

Digital Marketing initiatives of Amul during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The case is about the success of the Indian dairy cooperative society Amul during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Amul, a dairy brand managed by a cooperative body, the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited was jointly owned by 3.6 million dairy farmers in the western Indian state of Gujarat. The declaration of a nationwide lockdown in March 2020 in India due to the outbreak of Covid-19 influenced several businesses to struggle for their survival. In a contrast, the Managing Director of Amul, R S Sodhi, found an opportunity in the crisis. He exploited the pandemic period to gear up Amul's marketing and supply chain activities ensuring to reach people who stayed indoors. People were also cautious about their food thereby demanding trustworthy packaged food rather than non-packaged products. The pandemic forced many food producers to shut their factories but Amul sought an opportunity and ensured a steady and uninterrupted supply of milk and milk products across the country during the lockdown together ensuring the right marketing strategies to fall in place. In comparison to pre-COVID-19 times, the lockdown period viewed a 5-7% increase in demand for Amul's liquid packaged milk as consumers trusted the Amul brand over other loose milk. During the lockdown while most businesses decided to cut their media expenses, Amul ensured to grab the market opportunity by doubling its marketing spend on advertising and branding. It reinvented its marketing strategy, focusing on both the traditional and digital advertising space. Amul ensured to stay at the top of the market introducing a variety of immunity boosting products such as turmeric, tulsi and ginger milk and marketing those products effectively. The brand reputation, resilience, prompt action and adaptability of the dairy giant during the crisis has paved way for it to face the business challenges of any kind that may arise in future.

Issues

- The case attempts to address the following teaching objectives:
- Comprehend direct-to-consumer marketing and emphasize the role of e-commerce players in the market.
- Inspect how business continuity can be ensured during a pandemic.
- Understand the impact of pandemic on the supply chain of essential commodities.
- Examine the marketing strategies that consumer goods companies can follow in an adverse business environment.

Keywords

Brand image; Consumer preference; Panic buying; Consumer awareness, Increasing marketing spends; Media promotion; Direct-to-consumer marketing; Traditional and digital marketing strategies.

Introduction

Amul is one of the most popular and successful brands in India with a wide range of dairy products, Amul has now become a household name in the minds of Indian families. Amul has outperformed in the dairy market despite heavy competition and digitization. Amul's online marketing strategies and campaigns has helped the dairy giant to overcome the challenges put forth during the COVID 19 pandemic period.

Background

At once the lockdown was announced, Amul started to dominate the television media in advertising reaching the maximum target rating points since other dairy brands showed less interest in advertising their products. Amul believed advertisements on television would help it reach the maximum number of people as television was the most widely used as a source of entertainment all across the country. Amul adopted the approach of using a third-party online sales platform to increase online sales, bypassing physical retailers. The lockdown accelerated the milk cooperative's e-commerce sales by two, three, or even four times, depending upon the cities. Amul used third-party e-commerce players in India such as BigBasket, Dunzo, Flipkart, and Milkbasket to expand its online sales during the pandemic.

Amul's Digital Marketing Strategy

Amul's social media marketing strategies employ many social media strategies to keep up with the social landscape and interact with audiences in real-time.

Amul on Facebook & Instagram

In the present day, the shift from offline to online marketing was fairly an easy task for Amul. They were already creating content for banners and newspapers previously and now they just follow the same style for their creatives on Facebook & Instagram as well. Their most popular creatives on Facebook and Instagram revolve around the Amul Butter Girl the buzz-worthy happenings all around the world. Amul's digital marketing campaigns hit on Facebook as well as Instagram. **"Eat Milk with Every Meal"**. In 2013, Amul hired a digital marketing agency called Draftfcb Ulka to come up with a campaign for the digital space as well as print. The objective of this campaign was to educate Indian buyers about the goodness of milk and its byproducts. In older times milk was considered the world's favourite energy drink but in the present era of junk food, the importance of milk has been undermined. So, in this campaign, Amul focused on repositioning Milk and its entire range of dairy products to seem trendy and tempting to all. Moreover, Amul created graphics to enlighten its consumers about the various scenarios in which they could consume Amul products (along with the numerous benefits of those products). On 26th November 2019, Amul celebrated National Milk Day by launching a new campaign by using hashtags like, **#CelebratingDrKurien #BikeRally #VaranasitoAnand and # 26 November**. The objective of this campaign was to connect with the youth and inspire them to be purpose-driven and motivated in their lives. During the campaign, Amul organized a bike rally in which 50 bikers travelled from Varanasi to Anand (2500 Kms) to meet dairy farmers, dairy professionals and to learn about Dr Kurien and his works. Amul also launched a small 70 seconds film on Dr Kurien on Facebook, Instagram & YouTube. It also went Live on all the above-mentioned platforms to record the 12-day journey.

Amul on Twitter

On Twitter, Amul has a massive fan base of over 335K followers given that Twitter is a very different platform when compared to other social media platforms. On various occasions, Amul posts fun graphics featuring the Amul Butter Girl. Many people connect with those graphics and retweet them to show how they feel about the latest happenings in the world. Twitter is a great platform for a brand to engage with its customers. Taking advantage of this, Amul tries to conduct interactive activities like contests and giveaways. A lot of people also use Twitter to express their grievances for a service or a product. Amul makes sure that it replies to tweets of customers

complaining about its products. Unlike many brands that ignore or delete the negative posts of their customers, Amul takes the opinions of its customers very seriously and makes an effort to resolve their customers' problems on Twitter even in the presence of thousands of people.

Amul on Youtube

Amul is also present on Youtube and it enjoys about 4,03,000 subscribers on its official youtube channel called, Amul The Taste of India. However, On Youtube, it puts out advertisements that are previously aired on television. Although, during the Covid-19 pandemic when the country was in lockdown, Amul started a new campaign called Simple Home Made Recipes that was also promoted as “#SimpleHomeMadeRecipes”.

Amul's Digital Marketing Strategies during COVID-19

Despite lockdown and Amul also being an FMCG brand, sales have increased due to excess consumption of households during the lockdowns and its presence on E-commerce sites like Grofers, Big Basket, Paytm mall, etc. However, it has also doubled its spending on its marketing efforts. During the lockdown, everyone avoided stepping out of their homes and even if they did, nobody wanted to travel too far for their food supplies and put their safety at stake. So Amul went one step ahead and created an App to help its customers locate Amul products near them.

Amul Classics

Doordarshan started airing Ramayan and Mahabharat again after a span of a long time. So, Amul received a lot of requests from customers to start airing their old 90s retro ads again. That's when Amul took its customers on a nostalgic trip by airing its old com online as well as on TV. So, Amul is making a lot of effort to increase its visibility for the Indian public which is sitting home and consuming content on Social Media platforms.

Simple Homemade Recipes

During the start of the lockdown, Amul came up with a campaign called #SimpleHomeMadeRecipes. They invited chefs from all parts of India and all types of eateries like Bakeries, Hotels, Catering establishments, etc, and asked them to showcase their cooking skills to their Facebook audiences. In each episode of this cooking show, chefs shared a new recipe in which they used Amul products. Around 750 million people viewed these episodes, and Amul even shared pictures of dishes prepared by their audience. It has released more than 700 episodes

on its youtube channel and continues to upload it regularly. This move was successful and it received a lot of responses from the audience.

Conclusion

Today, Amul has about 15 million milk farmers supplying milk in 1,44,246 cooperatives across the nation. The learnings from Amul Case Study signify that the marketing efforts of Amul coping up with the evolving marketing era seems to be foundation of the astounding success enjoyed by Amul. This case study on Amul will emphasise the white revolution of Amul across several years encompassing the pandemic.

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