Chapter 4

Comparative Analysis of Marketing Communication Tools Adopted by Telecommunication Service Firms: Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular with Special Reference to Eastern Rajasthan, India

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ABSTRACT

The increase in number of players in cellular telephony has raised the expectation level of customers compelling firms to devise strategies to gain competitive edge. Thus, the main objective of this research is to comparatively study employees and customer’s awareness regarding marketing communication tools adopted by Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular in eastern Rajasthan. In the present study communication tools pertaining to advertising, sales-promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, events and public relations have been considered and analyzed. The present research will also attempt to explore the sources of information referred to by customers while opting for telecommunication services. The study will involve a sample of 250 existent customers and 25 employees for Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular respectively and the methodology employed will be structured questionnaire for customers and employees separately with reference to eastern Rajasthan. By identifying the strategic issues that affect customer decisions the present research will contribute to the understanding of the influence of communication tools on customers. It would also enable marketing managers to identify impact of these dimensions and to concentrate firm’s efforts on those factors which enhance customer awareness. It is an exploratory study.

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INTRODUCTION

Telecommunication sector in India has contributed significantly to the country’s economy with signs of profitability. The key players in telecommunication are Bharti Airtel, Reliance Communication, Vodafone, Idea, BSNL and Tata Communications.

Opportunities in the sector have brought in its own set of challenges as the industry currently is fiercely competitive and aggressively contested by fifteen big and small telecom service providers. With the entry of new players, competition in the industry has heightened and share of established players has skid.

The intensified competition in the telecommunication sector has lead consumers to enjoy sumptuousness of choice and higher bargaining power. Telecom companies in current times are becoming customer centric and are striving hard for distinction in the way they deliver services to the customers. Marketing communication tools provide an integrated approach in achieving efficiency by synergy. Judiciously planned marketing communication strategy brings in desired results. The present research focuses on comparative analysis of marketing communication tools adopted by telecommunication service firms- Bharti Airtel and Idea Cellular with specific reference to eastern Rajasthan.

BACKGROUND

Integrated Marketing Communication involves planning and execution of major marketing communication tools required for a product, brand, idea, organization or place in order to accomplish a common set of objectives and facilitate the positioning of promotion. Fitzpatrick (2005) highlighted that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) involves the merging of distinct communication functions in a way that permits an organization to speak with “one voice, one look”. McGrath (2005) opined that in case companies disregard IMC and various messages are not delivered in unison, it may result in an incoherent brand image, which can adversely influence consumer behavior. Holm (2006) expresses that the primary goal of IMC is to influence the perception of value and behavior through communication. Shimp (2007) felt that the main objective is to ensure all components communicate collectively in one (or a single) voice to strengthen and reinforce the main organizational or brand message. Smith (2006) highlighted that enhanced and better utilization of marketing communication tools within an IMC approach can yield better overall outcome and may subsequently deliver a more holistic picture. Panda (2009) asserted that the concept of IMC has evolved over four fundamental stages, beginning from tactical coordination of communication elements, redefinition of the scope of marketing communication and application of information and communication technology to the financial and strategic integration. According to Fill (2009), IMC represents both a strategic and tactic approach to the planning and execution of an organization’s communications strategy which also expects organizations to manage their diverse strategies, resources and messages in order to enable worthy and meaningful engagement with target customers. Picton (2005) corroborated that IMC involves integrating together all marketing communication activities across relevant target audience points to achieve effective brand coherence. According to Schultz (1998) IMC is a process through which companies accelerate returns by aligning communication objectives with corporate goals.

From the studies it is apparent that for applying IMC concept, various tools are used. Table 1 depicts their key specifications and applications:
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