in order to recognize customers in nearby areas and provide them notifications about the offers at restaurant, whenever they pass through the restaurant. Moreover, GPS technology can be used to handle the pre-orders made by the customers. The notification to the customers in the nearby area of the restaurant significantly increases the probability of customer to dine in the restaurant.

Antibiotic – free food:

The customers are becoming health conscious day by day. In order to build a brand image, it is very important to use antibiotic-free ingredients (protein, vegetables, etc.) and sustainable ingredients (milk, eggs, etc.). The restaurant should also look for the calories in the food; it should try to reduce the number of calories as much as possible.

5. MAKING USE OF HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

As per the research, the customers tend to go to the restaurant often during holidays and festivals. Therefore, such occasions serve as an important source for brand building. The festivals like Diwali and Starbucks can be used by the restaurants for enhancing the brand image by changing the theme of the restaurant as per the occasion. This can be well understood by the following example:

During the holidays, Starbucks launched its mobile order app and loyalty programs. This enabled the customers to order the beverages from their home through the app and the loyalty programs ensured that the customers come to the restaurant again.

Venue optimization:

The restaurant may have several entries on mobile-social platforms like Facebook and Foursquare. If there are numerous venues for the same location with a few check-ins, they will decrease the search result score. Therefore, all the entries on the social platforms should be converted into one.

For example, When restaurant Cinnabon performed value optimization, the engagement increased by around 43 percent on Foursquare and 63% on Facebook.

To-go bags:

If the restaurant provides delivery option, to-go bags can be used in order to build the brand and keep the name of the restaurant at the top of customers' minds.

The benefits of to-go bags can be well understood by the following points:

Brand building:

Most of the customers perceive the value of the food by its packaging. The restaurant can use to-go bags in order to build a strong brand image in the mind of the customers.

Communication vehicle:

To-go bags act as a communication vehicle, which carries the brand name and logo along with it to various customers.

Live for some days:

To-go bags live with customers, not just for minutes but for some hours and sometimes for days. It depends on the quality of the material used by the restaurant to make the to-go bags.

6. CREATE SAME EXPERIENCE AS SITTING IN RESTAURANT

To-go bags can create the same experience as though the customer is sitting in the restaurant. The packaging should be in such a manner that it provides everything to the customer from spoon to tissue paper.

The quality of bags:

The bag should be made with such material that it becomes reusable. If the bag is reusable, the customers will carry those bags at several places and that will influence their peers to try the food of the restaurant.

Be visual – photos:

The thing that can attract the empty stomach of the customers is the amazing picture – aka “food porn”. The restaurant should use lips-smacking photos of the various dishes that it serves. The restaurant should share the pictures of happy customers and staff on Instagram, which is an effective way to reach broader audience.

Gift cards:

In order to promote the sales, the customers should be offered bonus gifts along with the gift cards. For example, if the customer buys a gift card of Rs. 200, he/she can be offered Rs. 20 as premium or gift. The restaurant can use animation where the users can add photos and videos and can electronically unwrap the gift cards. As per the research, 60% of the customers say that they want a gift card.

7. MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Marketing campaign is the most effective way for building the brand image. The restaurant should launch at least one marketing campaign each month in order to enhance its public image. Marketing campaigns can be well understood by taking the example of following successful marketing campaigns:

Taco Bell launched a marketing campaign: ‘Breakfast with Ronald McDonald’, which increased the sale of breakfast at Taco Bell.

Starbucks launched a ‘Meet me at Starbucks’ campaign in order to project its image as a neighborhood- meeting place.

KFC launched a campaign ‘Together’ in order to project itself as a branded chain of ‘family’ restaurant.

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