Chapter 68

A Case Study on Customer Experiential Management at High Five Hotels Pvt. Ltd, Nashik

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ABSTRACT

Experiential Marketing is an extension of consumer orientation marketing. The organizations can use Experiential Marketing as one of models which has vast potential to serve as a link between improved customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. It can be described as one of the innovative ways of delivering the consumption experiences to the consumers before they buy a product or actually use the service. It works on the simple principle that the memories of experiences get preserved in the minds of prospective customers as well as repeat consumers which induces them to visit again and again for the same product or service. In this case study of High Five Hotel Pvt. Ltd., this innovative marketing strategy, known as experiential marketing, was applied by the management to establish itself in the market as a reputed brand. This case study presents various innovative promotional strategies followed in the hospitality industry. The ultimate outcome and the results after applying this 'experiential techniques' were excellent in terms of financial returns as well as customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION TO THEME

The pleasure of experience can result in product procurement. Truly, experiential marketing or Customer Experience Management (CEM) is a new age marketing tactic to influence the customer's buying decision. The term "Experiential Marketing" refers to actual customer experiences with the brand/product/service that drive sales and increase brand image and awareness. It's the experience which is attracting the consumer towards a brand and ultimately a source for creation of brand loyalty.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The owner and promoter of chain group of hotels, Mr. Raj Malhotra had a vision of setting his dream project in Hospitality Industry in the Holy city of Nashik which is situated in Maharashtra state of India. Accordingly, a three star hotel, property named as High Five Hotels Pvt. Ltd, was established in January of 2011 on the Mumbai Agra National Highway. Mr. Malhotra had in mind that the Hotel will get a strategic locational advantage as it is situated on busy National Highway as well as within the proximity of Ambad Industrial area of Nashik city. His major target clients are affluent travelers who will be visiting Lord Sai Baba's Temple at Shirdi and the business clients from Mumbai's Corporate offices who regularly visit the companies in the industrial area. The 54 room luxurious hotel is equipped to provide world class staying and dining experience to the guests.

Mr. Gurucharan Singh, the General Manager (GM) has four efficient, enthusiastic, and energetic subordinates namely Mr. Alex D'souza as Food & Beverage Manager, Mr. Gupta as Front Office Manager, Ms. Kashmira as House Keeping In Charge, and Chef Vijay Kapoor as Food Production Manager. The organizational culture was healthy and everyone was working with the sole aim of giving best quality service to the customer with complete dedication and strong belief in **"Atithi Devo Bhav"** (Sanskrit words meaning *Guest is God*). It was of little difficulty for the management to get and retain skilled as well as qualified employees at operational level to work in restaurants and kitchen.

CURRENT SITUATION, CHALLENGES, AND GOALS

Mr. Malhotra had gauged the strong presence of competitors like Express Inn, Hotel Taj- Ginger, Hotel Sai Palace, and White Lily. He was worried over financial returns on investments made and also wanted to create unique identity of his Hotel. He decided to do what other hoteliers have neither done nor even thought of. He followed the new age marketing tool 'experiential marketing' to penetrate the market and to embark on effective pre-launch and post-launch strategies as suggested by the General Manager.

The drive-in guests had to face the parking problem as maximum space used to be occupied by the vehicles of staying guests. The management was ready to pay a high price to acquire the adjacent area for parking which was not readily available. Strong presence of established competitors and their sizable market share was another important concern.

Major goals which the organization hoped to accomplish were widening the market share, enhancing the number of repeat customers, and marketing the innovative idea of rendering an 'experience' of lavish and comfort staying to the guest even before they buy the service.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Mr. Malhotra hired a consultant Mr. Aatish Rizvi from reputed Hospitality Consultancy Firm known as Welcome Services Pvt. Ltd. He conveyed the professional fees of $5000 which was nearing to the salary of General Manager, Mr. Singh. The consultant was not in favor of the experiential marketing tool as it involves relatively high cost factor and was instead more keen on traditional marketing. Mr. Singh, the GM was against the consultant's appointment. He had complete faith in experimental marketing tactics for which he submitted a plan of action to Mr. Malhotra. Realizing the probable and positive impact of the General Manager's plan of action, Mr. Malhotra took a pioneering decision to implement experiential marketing as his promotional strategy.

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