

Creative Marketing for small businesses

Assistant Professor- Mrs.Vandana Sharma

Abstract: *The essence of marketing is to understand your customers' needs and develop a plan that surrounds those needs. Marketing is more than advertising and selling your products. Marketing addresses all aspects of growing your customer base, and the more you know, the more successful your marketing and your business will be. A business will succeed because of some creative ideas of marketing than competitors. The first test of any business, small or large, is its uniqueness when compared to its competitors. The most effective way to market a small business is to create a well rounded program that combines sales activities with your marketing tactics. This paper will help readers to understand different tactics of social media adopted by small businesses nowadays.*

Key Words: *Marketing, Customer, Competition, Uniqueness.*

I. Introduction

The history of marketing thought deals with the evolution of theories in the field of marketing, from the ancient world. Marketing historians agree that the discipline branched out of at the turn of the twentieth century, though some argue that scholars in the ancient and medieval ages had already studied marketing ideas. In pre-modern economies, the predominance of small enterprises militated against the recognition of marketing as a separate field of expertise. Changes in the patterns and intensity of economic activity, as well as the rise of economics as a science, particularly in the 19th century, paved the way for studies of marketing. The growth in size and scope of national and international economies in the course of the Industrial revolution led eventually to a transcendence of ad hoc retailing and advertising innovations and eventually to systematization. Marketing emerged as a separate technical field only in the late 19th century. The OED traces the abstract usage of the word only as far back as 1884. Much of traditional marketing practice prior to the twentieth century remained hidebound by rules-of-thumb and lack of information. Information technology, especially since the mid-twentieth century, has given the marketer new channels of communication as well as enhanced means of aggregating and analyzing marketing data. Specializations have emerged (especially sales versus marketing and advertising versus retailing) and re-combined (business development) over the years. Societal marketing emerged in the 1960s. The societal marketing concept deals with the needs, wants and demands of customers: how to satisfy them by producing superior value that should satisfy the customers and promote the well-being of society. The producer should not produce products deemed hazardous to society. Starting in the 1990s, a new stage of marketing emerged called relationship marketing. The focus of relationship marketing is on a long-term relationship that benefits both the company and the customer. The relationship is based on trust and commitment, and both companies tend to shift their operating activities to be able to work more efficiently together. One of the most prominent reasons for relationship marketing comes from Kotler's idea that it costs about five times more to obtain a new customer than to maintain the relationship with an existing customer. Guerrilla marketing is an advertising strategy in which low-cost unconventional means (graffiti or street art, sticker bombing, flash mobs) are used, often in a localized fashion or large network of individual cells, to convey or promote a product or an idea. The term guerrilla marketing is easily traced to guerrilla warfare, which utilizes atypical tactics to achieve a goal in a competitive and unforgiving environment.

II. Literature Review

Creativity has been approached from several different theoretical perspectives, which can be viewed as different schools of creativity (see Getzel and Jackson 1962; Gowan 1972; Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin 1993; Treffinger 1995). According to Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin (1993), these schools fall into three categories: personality, cognitive and social psychological. This classification can be used as a starting off point for a more detailed survey. Creativity research tends to cluster around four perspectives: context, individual, process and product. Conceptualizing creativity as a process, context constitutes a field in which this process takes place and which empowers the individual to be creative. Creative individuals are defined as actors seeking to find their place in the relevant context to fulfill their goals by the dynamic interaction of resources in their deep structure, learned symbol systems and individual capabilities. Potentials in the context and individual are channeled by the creative process, a mental transformation, in which the individual redefines problems, finds novel solutions and tests them against reality. The artefact of this activity is a creative product, a communicable symbol, which is an

improvement of previous ones and which the social organization deems creative.

Creativity research on has traditionally been the domain of psychology (Busse and Mansfield 1980), but in recent years creativity has increasingly attracted the attention of other sciences as well, including organization theory (e.g., Drucker 1998). Interest in it has increased, because theories on creativity offer conceptual tools for explaining and understanding the genesis of novelty, which is an integral part of competitive business (de Konig and Muzyka 1996; Muzyka, de Koning and Churchill 1997). It also provides a basis for understanding the emergence of new business (Hills, Shrader and Lumpkin 1999). This section aims at using major theories of creativity to provide a conceptual framework for creativity and then anchoring entrepreneurial creativity in this framework. When Guerrilla Marketing was first published in 1983, Jay Levinson revolutionized marketing strategies for the small-business owner with his take-no-prisoners approach to finding clients. Based on hundreds of solid ideas that really work, Levinson's philosophy has given birth to a new way of learning about market share and how to gain it. Guerrilla Marketing is the entrepreneur's marketing bible.

III. Research Methodology

This is an explanatory type research paper which deals with observations and explanations of concept of creative marketing adopted by small business units to be particular. The study reveals many creative ideas which will definitely add some importance to the readers for further studies.

Data Collection: The data is collected from secondary sources and few primary sources like journals, reports, case studies, News papers, and observations.

Meaning: Small scale service/business enterprise – means investment is fixed assets up to Rs.25 Lakh (excluding plant and machinery) .The majority of small business owners have limited marketing budget. The most effective way to market a small business is to create a well rounded program that combines sales activities with our marketing tactics. Our sales activities will not only decrease our out-of-pocket marketing expense but it also adds the value of interacting with our prospective customers and clients. This interaction will provide us with research that is priceless. Small businesses typically have a limited marketing budget if any at all. It just means you have to think a little more creatively. Marketing is more than advertising and selling our products. Marketing addresses all aspects of growing our customer base, and the more we know them, the more successful our marketing and our business will be. Marketers finally have a complete, integrated solution for all their marketing efforts. Analytics, social, media optimization, targeting, web experience management — and now cross-channel campaign management with Adobe Campaign — Adobe Marketing Cloud does it all. Marketers are becoming strategic leaders within their organizations, and now they have the tools to find and maximize every opportunity. Adobe Marketing Cloud pulls all your data together — including email, point-of-sale, CRM, third-party data, and more. With a single source of truth, you'll have powerful new ways to monitor and adapt campaigns, accurately assign attribution, and make informed decisions based on powerful, predictive logic. Small businesses are normally privately owned corporations, partnerships, or sole proprietorships. What constitutes "small" in terms of government support and tax policy varies depending on the country and industry.

Characteristics of a SBU

- Small capital investment
- Generates employment, generally around 10 employees
- Located in rural and semi urban areas
- Generally a sole proprietorship business
- Funding from the entrepreneur's personal funds
- Exploitation of human resources (Women and child labor)
- Organizing and management skills are often neglected
- Financial discipline is weak
- Encourages entrepreneurial growth
- Balanced regional development is ensured

Importance of starting SBU's.

- Labor intensive
- Ensure an equal distribution of income and wealth
- Act as a link to large scale
- Act as a training ground for entrepreneurs
- Mobilize resources and services
- Give rise to capital formation
- Has a huge export potential
- Are extremely innovative and productive

Advantages of running a SSI

- Most do not need high level of technology and are labour intensive and hence do not need huge start up or working capital
- SSI projects can be undertaken in a short time frame
- Use of abundant local natural resources is possible.

Highly effective marketing is a make-or-break necessity for most of the small businesses. It's really impossible for us to be successful without good marketing and sales techniques—that's what brings the profits in the door. Marketing is more than simply letting people know about our products or services. First, we need to know who our customers are. We need to understand them so well, that we can anticipate their needs and desires. We need to be able to communicate to them exactly why they need what our business can provide. And, then we have to reach them with that message.

Our discussion here is intended to introduce all to some of the concepts and strategies that professional marketing experts in large companies use and show you how they can be adapted to help our small business thrive, beginning with an overview of marketing and continuing through the following:

- **How to analyze the market environment:** We must not only know our product, we must be aware of the competitive environment and cultural trends to assess our business's place in the market.
- **Understanding market research:** Market research is not just for large companies. There are many research techniques that we can adapt to fit our needs and budget.
- **Product development must be an ongoing, intentional process:** Our business must develop and refine products or services that meet customers' needs, even before the first sale.
- **Packaging and pricing our product:** How we present and package our business offerings is crucial to our company's success.
- **Choosing effective distribution methods:** In a tough economy, effectively getting our product or service to our customers can mean the difference between success and failure.
- **Advertising to build our customer base:** We need to focus on promoting and advertising our product profile in order to reach our target market. And, small businesses need to be creative in the use of public relations to reach potential customers.
- **Building a successful marketing plan to drive long-term success:** To succeed, you need to know where you are going. A marketing plan pulls all the elements of building shows you how to put it all together into a cohesive planning document that will become your blueprint to marketing success.

Designing a Marketing Plan for Small Businesses

- **Market Research** – To produce a marketing plan for Small businesses, research needs to be done on similar businesses which should include desk and field research. This gives an insight in the target group's behavior and shopping patterns. Analysing the competitor's marketing strategies makes it easier for Small business to gain market share.
- **Marketing mix** – Marketing mix is a crucial factor for any business to be successful. Especially for a Small business, competitor's marketing mix can be very helpful. An appropriate market mix helps boost sales.
- **Product Life Cycle** – After launch of the business, crucial points of focus should be increasing growth phase and delaying maturity phase. Once the business reaches maturity stage, an extension strategy should be in place. Re-launching is also an option at this stage. Pricing strategy should be flexible and based on the different stages of the PLC.
- **Promotion Techniques** – It's preferable to keep promotion expenses as low as possible. 'Word of mouth', 'Email marketing', 'Print-ads' in local newspapers etc. can be effective.
- **Channels of Distribution** – Selecting an effective channel of distribution may reduce the promotional expenses as well as overall expenses for a Small business.

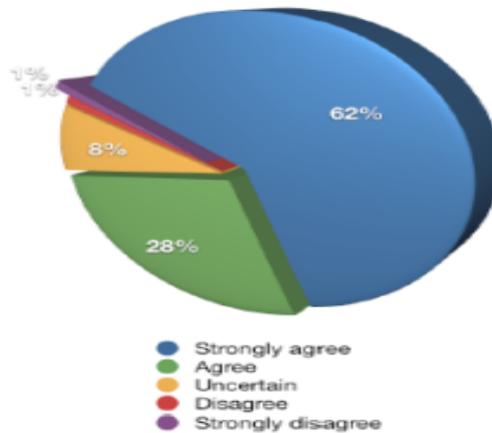
There are five questions that should be answered for every business:

- What's unique about your business idea?
- Who are your target customers? Who buys your product or service now, and who do you really want to sell to?
- Who are your competitors? As a small business, can you effectively compete in your chosen market?
- What positioning message do you want to communicate to your target buyers? How can you position your business or product to let people know they are special, in ways that are important to these buyers?
- What's your distribution strategy? How will you get your product or service in the hands of your customers?

Creative strategies adopted by small business units:

1. Social media: Small businesses benefit most from social media; Small business owners are seeing the greatest results from social media marketing. Michael Stelzner authored the third-annual industry study in which he surveyed 3342 marketers, 47% of whom were either self-employed or small business owners. This group reports some amazing results from social media marketing. Let me show you what they found...

"Is social media important to your business?"



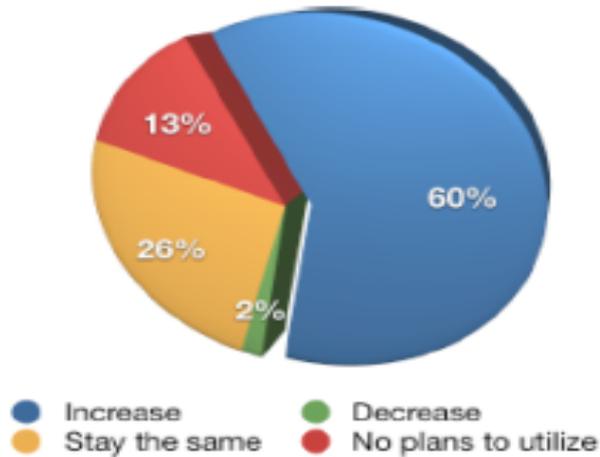
Ninety percent of those surveyed agreed that social media is important to their business. The report reveals that the self-employed (62%) and small business owners (28%) were more likely to strongly agree with this statement.



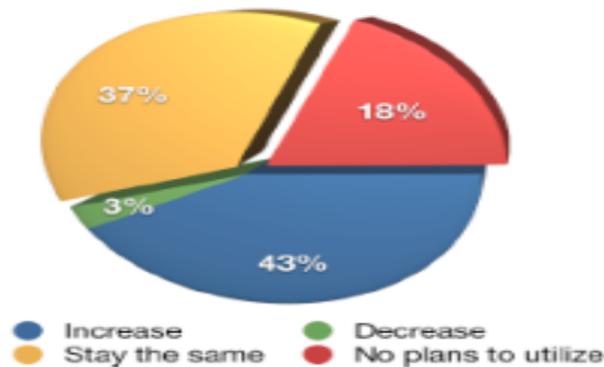
Almost all marketers find that social media helps them stand out in an increasingly noisy marketplace. In fact, 88% of all marketers found social media helps get them increased exposure. Additionally, 72% of those surveyed saw increased traffic and subscriptions as a result of social media.

2. Event Marketing:

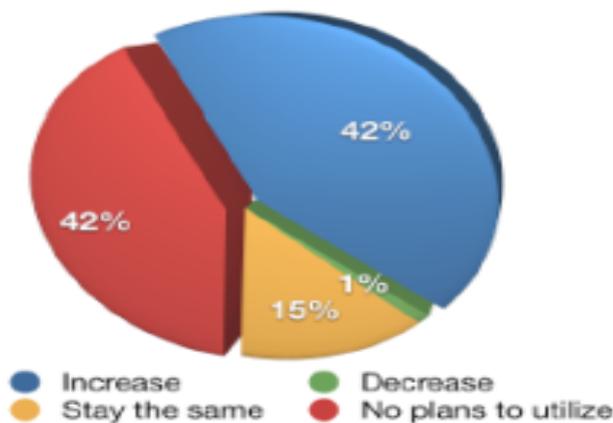
Sixty percent of all marketers plan to increase their use of event marketing (networking and speaking at conferences and trade shows). Of these, the self-employed (70%) and small business owners (65%) are significantly more likely to participate than marketers from large corporations (43% to 38%, depending on the size of the company).



3. **Press Releases:** Eighty percent of all businesses plan to either maintain or increase their use of press releases in 2011. Small business owners are more than twice as likely (52%) to increase their use than businesses with 500 to 1000 employees (24%).



4. **Webinars and Teleseminars:** A surprising 42% of all businesses have no plans to utilize webinars or teleseminars in 2011. But small businesses are far more likely to make use of this strategy. In fact, 49% of the self-employed plan on increasing their use compared to 27% of businesses with 500 to 1000 employees.



5. **Contact past customers:** Assuming we have an e-mail list, every single time someone opts out of that e-mail list, contacting them (preferably by phone if you have their number). We should not start calling them directly to sell a product and why they have opted our product. Simply calling them and thanking them for ever signing up for the e-mail list and ever shopping with us in the past. Our end user will be blown away from a phone call simply thanking them for business.

If we have an online presence, our past customers are stagnant or haven't visited for months. Reach out to every single one of them and again thank them for choosing to shop with us 6 months ago, a year ago, however long it's been. Take a minute to tell them what new, etc is.

6. **Find influencers:** When we've got a killer product or service, our local customer base can become our secret weapon if we can properly strategize on what we need, can help how to make the expected results possible.
7. **Measuring Efforts:** The best strategy is to make sure we're truly measuring each effort in every marketing strategy we use.
 - What's the Cost of the Marketing Plan
 - How many Potential Customers is this Strategy reaching
 - Is this reaching the type of customer that are valuable to my business
 - How many customers do I convert with this campaign?
8. **Some other techniques of creative marketing are:**
 - Repeated punch-lines are subject to the laws of diminishing returns – updating ads regularly.
 - Market to the right audience - everyone is not a potential customer
 - Increase the frequency of ad placement
 - Be consistent in messaging - a unified front in all places we want to advertise
 - Do not place too much content in marketing ad
 - Create a sense of urgency, e.g., this week only
 - Do not mimic the persona of a competitor
 - Develop a branding strategy - a consistent mood/theme for all marketing efforts
 - Do not use self-aware ads, e.g., we're number one in service...
 - Present one contact point per ad. A single commercial should not have call, click and stop by...
 - Update your webpage – preferably to a “responsive” format (mobile friendly)
 - Should not be too creative, e.g., Shakespearean word play
 - Allow consumer preferences to shape our marketing plans
 - Should not use volatile marketing tools, e.g., flyers on car windows
 - Creating a marketing budget
 - Using a slogan that includes the customer. I'm Lovin' It, is supposed to be a declaration of the customer – not McDonald's
 - Use social media to make friends – not dig for customers. Remember, it's always easier to ask a friend to become a customer rather than asking a total stranger to do the same.
 - Heed the advice of a marketing professional
 - Seek objectivity. Get the ads reviewed by an outsider.
 - Sponsor a local event or charity: Get to know the ideal customer and think about how and where they spend their time.
9. **Should focus on current clients, they should not slip away:** Being kind to customers is the smartest low-cost marketing we can do. Reach out to our clients with personal and helpful communication on a consistent basis. If we haven't heard from a customer in a while, send a personalized email inquiring whether all is well. For a customer who has suffered a bad experience, pick up the phone and ask if there is anything you can do.

Strategies used by retailers for creative marketing:



Small business owners can easily get too involved in the day-to-day operations of their retail stores to spend any time brainstorming marketing ideas or promotional events. Some retailers worry that marketing is too expensive, others may find it too time consuming. Without announcing who you are and what you sell, how will anyone know?

Here are few retailers strategies that can be implemented:-

1. Creating a calendar for customers with our shop's name and address on it.
2. Printing the products we sell or services offer on the back of our business cards.
3. Always carrying business cards with us. Give them free and ask permission to leave them in places of our target market they visit.
4. Joining a trade association or organization related to our industry.
5. Having a drawing for a product or a gift certificate. Using the entry forms to collect customers' mailing addresses.
6. Developing a brochure of services that our shop offers.
7. Conducting monthly clinics about a product or service we offer or schedule semi-annual seminars on related "how-to" information for your industry.
8. Printing a tagline for our business on letterhead, fax cover sheets, e-mails and invoices.
9. Developing a website to showcase our products, services and location. Using a memorable URL and including it on all marketing materials.
10. Including customer testimonials in our printed literature.
11. Promoting our self as an expert by writing articles or tips on topics related to our industry.
12. Submitting the material to the local newspaper, trade journal or other publications.
13. Hosting an after-hours gathering for our employees and their friends/relatives.
14. Providing free t-shirts with our logo to our staff to wear.
15. Sending newsworthy press releases as often as needed.
16. Creating an annual award and publicize it.
17. Developing our own TV show on our specialty and present it to our local cable station or public broadcasting station.
18. Creating a press kit and updating it regularly.
19. Using an answering machine or voice mail system to catch after-hours phone calls. Include basic information in our outgoing messages such as business hours, location, website, etc.
20. Joining a Chamber of Commerce where we can develop network with business owners.
21. Holding an open house. Invite prominent city officials and the press.
22. Getting a memorable local or toll-free phone number.
23. Placing ads in publications that our market reads. Be sure to reach the non-English speaking market as well.
24. Distributing specialty products such as pens, mouse pads, or mugs with our store's logo.
25. Advertising in creative locations such as park benches, buses, and popular Web sites.
26. Improving our building signage.
27. Getting a booth at a trade show or expo attended by our target market.
28. Giving a speech or volunteer for a career day at a high school.
29. Sponsoring an Adopt-a-Highway area in our community to keep roads litter-free.
30. Donating our product or service to a charity event or auction.
31. Having Yellow Pages ad listed under the main industry and in related categories.
32. Volunteering our time to a charity or non-profit organization.
33. Creating a loyalty program to reward existing customers.
34. Creating an opt-in email or print newsletter for our customers. Fill each edition with specials, tips and other timely information.
35. Sending hand-written thank you notes to important customers every chance we get.
36. Using brightly colored envelopes and unique stationary when sending direct mail pieces.
37. Showing product demos or related videos on a television on the sales floors during store hours.
38. Booking a celebrity guest for an event at the store. Using people in industry or television news anchors or local authors.
39. Creating window displays in locations away from the shop. Airports, hospitals, and large office buildings occasionally have display areas they rent to local businesses.
40. Teaming up with a non-competing business in the area to offer a package promotion.
41. Selecting the slowest day of the week to hold a one-day sale.
42. Creating a warm, welcoming waiting area for the customers.
43. Providing extra customer service training for staff members.
44. Signing up for a newsletter or joining online discussion groups in the industry.

45. If possible, loan the facilities to other groups for a meeting place.
46. Creating a unique lapel pin based on the products to be sold to wear at meetings.
47. Choosing a regular customer to spotlight as a Customer of the Month. Creating a brief write up to submit to the local newspaper about the customer and be sure to give he or she a copy of the article as well as have one framed to hang in the store.
48. Pairing up slow moving items with related products and repackage as a special buy.
49. Starting a blog. Writing about our industry or details in-store happenings.
50. Offering our customers discounts for each referral they provide.

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Marketing is most effective if done in coordination with other exposure. Enhance the above efforts with additional signage, newspaper ads, displays and radio ads. Remember to tailor each event for our target audience. If our message isn't being delivered to the right person, it may be a wasted effort. Creative Marketing Concepts, founded in 1997, is an integrated marketing company offering products and services in five categories - Print, Promotional, Packaging, Presentation, and Premiums.

Sources of funding:

- Self-financing by the owner through cash, equity loan on his or her home, and or other assets.
- Loans from friends or relatives
- Grants from private foundations
- Personal savings
- Private stock issue
- Forming partnerships
- Angel investors
- Banks

Problems faced by small businesses:

1. **Small business bankruptcy-** This is often a result of poor planning rather than economic conditions - it is common rule of thumb that the entrepreneur should have access to a sum of money at least equal to the projected revenue for the first year of business in addition to his anticipated expenses.
2. **'Entrepreneurial Myth' or E-Myth-** The mythic assumption is that an expert in a given technical field will also be expert at running that kind of business. Additional business management skills are needed to keep a business running smoothly.
3. **Social Responsibility-** Small businesses face a form of peer pressure from larger forces in their respective industries making it difficult to oppose and work against Industry expectations. Furthermore, small businesses undergo stress from shareholder expectations. Because small businesses have more personal relationships with their patrons and local shareholders they must also be prepared to withstand closer scrutiny if they want to share in the benefits of committing to socially responsible practices or not.

4. **Job Quality-** Small businesses generally employ individuals from the Secondary labor market. Many small businesses struggle or are unable to provide employees with benefits they would be given at larger firms. The quality of the jobs these businesses create has been called into question.



IV. Conclusion

Without a change in strategy, little creative mindset can change results. One finds himself/herself proud on their dedicated commitment - Quality, Service, and Reliability. Creative Marketing Concepts is all about the "brand". It helps us to pick the right product, or help us to choose the right marketing program, to best keep our brand "Top of Mind" even when our clients are not thinking about us. It can help us determine what the key indicators are of particular 'brand', and then show us how to best communicate those indicators to our clients and prospects utilizing any or all of the "five P's". **Guerrilla Marketing** is a growing trend: executed correctly, it can be targeted at the people that we want to turn on the most. Diligence, creativity and consistence bring profits in business. Creativity helps in bringing huge demand and hence profits if done at right time. Marketers find that social media helps them stand out in an increasingly noisy marketplace. It helps in increased market exposure. Self-employed and small business owners agreed that social media is important for a small business. Web seminars E-Mails, Video Marketing, Teleseminars, Event Marketing being a part and parcel of social media helps in bringing awareness for a small business owner. There are some financial related areas that can be handled with care and small business owner can focus on enhancing customer base using these above mentioned strategies.

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