

Marketing Practices Followed in Exhibition Industry: An Indian Perspective



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Abstract

A revolution has taken place in the field of marketing and the ways of performing marketing practices i.e. product, price, place and promotion decisions are being modified for better results and cost effectiveness. The style and techniques of marketing managers are getting changed in the present scenario and they are focusing upon digital marketing, web marketing, Apps, social media assistance, technological up-gradation, E marketing, E governance, quicker deliveries, online pricing, etc. The focus of the researcher is to study the changing marketing practices including product, price, place and promotion practices in Indian Exhibition Industry. The exhibition sector in India is growing at a very fast pace and there is huge scope of earnings in this Industry. Therefore the purpose of this study is to observe product decisions, price decisions, place decisions and promotion decisions in Indian exhibition industry. This will help the Indian exhibition organizers to understand the marketing practices to be followed for better results and effective participation. As a result of this, Indian exhibition organizers will be more educated to attract better participation from international participants since exhibition being a magnificent international entry tool as well. The present study is qualitative and subjective in nature based upon secondary data and expert observations of the experienced researcher in Indian exhibition industry. The major observations includes investing in technology, apps, CRM software, social media support and e marketing etc.

Keywords: Exhibition Industry, Tradeshows, Trade Fairs, Exhibitions, Marketing Mix, Product Mix, Price Mix, Place Mix and Promotion Mix.

Introduction

Exhibition Industry and Marketing Practices

Exhibitions is considered to be a universal marketing tool and below the line promotional platform for creating awareness towards your solutions, product launch, pricing strategies, developing relationships etc. and at the same time exhibition industry is considered to be a wonderful platform for various exhibitors to fulfill their marketing related objectives such as product, price, place and promotion decisions. The Indian exhibition organizers are trying their level best to ensure success for their participants so that repetitive participation may come for the next event. It has been observed that there are several marketing practices which are being followed to ensure the success for the event used by exhibition organizers in the present scenario, which are as follows (Friedman, 2013; Situma, 2012):

1. Online marketing for providing everything at the click of the button and to provide convenience through the use of technology
2. Customized show apps for speedy interactions and direct deals
3. Advertisement in news papers to create awareness about the show
4. Co-branding with co-organizer of the show
5. Horizontal and vertical alliances to provide convenience and accessibility to the target customers
6. Several pricing strategies for several participants of the show
7. E marketing to support business with ease
8. Social media support for reviews and feedback etc.

The focus of the researcher through this study to provide product, price, place and promotion decisions under marketing decisions followed by exhibition organizers in exhibition industry based upon his subjective observations. Therefore, researcher is trying to draw our attention on what is exhibition and this industry all about, related review having marketing objectives by other scholars, product, price, place and promotion decisions

observed by the researcher as being followed by exhibition organizers.

Definitions of Exhibitions

Exhibition is a social service activity that delivers and exchanges information through visual display under certain time and space conditions in accordance with the social needs so as to allow viewers to make purchases and sales, investment decisions, or to learn and soon (Xiaoming, 2012). Kumar & Meenakshi (2010) explains that exhibition is the only promotional tool that brings buyers, sellers and the competitors in a commercial setting. (Gaur & Saggere, 2009; Karunakaran, 2009) defines Exhibitions as presentation of goods and services at a common location for the purpose of either sale or display which may be commercial in nature or may be a non commercial display of rare arts, ancient artifacts or other skills. Kazmi & Batra (2009) defines a trade fair or exhibition is a temporary exhibit, generally held at some interval in a major city. Brieter & Milman (2006) describe Exhibitions and trade shows are synonymously used with the basic meaning of exhibiting the products and services.

Previous studies suggest that the Exhibition Industry is not well organized and exhibition organizer need to develop a strategic marketing plan to meet the marketing objectives of the organizations prior to exhibitions to get most out of the trade shows and make it a success (Bello & Lohtia, 1993; Kijewski, Yoon & Young, 1993). With the advent of social media, digitalization, E governance and electronic marketing, the techniques of doing business has been totally changed. Exhibition organizers, exhibitors and attendees must recognize the new marketing mediums & challenges available in front of them and integrate these alternatives in the exhibition marketing mix in order to remain competitive in today's global market place.

Therefore the researcher has chosen **"Marketing practices followed in Exhibition Industry: An Indian Perspective"**. The researcher is trying to make an attempt to understand marketing practices including product decisions, price decisions, place decisions and promotion practices available in Indian exhibition industry to generate more sales revenue and achieve organizational marketing objectives.

Review of Literature

The review of literature about Indian exhibition Industry reveals the interest in assessing the exhibitions – its marketing objectives, marketing

goals and marketing mix practices in exhibition industry. Exhibitions are considered one of the major universal marketing tools to ensure business growth. The major marketing goals usually are providing customer value and customer satisfaction that means giving more benefits at lesser cost and exceeding the expectations, which can be established by consistent marketing activities (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008; Kotler & Armstrong, 2001; Kotler & Keller, 2007; Kotler, 2002; Kazmi, 2007; Belch, Belch & Purani, 2010).

During the past decade, there has been an extensive growth in the exhibition industry and exhibitions have become an essential part of the industrial marketing communications profile (Browning & Adams, 1988; ICFAI, 2006). Trade shows are important promotion tools for marketing many products and services (Hensen, 2004). Trade show was conceived of as a mix of direct selling and advertising and has become a popular vehicle for promoting products and services (Chiou, Hsieh & Shen, 2007). (Bello & Barczak, 1990; Bonoma, 1983) described many firms spend more than 20% of their marketing communication budget on exhibitions. (Dwyer & Tanner, 2010) Trade shows rank second only to advertising in terms of the marketing communication budget (Taking out personal selling).

For several decades, numerous marketing objectives of exhibitions have been identified in the literature in order to discover effective and efficient marketing strategies (Bello & Lohtia, 1993; Blythe, 2002; Bonoma, 1983; Browning & Adams, 1988; Herbig, O'Hara, & Paulmbo, 1997; Situma, 2012; Kijewski, Yoon, & Young, 1993). (Kumar & Meenakshi, 2010; Kotler, Keller, Koshy & Jha, 2009) summarized that marketing objectives of exhibitions, which are as follows:

1. Product launch
2. Creates awareness and develops relationships with new prospects
3. Demonstration of products
4. Gaining competitive edge
5. Introduce a new product
6. Designing CoD
7. Brand image building exercise
8. Deal with service and other customer problems
9. Sales activity
10. Segment identification
11. Promotional platform
12. Innovation and improvements
13. Developing marketing mix

Wagen & Carlos (2005) suggested marketing mix of events as



Figure 2: The marketing mix

Source: Wagen, L. V. D., & Carlos, B. R. (2005). *Event management: for tourism, cultural, business and sporting events*, New Delhi, Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 79.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research is to determine **marketing practices followed in Exhibition Industry: An Indian Perspective** along with other objectives which are mentioned below:

1. To determine the product decisions in Indian exhibition industry
2. To determine the price decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry
3. To determine the place decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry
4. To determine the promotion decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry

The above objectives have been achieved based upon the subjective observation of the researcher to understand the marketing practices followed in Indian exhibition industry, which is a combination of product, price, place and promotion decisions, which are mentioned as below:

Product Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

Product decisions means launching the product, designing the venue, providing physical environment, infrastructure, and technology for making deals and developing relationships to several participants of the show. The product decisions being followed by Indian exhibition organizers as per the researcher includes:

1. **Design for Environment (DFE):** The modern venues of exhibitions have been made with environment friendly material and they have been designed to minimize the use of resources in your day to day business operations through undertaking activities such as using recycled paper, environment friendly inks, online communications, virtual communications etc.
2. **Professional Specifications:** The sizes and dimensions of booth space as well as bare space have been designed and offered uniformly keeping in mind the entire layout of the exhibition and professional movements within the premises thereby providing ease to all the participants of the exhibition industry.
3. **Superior Packaging:** The packaging of products has been made with environment friendly material and utilization of containers has ensured maximum quantity of material with no damages at minimal cost with to and fro arrangements.
4. **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Decisions:** The exhibition organizers understands the power of IPR and side effects of duplicity, therefore they have ensured patent for inventions, copy right for content and design, trade mark for logos and registration for brand names so that no one can take undue advantage of their IPR legally and easily.
5. **Technology Integration:** Exhibition organizers have also ensured technology integration, digitalization, cloud computing, 4G wireless infrastructure, wireless apps, wireless devices, mobile computing, internet connectivity etc. as SMART Initiatives. (Friedman, 2013)

The above mentioned decisions are very important to achieve success in Indian exhibition industry. The researcher is quite confident that the growth and improvement in exhibition industry will

definitely create a fruitful environment for the entire business community in all sectors.

Price Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

Price decisions means the monetary deals with the participants of exhibitions including pricing plans, methods and strategies to get margins based upon their segment, product line, demand, competition, cost and customer etc. and to sell tickets, booth space, bare space and other ancillary services attached to exhibition Industry. The researcher has divided the price mix into 2 parts:

Pricing Strategies Used for Exhibitors of Exhibitions

1. Cost plus pricing
2. Target Return on Investment
3. Target costing
4. Economic value to customer
5. Activity based costing
6. Going rate pricing
7. Prestige pricing
8. Economy pricing
9. Product line pricing
10. Geographical pricing
11. Sealed bid pricing
12. Negotiated pricing
13. Demand based pricing
14. Multidimensional pricing

Pricing Strategies Used for Visitors of Exhibitions

15. Loss leader pricing
16. Breakeven pricing
17. Marginal pricing
18. Penetration pricing
19. Psychological pricing
20. Discount pricing
21. Going rate pricing
22. Defensive pricing
23. Promotional pricing
24. Value pricing
25. Customary pricing

The above mentioned decisions are very important to provide customer value, customer satisfaction and gaining competitive edge in the market to achieve success in Indian exhibition industry. The researcher is quite positive that the decisions taken in terms of pricing in Indian exhibition industry will definitely create a valuable environment for the entire business fraternity in all sectors.

Place Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

Place decisions means providing convenience to the targeted customers to save on logistics as well as opportunity cost and time having design of effective channel of distribution (CoD) nationally as well as internationally. Therefore, it's very important for Indian exhibition organizers to choose these below mentioned place related strategies which are not only efficient, cost effective but has maximum impact. The place mix or decisions followed by Indian exhibition organizers as per the researcher includes:

Direct CoD or Zero Level CoD Decisions

1. Company sales force
2. Onsite booth
3. Registration desk etc.

Indirect CoD

Horizontal CoD

Means making alliance or tie ups with non competitors or commercial support providing agencies such as

1. Banks
2. Metros
3. Railway stations
4. Café coffee day outlets
5. Transporters
6. Airports outlets etc.

Vertical CoD

Means making alliance or tie ups with traditional middlemen such as

1. Agents
2. Brokers
3. Franchisees
4. Contractors
5. Compilers etc.

Mixed CoD

Means using direct and indirect CoD for better coverage of the targeted customer and providing ease to them by focusing upon intensive, selective and exclusive channel of distribution.

Virtual CoD

Means making alliance or tie ups with click only dot com providers such as flipkart, snapdeal, e bay, etc. to ensure better reach for sale of the product or services or tickets etc. at affordable and modern pricing.

Technology Integrated CoD

Means using Apps, internet, internet ready kiosks, touch points, mobile phones, SMS, telephone marketing, CRM software, ERP packages and other electronic assistance to reach your target customers in cost effective manner.

The above mentioned decisions are very important to provide customer convenience, accessibility, providing psychological ease and gaining location based advantages for primary trade area and secondary trade area. The researcher is quite confirmatory that these modern place practices will create cost effective solutions to get accessibility as well affordability towards the offer raised by Indian exhibition organizers.

Promotion Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

Promotion mix means providing communication to the targeted audience to create the awareness about your exhibition or show happening for effective participation nationally as well as internationally. Therefore, it's very important for Indian exhibition organizers to choose these promotional strategies which are not only cost effective but has maximum reach with ease for their segment. The promotion mix or decisions followed by Indian exhibition organizers as per the researcher includes:

Advertising Decisions: Includes

1. Print
2. Outdoor
3. Direct mail
4. Internet
5. Videos
6. Local media
7. Digital Media
8. Apps etc.

Direct Marketing Decisions: Includes

1. Apps marketing
2. Web marketing
3. Direct mails
4. Tele marketing
5. Digital marketing
6. SMS marketing
7. Affiliate marketing
8. Word of mouth marketing etc.

Public Relation Decisions: Includes

1. Event marketing
2. Conference
3. Workshops
4. Seminars
5. Hot air ballons
6. Website launch
7. Promotional items
8. Sponsorships
9. Video and films
10. Action programs etc.

Publicity Decisions: Includes

1. Press release
2. Word of mouth
3. News channels
4. Interviews
5. Feature article
6. Captioned photograph etc.

Sales Promotion Decisions: Includes

1. Display
2. Demonstrations
3. Contests
4. Sampling
5. Free products
6. Free bags or kits
7. Free calendars
8. Freebies etc.

Social Media Marketing: Includes

1. Face book reviews
2. Twitter reviews
3. LinkedIn reviews
4. Google talk
5. Whatsapp support
6. You tube videos etc.

The above mentioned decisions are very important to provide customer awareness, making positive attitude towards your show and gaining visitor preference to attend the show in Indian exhibition industry. The researcher is quite affirmative that these modern promotional practices will create cost effective awareness in Indian exhibition industry for the exhibition organizers.

Research Methodology

The present study is subjective and qualitative in nature and based upon secondary data. The main source of information is review and analysis of the published data which is collected from various magazines, newspapers, books, articles, dissertations, websites and research papers from different journals. The subjective observation method based upon researcher personal 5+ years of experience in exhibition industry and interaction with some of the top marketers in exhibition industry is used; to collect, interpret the related information and providing strategies for further growth.

Scope and Relevance of the Study

Scope of the study

The present study entitled "Marketing practices followed in Exhibition Industry: An Indian Perspective" for business growth is very important looking at the fast changing scenario. The study has covered the marketing practices including product, price, place and promotion practices involved in Exhibition Industry.

Relevance of the Study

After studying the available literature review, it has been observed that very little work has been done to study the marketing practices in Indian Exhibition Industry and as a result it has been comparatively less explored and requires further extension of work in terms of understanding the product, price, place and promotion decisions practiced in Indian exhibition industry. This study will prove a helping hand for the exhibition organizers, associations, councils, co organizers, and support agencies, the policymakers, marketing consultants, economists and government officials to understand marketing strategies for future growth.

Limitations and Future Research

The following limitations were observed while preparing this paper:

1. Lot of time got consumed while gathering and analyzing secondary data
2. The equipment and support required for the research demands cost
3. Limited man power assistance as this research has been conducted alone due to cost implications.
4. Getting sponsor to arrange money is a major constraint for research as no one is ready to provide the fund in this time of inflation
5. Opportunity cost incurred in this research by the researcher

Exhibition industry is very vast in nature and involves the entire business fraternity to come under one roof. There is a lot of scope to research on different topics in the same domain to improve the success of exhibitions, which includes:

1. Role of stand fabricators towards the success of exhibition industry in India
2. A Study of Supply chain practices followed in Indian exhibition industry
3. Promotion mix practices followed in Indian exhibition industry
4. Indian Exhibition Industry – Impact of Advertising as a promotion tool for exhibitions in NCR
5. Indian Exhibition Industry – Perception of Exhibitors towards exhibitions in NCR.
6. Indian Exhibition Industry - Impact of CRM software to improve exhibition attendance in NCR.

Discussion Based On Observations for Indian Exhibition Organizers

Based on the above mentioned review, product, price, place and promotion decisions followed in Indian exhibition industry, the researcher has observed several practices for show organizers of Indian exhibition industry. Therefore, these subjective observations need to be dealt properly to ensure the success of the show. These major observations as per the researcher are mentioned, as below:

Investment in Technology

Indian exhibition organizer should invest in technology to provide ease, connections, comfort, standard of living, replacing people with technology and gaining competitive edge, linkage, easy transfer of data, saving logistics as well as opportunity cost.

Apps Based Deals

Indian exhibition organizers should develop customized apps for information and monetary transactions to sell their services. With the help of these apps the exhibition organizers are just available at the click of a button. Researcher has observed that now days everybody has started developing their apps from education to events, therefore these apps are really customer friendly and gives confidence to your segment to interact with ease.

CRM Software

As per the researcher, all the professional players have started using CRM software to deal with data and generate category wise reports for easy understanding and taking decisions. Therefore, researcher has also observed the same and discussed the utilization of CRM software for registration, data gathering, data analysis, segregation of data, and creation of promotional offers as per the category of the customers to make long term relationships.

Social Media Support

Social media has become a buzzword before the buying of any products and services to understand the feedback or reviews of non commercial sources for comparison, satisfaction check, word of mouth and future results. Researcher has also discussed that the exhibition organizers should be available on all the social media platforms for exhibitors opinions, feedback, reviews, ratings and satisfactions so that next time exhibition participation gets easy.

E Marketing

Electronic marketing is not new to us as we have already seen the utilization of telecom, internet, computers etc. in our day to day life. E marketing has made our life easy and reduced cost as well. Since Indian exhibition organizers are supposed to deal with national as well as international participation therefore instead of going physical the Indian exhibition organizers should E marketing practices such as utilization of mobile commerce, E commerce, Computers, internet, telecom, and network communications etc. to provide easy transactions and saving precious time of your segment.

Virtual Channel of Distribution

Physical channel of distribution is very costly due to heavy infrastructure cost, manpower cost, physical resources cost and other intangible concerns, therefore virtual channel of distribution has come up which means joining hands with E commerce services providers for transfer of marketing practices which includes products display, pricing, direct distribution and awareness or promotion of your products and services. Therefore organizers of the show are also request to be virtual in terms of channel of distribution for their tickets and other services which are on sale and require virtual transactions.

The above mentioned observed marketing practices needs to be implemented by show organizers to ensure better results and achieve

marketing objectives of the organizations while providing customer value and satisfaction for long term relationship.

Conclusion

Exhibitions have several marketing objectives to participate such as Product based, price based, place based and promotion based objectives. However the primary purpose is to encourage business interactions and generate profit. Since conducting exhibitions requires high budgets therefore it is of prime importance for the exhibition organizers to generate enough footfall or exhibition attendee so that exhibition seems to be a successful event in terms of return on investment else it's a flop show. Thus, understanding of marketing practices including product, price, place and promotion decisions is very important for the entire exhibition industry because it ultimately affects the participants of exhibition industry. Thus, the researcher has chosen marketing practices followed by Indian exhibition organizers and provided product, price, place and promotion strategies to ensure success for the exhibition organizers as well entire exhibition industry. Therefore the researcher has made an attempt to study apart from primary objective mentioned above along with several sub objectives such as: (1) To determine the product decisions in Indian exhibition industry (2) To determine the price decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry (3) To determine the place decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry (4) To determine the promotion decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry.

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