

Branded Entertainment: A New Avenue Shaping Brand Equity and Sales

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Abstract

Over the decades social media has gained a crucial place in marketing mix of brands. Owing to the visual appeal of fashion industry social media serves as a suitable advertising tool. The current study used case study research design to investigate the influence of branded entertainments marketing strategies on brands equity and sales. Gul Ahmed fashion clothing brand was selected as a single case for this article. Content based data was collected in the duration of eight months and then categorized. On the whole 432 Facebook, 732 Instagram and 90 Twitter posts were analyzed. The results of social media marketing were related with the Gul Ahmed's financial information regarding equity and sales. Our results have shown raised sales, brand equity and stability in financial assets as a result of employing correct business promotional strategies. A gradual increase in brand equity can be seen in 2016 onwards owing to the influence of latest marketing technologies. Similarly, brand regained strength in 2017 by showing an increase of 24% in sales. Regular updates and attractive appearance on social media has brought out full potential by gaining profitable results.

Keywords: social media, marketing, branded entertainment, equity, sales

Introduction

Social media has gained special importance in relevance of fashion marketing. Irrespective of business nature, brand communities on social media are of high importance as it improves brand equity leading to focused consumer choices and improved purchase intention of target group. Social networking is an active way of communication among brands and customers due to the widespread global usage of technology devices and social media. Fashion industry has realized the potential of social media marketing in improving brand equity and sales, which is evident in last ten years. Fashion brands have integrated marketing through social media channels in their marketing strategy for advertising and sales. The major use of social media sites by fashion brands surfaced in year 2009 (Caro & Albeniz, 2014). Social networking has transformed the process of marketing which involves making customers interested in buying and consuming their product. Marketing techniques encompasses business communication, sales techniques, revenue development strategies and integrated marketing (Kotler et. al, 2005). It has provided great prospects to marketing professionals to shape brand awareness and effectively manage brand attitude. Nearly 93% of the marketing professionals incorporate social media in their marketing strategy (Pick, 2013). It involves maintaining a presences on social media platforms, creating and sharing advertorials and content related to the brand and cultivating customer feedback on the brands posts throughout the campaign.

Branded Entertainment

Branded entertainments is significant in relation to today's latest marketing technology. The concept of branded entertainment has originated from product placement activities which introduces

the concept of hybrid messages which means integration of information related to a brand into entertainment programs. The earlier idea of product placement has matured in the form of entertainment marketing. Almost all definitions of this concept included the term integration in some form (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). The term branded entertainment was first used by Advertising Age Company (2007) as “a hybrid advertisement strategy”. However it was defined by Hudson and Hudson (2006) as “the integration of advertising into entertainment content, whereby brands are embedded into storylines of a film, television programs, or other entertainment mediums. This includes co-creation and collaboration between entertainment media and brands”. The practice of generating content for branded entertainment includes collaboration between advertisers and companies that produce entertainment programs for incorporation of branded commercial content in entertainment program (Williams et al., 2011). A smart way to connect with the target customers is the use of branded entertainment, it rise brand awareness which is a crucial marketing outcome (Grinta, 2016). “The content created as branded entertainment serves as a contact point that can achieve brand resonance through authentic narrative and impression of the product” (Loggerenberg, 2017). It has provided marketing professionals with an unconventional way of advertising (Thomas, 2009). Ownership of branded content lasts with the concerned brand as its property, in the case of branded entertainment (Musson, 2014).

Brand Equity

“Brand equity is a phrase used in the marketing industry which describes the value of having a well-known brand name, based on the idea that the owner of a well-known brand name can generate more revenue simply from brand recognition” (Aaker, 1991). The well reputed brands and companies can get higher price of their products in comparison to brands offering similar products with less known names, as customers consider that products of famous brands are better than products of less famous producers. Effective marketing helps a brands to sketch its status and brand image for customers. It also presents fashion lifestyles in the market which distinguish a fashion brand in the market (Tuominen, 2010). It is evidenced that brand equity and has substantial effect on perceived product quality and customer loyalty towards a brand. The perceived quality and brand equity is shaped through marketing activities that build brand awareness and image (Dalia, & Ilham, 2015).

Sales

“Sales are activities related to selling or the number of goods or services sold in a given time period. The seller or the provider of the goods or services completes a sale in response to an acquisition, appropriation, requisition or a direct interaction with the buyer at the point of sale” (Sale of Goods Act, 1979). In the act of sales ownership and property of items changes from one person to another on a settled price. The effectiveness of various marketing strategies are expected to result in the form of increased sales and profit. Profit is the superfluous of total returns above total cost of production. Sales and profit making is the key function of any organizational activity (Agabeja et al. 2015). Therefore main goal of the brand is maximization of sales by using various marketing specially advertising strategies.

Assets

“An asset is any resource owned by the business. Anything tangible or intangible that can be owned or controlled to produce value and that is held by a company to produce positive economic value is an asset. Simply stated, assets represent value of ownership that can be converted into cash” (O'Sullivan, 2003).

Gul Ahmed Brand Profile

Haji Ali Muhammad is the founder of Gul Ahmed established in 1953. Gul Ahmed Textile Mills Ltd (GTM) is pioneer textile units in the area of subcontinent around the start of 1900s. Their

name was listed on Karachi Stock Exchange in year 1972 (Gul Ahmed, 2018). “Gul Ahmed is a compound unit, manufacturing everything from cotton yarn to finished products. A capacity of more than 130,000 spindles, almost 300 state-of-the-art weaving machines and most modern yarn dyeing, processing & stitching units.” (Gul Ahmed, 2018).

Financial growth of Gul Ahmed was adversely affected in recent past due to little textile exports and continuously raising inflation. “The company attributed the fall in cotton prices and strong rupee as reasons for its profitability taking a big hit in FY15. However, things have been relatively better for the company since then and revenues jumped by 24 percent in FY17 on a year-on-year basis on the back of decent uptick in export sales which increased by 28 percent” (Zuberi, 2018). A recent increase in local and export business has helped the brand in increasing revenues by 14 percent in 2018. This rise in sales has assisted the firm to use its improved production capacity which came about as a result of the company's harmonizing, modernization and technology improvement process. The current trendy integrated media marketing strategies have also played a very significant role (Zuberi, 2018). They deal in unstitched fabric, ready to wear garments, and accessories, for both men and women. There are almost seventy seven stores of Gul Ahmed in Pakistan, and few in UAE and UK as well.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Paly theory presented by Stephenson according to which “mass communication can be understood as a form of play because it provides enjoyment and pleasure” (Stephenson, 1967). Zhang further explored this theory and highlighted the factors related to customer motivation for involvement in various play activities. He gave four play themes including frivolity, identity, fantasy and power play theme. In the case of this research social media branded entertainments are considered as play or entertainment. “Brands could possibly apply some play themes in branded entertainment to motivate users for participation. It display play themes that are compatible to the users’ profiles, such as demographics and psychographics” (Zhang, 2010). Various branded entertainment categories of social media marketing includes “interactive games, contests, sweepstakes, and word play, audios, events, videos, downloads and videos” (Zhang, 2010).

Significance

This research will be highly beneficial for local fashion brands as it highlights the factors responsible for increase in sales, brand equity and assets. It will also shed light on the marketing activities that positively influence brands sales. The study will contribute in marketing literature related to improving brand value by recognizing and manipulating key features of social media marketing for this purpose.

Problem Statement

We strived to study the branded entertainment marketing strategies of Gul Ahmed fashion clothing brand in the light of play theory for customer motivation. The incorporation of play themes in various branded entertainments among Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts were studied. The impact of modern integrated social media marketing on brand equity, sales and assets was also analyzed.

Research Objectives

- To identify the influence of branded entertainment marketing on brand equity
- To identify the influence of branded entertainment marketing on brand sales

Methodology

Case study research technique was used for this article. Robson (2002) defines case study as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. Gul Ahmed fashion clothing brand was selected as case study in this article. For this purpose we analyzed branded entertainments in social media posts of Gul Ahmed fashion clothing brand from February to September 2018, by collecting content based data from their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts. On the whole 1254 Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts were analyzed. Our coding scheme, included 7 categories of branded-entertainment i.e. “online interactive, sweepstakes, video, contests, events, downloads, and games, while four play themes i.e. power, identity, fantasy, and frivolity” based on research of Zhang’s (2010). The coding categories of photos, advertisements, discounts and catalogues were also included as a type of branded entertainment. Results of social media branded entertainment were related with Gul Ahmed’s financial information regarding equity, assets and sales. Financial information of Gul Ahmed was retrieved from brands official website.

Results

Brand Equity



Figure 1. Equity Growth (Gul Ahmed, 2018)

Figure 1 depicts continuously increasing trend in equity growth. As mentioned in above graph in 2013 equity valued at Rs5428 and in 2014 it is increased to Rs6660. There is an increase of (6660-5428) Rs1232 that reflects increase in % change of 22.6%. In 2014 equity valued at Rs6660 and in 2015 it increased to Rs7169 showing an increase of (7169-6660) Rs509 reflecting an upward movement in % change of 7.64%. As in 2015 brand equity amounted to Rs7169 and in 2016 it increased to Rs8717 reflecting an increase of (8717-7169) Rs1548 showing an increase % change of 21.59%. As in year 2016 brand equity valued at Rs8717 and in 2017 it increased to Rs10914, reflecting an increase of Rs2197; showing a substantial increase in % change of 25%. In 2017 equity amounted to Rs10914 and in 2018 it increased to Rs12621 showing an upward movement of Rs1707 reflecting an increase in % change of 16%.

Brand Sales

Figure 2 depicts upward and downward both movements in sales growth. As mentioned in above graph in 2013 sales valued at Rs10000 and in 2014 it is increased to approximately Rs34000. There is an increase of (32000-10000) Rs22000 that reflects increase in % change of 220%. In 2014 sales valued at Rs32000 and in 2015 it slightly increased to Rs33354.78447 showing an increase of

(33354.78447-32000) Rs1354.78447 reflecting an upward movement in % change of 4.234%. As in 2015 sales amounted to Rs33354.78447 and in 2016 it decreased to Rs32274.556 reflecting a decrease of (33354.78447-32274.556) Rs1080.22 showing a decrease in % change of 3.24%. As in 2016 sales valued at Rs32274.556 and in 2017 it increased to Rs40000 reflecting an increase of (40000-32274.556) Rs7725.444 showing a substantial increase in % change of 23.94%. In 2017 sales amounted to Rs40000 and in 2018 it increased to Rs46000 showing an increase of (46000-40000) Rs6000 showing an increase in % change of 15%.

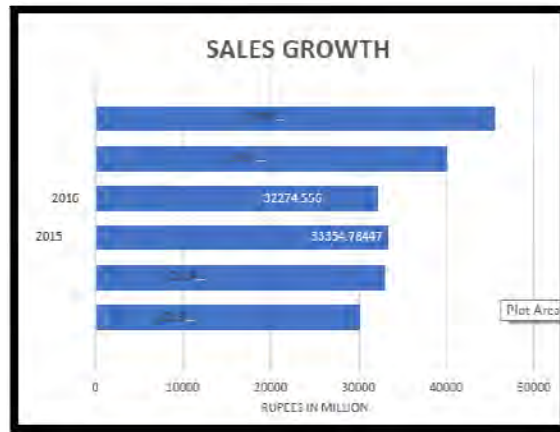


Figure 2. Sales Growth (Gul Ahmed, 2018)

Brand Assets



Figure 3. Fixed Assets Growth (Gul Ahmed, 2018)

Figure 3 depicts continuously upward movement in Fixed Assets Growth. As mention in above graph in 2013 Fixed Assets valued at Rs7132 and in 2014 it is increased to approximately Rs8210. There is an increase of (8210-7132) Rs1078 that reflects increase in % change of 15%. In 2014 Fixed Assets valued at Rs8210 and in 2015 it slightly increased to Rs9039 showing an increase of (9039-8210) Rs829 reflecting an upward movement in % change of 10%. As in 2015 Fixed Assets amounted to Rs9039 and in 2016 it increased to Rs12050 reflecting an increase of (12050-9039) Rs3011 showing a substantial increase in % change of 33.3%. As in 2016 Fixed Assets valued at Rs12050 and in 2017 it increased to Rs15969 reflecting an increase of (15969-12050) Rs3919 showing again a substantial increase in % change of 32.5%. In 2017 Fixed Assets amounted to Rs15969 and in 2018 it increased to Rs16104 showing an increase of (16104-15969) Rs135 showing an increase in % change of approximately 1%.

Openly accessible at <http://www.european-science.com>

Facebook

The official Facebook page of Gul Ahmed had 947,291 likes and 948,983 fan-following. In the duration of February to September 2018 almost 432 posts were updated. They updated 54 posts per month.

Table 1. Types of branded entertainment used in Gul Ahmed's Instagram posts h.

#	Branded entertainment	Instagram		Facebook		Twitter	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
1	Online interactive	732	100%	432	100%	90	100%
2	Downloads	0	0%	432	100%	0	0%
2	Advertisements	714	97.5%	432	100%	90	100%
3	Photos	716	97.8%	419	97%	0	0.0%
4	Catalog	4	0.5%	23	5.3%	0	0%
5	Video	15	2.0%	15	3.5%	0	0%
6	Discounts	138	18.9%	345	79.9%	20	22.2%
7	Events	15	2.0%	31	7.2%	43	47.8%
8	Games	6	0.8%	6	1.4%	29	32.2%
9	Contests	6	0.8%	6	1.4%	0	0.0%
10	Sweepstakes	10	1.4%	6	1.4%	29	32.2%
11	Play as Frivolity	548	74.9%	387	89.6%	72	80%
12	Play as Identity	159	21.7%	117	27.1%	45	50%
13	Play as Fantasy	29	4.0%	22	5.1%	0	0%
14	Play as Power	15	2.1%	12	2.8%	3	3.3%

Gul Ahmed uploaded 432 posts on Facebook, 732 posts on Instagram and 90 posts on Twitter during the duration of February to September 2018. Almost 1254 social media posts were analyzed for content analysis. An average of 54 posts were uploaded on Facebook per month. While on Instagram an average of 92 posts per month were uploaded by the brand. Twitter page had an average of 11 posts per month.

The analysis of Gul Ahmed's social media posts from February 1st to September 30th revealed following trends in the use of branded entertainment. Almost all Facebook (432) Instagram (732) and Twitter (90) posts provided online interactive options such as like, comment and share for members of the community. Facebook allowed the community members to download brand related content in the posts (432 times, 100%). The basic purpose of posting content on Facebook is to advertise content, with main focus on images of the articles to boost sales. Hundred percent of the Facebook and Twitter posts were uploaded from the purpose of brand advertisement (432 and 90 posts). While almost 97.5% of the Instagram posts were advertisement in nature (714 post). Photo is the most used powerful visual element, and was witnessed to be used 419 times by Gul Ahmed commonly on Facebook in the research duration (97%) and 716 times on Instagram (97.8%). Gul Ahmed brand uploaded photo catalogs randomly on Facebook (23 times, 5.3%) especially after new collection launches. While its use on Instagram is comparatively less as compared to Facebook i.e. 4 times (0.5%) in this duration. Video were used as teasers and attention gaining element for community members on Facebook 15 times (3.5%). While its use on Instagram was also 15 times (2.0%). Discount and sales strategy was used very often in the posts as a major motivational factor, almost 345 times on Facebook (79.9%), 138 times on Instagram (18.9%) and 20 times on Twitter (22.2%). National, International and religious events present an exciting opportunity for brands to involve

customers and also contribute to the society at community level. It also help brand to build their concept of brand identity. Almost 31(7.2%) Facebook, 43 (47.8%) Instagram posts and 15 Twitter Posts (2.0%) announced about events category. Games, contests and sweepstakes were used few times by the brands. This category presents the opportunity to increase goodwill among the customers. Gul Ahmed brand posted 6 times (1.4%) on Facebook. On Instagram page they posted 6 times about games and contests (0.8%) and 10 times about sweepstakes (1.4%). Twitter page has 29 posts about games and sweepstakes (32.2%).

Frivolity play theme was most commonly used 387 times, (89.6%) on Facebook, 548 times (74.9%) on Instagram and 72 times (80%) on Twitter. Identity play theme was second most commonly used type of theme i.e. 117 times on Facebook (27.1%), 154 times (21.7%) on Instagram, and 45 times (50%) on Twitter. Fantasy play theme was very frequently used in advertising campaigns and videos. Gul Ahmed fashion brand posted 22 times (5.1%) on Facebook, 29 times (4.0%) on Instagram about Fantasy theme. Power play theme is least used by Gul Ahmed i.e. 12 times (2.8%) on Facebook, 15 times (2.1%) on Instagram and 3 times (3.3%) on Twitter.

Discussion

Main purpose of marketing through social media is to involve and connect with clients by application of various categories of branded entertainments (Lehu, 2007). “The concept of branded entertainment involves a mixture of entertainment and brand information that is part of a marketing strategy designed to reach consumer” (Hudson and Hudson, 2006). Social Media is a tremendous promotional tool greatly utilized by online businesses to attract target market attention. And the traffic could be steered to online brand stores by cross posting website links. Branded entertainment has proven to be more successful in building effective association between brand and customers in comparison with traditional forms of marketing (Zhang, 2010). As marketing strategies have a significant effect on business turnover. Many fashion brands have modernized their production facilities most importantly marketing department to compete in ever evolving global village.

Gul Ahmed is a known name among Pakistani textile producers. They are well known for exclusive designer lawn collection due to strong fabric production capacity. Gul Ahmed fashion brand has also improved modernization through latest machinery and use of mass communication channels along with traditional forms of media. Financial performance of the company improved in 2017 to 24%, while the exports increased to 28%. The revenue increased to 14% due to the improvement in local and export sales. For the improvement and raise in companies revenue Gul Ahmed strived for modernization and replacement of marketing, communication technology, and management. They are maintaining accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter making its potential customers active participant. Content about brands products, discount offers, events and launch of new fashion collections is posted on social media. The effort has paved way for Gul Ahmed to keep consistent reputation among its market competitors. In this manner brand further enhanced its outlook by increasing customer exposure on social media gaining brand awareness. As Lee (2014) highlights that capital knowledge of brands can be elevated by higher number of likes, shares and electronic word of mouth. Gul Ahmed enhanced exposure to its brand message by repeatedly posting branded content on social sites.

Role of Branded Entertainment Marketing in Shaping Business

Effective marketing and brand communication strategies of Gul Ahmed fashion brand have brought them out of down fall in sales of 2015 and gave it a steady market growth. To achieve this objective they used social media as a marketing and promotion tool and worked on repositioning their brand and building strong identity. Their desire to have strong foothold of a long-term sustainable development enabled them to position products in a competitive manner. Power marketing ac-

tivities were fruitful in improving brand image serving market differentiation and brand positioning purpose. To position the brand clearly in target markets mind Gul Ahmed incorporated power theme 12 times on Facebook, 15 times on Instagram and 3 times on Twitter in its posts. As most efficient positioning is done at the level of customer believes and values. The brand posted content on social media about taking part in international exhibitions, fashion shows, award shows, opening of new brand outlet and expanding business. They also uploaded posts about printed advertisements and Gul Ahmed's fashion collection being featured on cover page of numerous fashion magazines. They uploaded posts about celebration on large brand community, which indicates high fame among its customers. Power theme based activities can build reputation, that a brand has higher end profile with strong international cliental, which can boost brand image. As positioning is starting point of building a profitable business models Gul Ahmed worked on both aspects of market positioning and product placement.

Their effective use of branded entertainments such as attractive photo-shoots with suitable captions was used as a tool to shape consumer perception about the brand and its product. Fun and interesting way of regularly posting fashion updates on social media page was appealing for viewers. Frivolity branded entertainments activities were used by brand, that are simple and entertaining such as photos, opinion pools, simple games that require fans to answer easy questions (Sutton-Smith, 1997). These activities were used by Gul Ahmed fashion brand to create an enjoyable environment for community members. They used frivolity theme 387 times on Facebook and 548 times on Instagram. Their posts contained photos, online albums/catalogues with brief status often containing catchy liners, downloadable by brand community members. Status liners often include pre-announcements such as coming soon teasers and fashion collection re-stocking alerts. They seldom organized online contests and giveaway games as another way of involving customers.

Gul Ahmed clearly achieved its goal to occupy a clear, unique, and advantageous position for consumer, by offering special discount offers and return options for online customers. They attained special place relative to competing brands in minds of its customers in many aspects. It captured many target market groups by offering four to five fashion collections each season in diverse styles. Similarly, products at various price range were also available on their brand stores and online store. Sales and discounts strategy was used all around the year to attract varied customer groups in order to improve brand recognition for effective positioning and brand sales. For this reason brand offered large number of sales in 2017 onwards and posted related content on social media, especially on special national, international and religious occasions. Strategy include discounts, online sales, online shopping special exchange offers, free shipping on international orders, gift vouchers and lucky draws. Customer attention can be gained in several ways, "it can be as simple as a good catchphrase or a discount, but it has to be interesting enough for the customer to proceed to genuine interest of what is on offer" (Dickson, 2017). Number of customers entering the brands store increased due to price adjustment strategy, which also enhanced brand visibility ultimately leading to higher sales and profit. Sale and discount offers are used as involvement strategy. They also offered attractive options for improving online business and international sales by giving free shipping on international orders. In this manner they created an image of a versatile brand that cares for its customers (Fan, 2014). Use of branded entertainments on fashion brand's social media accounts was used to achieve the goal. Various branded entertainments were embedded in brand message about regular updates of new products.

Impact of Branded Entertainment Marketing on Brand Equity

A gradual increase in brand equity can be seen 2016 onwards, as brand equity is directly influenced by identity and repositioning. The reputation of Gul Ahmed fashion brand was enhanced

due to effective display of information through latest media channels along with traditional print and television media. Gul Ahmed has sustained reputation in terms of brand equity growth. Whereas keen analysis highlights that percentage of increase in equity which was 23% in 2013, which decreased to 8% in 2014. This fall in the company's steady equity growth improved in following years. Healthy increase in brand equity shows positive reputation owing to positioning and customer perception about the brand. Lee (2014) suggests that "in a social media environment, exposure is the main ingredient that paves way forward to customer engagement, fan loyalty and influence that helps to enhance brand equity". It is evident that there is a significant relationship between social media marketing and brand equity. A previous empirical research shows that effective exposure, customer engagement and fan loyalty due to social media marketing have strong positive effect on brand equity of a company (Kavisekera & Abeysekera, 2016). Brand equity is directly related to value of a brand's product in relation to its price in market due to brand name. When customers associate a high level of quality or status with a brand, they recognize that brand's articles are worth more than products offered by competitors, so they are ready to pay more. Market bears higher price for brands that have high levels of brand equity. Positive brand equity rises profit margin per product because it allows a brand to charge more for a product as compared to competitors. Status of a brand can be built by effective marketing on various channels to shape brand image and presenting a distinctive fashion lifestyle for customers. This distinctive fashion lifestyle distinguishes a brand among its competitors in the market.

Almost all social media posts gave online interactive option for brand community members in form of like, comment and share options enabling customer feedback. In their social media marketing Gul Ahmed focused on achieving better sales.

Our analysis showed that Gul Ahmed used identity marketing activities more than power marketing activities. Identity theme based marketing activities revolve around building high reputation for its consumers and managing brand at macro level. Developing a brand image is a long process, as brand is a valuable asset that needs to be carefully managed. A brand does not only consist of a name and a symbol, the company's relationship with its consumers is an essential element. To cover the losses in business sales experienced in 2015 Gul Ahmed fashion brand targeted to build their reputation. Gul Ahmed used this theme 117 times on Facebook, 159 times on Instagram, and 45 times on Twitter. It helps in developing brand loyalty and equity among customers. Due this reason most social media posts and marketing activities included identity theme based marketing such as brand ambassadors, event marketing covering national events, international events and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities etc. Identity theme was predominantly seen in brand events. Events were also organised on launching of a new brand store or a special fashion collection by the fashion brands. These events were reported in the form of social media posts for public awareness increasing brand contact points. As corporate social responsibility (CSR) has achieved a significant place globally in corporate business, Gul Ahmed has also indulged in social awareness activities such as pink ribbon breast cancer prevention awareness campaign. They also conducted awareness campaign for vote casting in National Election of 2018 in Pakistan. Photo shoots were constantly posted on Gul Ahmed's social media for all marketing campaigns. Celebrity endorsement is a beneficial promotional tool for all types of media. Previous researches have shown that celebrity endorsement influences advertising effectiveness, brand recognition, brand recall, purchase intentions and even purchase behavior (Lehu, 2007). Our findings show that celebrity endorsement has led to improved image for both celebrity and fashion brand. Additionally, overall image, competitive advantage and brand equity are attained due to credibility demonstrated by brand endorsements (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Gul Ahmed fashion repeatedly used celebrity endorsements in a number of ways and spent higher financial budget as they employed top class brand ambassadors. They en-

gaged famous fashion models, actresses, and television host for their advertising photo-shoots. In a campaign named 'spotted' they posted celebrity photos, who were found wearing Gul Ahmed's outfits. The brand attained higher brand image in recent years corresponding to higher credibility of these models. They also endorsed a number of well-known fashion bloggers, and posted their photos while modelling in branded outfits on social media. Brand also promoted their own brand community by uploading photos of Gul Ahmed production team. This depicts the strength of their brand community. Frequency of posting promotional content on social media was much higher than most of competitors.

Impact of Branded Entertainments on Brand Sales

We have seen that their sales also increased with steady rise in brand equity. Gul Ahmed's financial performance declined in 2013 to 2015 due to various reasons. The company's sales increased only 4.23% in 2014 and 3.24% in 2015. Small increase in sales was a negative point in terms of growth. But fall in company's sales of about 3.4% in 2016 was alarming for their reputation. Gul Ahmed regained strength in 2017 by showing an increase of 24% in sales, followed by an increase of 15% in 2018. Brand equity has a direct effect on sales volume because consumers gravitate toward products with great reputation. Because a certain percentage of a company's costs to sell products are fixed, higher sales volumes translate to greater profit margins. Gul Ahmed fashion worked on profit increasing strategies by building reputation among market competitors. Fantasy theme in marketing and advertising campaigns play a significant role in aesthetically inspiring customers. They used fantasy theme predominantly in advertising campaigns, such as small videos, theme based photo-shoots, and editing visual background. They used fantasy theme on Facebook 22 times, Instagram 29 times and Twitter 3 times. "To persuade consumers it is important to get an emotional relationship between consumer and product with the help of advertisement" (Klie, 2013). In this manner consumers feel emotional attachment with advertised product and as a result it tends to be purchased more frequently giving profitable results. Moreover use of well reputed brand endorsement and efficient brand collaborations has built their identity as a high end consumer brand, enabling them to charge higher profits as a result. Trend in sale growth indicate that increase in sales is directly proportional to increase in equity and assets.

Among social media platforms Facebook is identified as a most beneficial site, although brands that are using multiple platforms are able to achieve higher sales. Another factor that contributed in better sales includes effectively responding to consumer's questions posted in comment section. It is important for marketing professionals to use multiple social sites and consider consumers feedback on online forums. Another important aspect includes managing social media outlook through functional staff team. Brands are gaining higher online sales in case owner pay special attention to social media efforts. This finding identify that customers prefer to deal with responsible staff on behalf of brand (Thach et al., 2016).

Gul Ahmed has worked on setting a trend of online sales by offering exclusive discount deals on buying from their website. They also supported their online customers by permitting exchange of online bought fashion articles in Gul Ahmed stores. This strategy helped in improving overall brand sales. Regular updates and attractive appearance on social media has brought out full potential by gaining profitable results. Moreover company information about brand's assets also show similar trend. In terms of assets Gul Ahmed has shown steady growth showing increase in fixed assets from 15% in 2014 and 10% in 2015 increased to 33.3% in 2016 and 32.5% in 2017. Such high rise in asset values show stability of company assets. It is visible that a high rise in assets was experienced in 2016 onwards. Brand itself declared in an interview that their revenues increased

due to incorporating latest technology in terms of marketing communication as well as production capacity.

Social Media Marketing Enhancing Brand Equity & Brand Sales

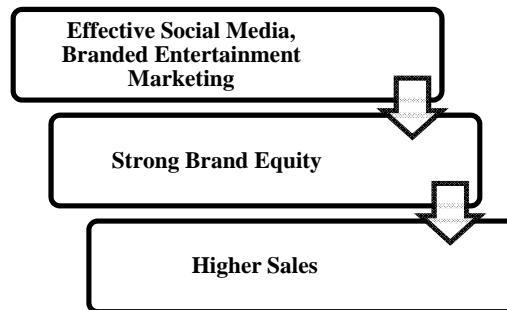


Figure 4. Effective Marketing through Branded Entertainments to Achieve Strong Brand Equity and Higher Sales

Conclusion

Social media has turned into a global avenue for marketers to showcase their products and services in a virtual environment in which impression building is dynamic. Key goal of these activities remains brand recognition and awareness. Brand name is pertinent to customer exposure which is the main purpose of social media technology. According to our research branded entertainments surely serve their purpose by contributing many promotional, advertising, marketing, communication, aesthetic appeal and several other functions for brand. In the case of fashion industry social media is a magical partner being highly visual, providing virtual space for showcasing fashion product with equally aesthetic backgrounds. Over a last decade this industry has seen boom due to media technology since 2009 due to its commercial use by clothing brand in Pakistan. Cost of branding and publicity has shrunken and effectiveness increased tenfold. As reported by Raudeliunien et.al. (2018) “sales, content quality, traffic on brand’s website, brand image and community growth are essential assessment factors for evaluating the effectiveness of advertising campaigns on social media”. Fashion brands have achieved both increased brand equity and brand sales due to utilizing effective branded entertainments on social media platforms.

Future Recommendations

Today large number of companies are using digital business solutions in this new age of marketing. New aspects of this digital business need to be studied by students of this field. It is crucial for companies to identify ways of competing in digital marketing field while refining their on-line campaigns adding prestigious value to brand.

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