Importance of Electronic Customer Relationship Management (ECRM) for the E-Business: Case Studies of Kiddicare, Olivers and Babyboodle

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ABSTRACT

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is at the heart of any E-Business activity. All of the companies doing business electronically through their websites emphasize upon the various aspects of e-CRM (Electronic CRM) including the organization of information on the websites, website customization, order tracking and delivery channels, security and safety measures, registration and login procedures, ease of checkout, customer support (Email, live chat, telephone) etc. This study elaborates the various activities/features of e-CRM adopted by the Kiddicare, olivers and Babyboodle for the promotion of their business and market share. The result emphasize on enhancing the Customer's satisfaction through revised e-CRM strategies.

Introduction

Kiddicare, olivers and Babyboodle are e-business websites famous for providing children/Kids related products and accessories. As E-CRM is an enterprise-wide effort of establishing satisfactory relationship with customers from all aspects of communication through the use of IT and ICT resources. Although there is a long list of e-CRM features (41 in numbers) upon which the business websites can be compared and judged, but here we have included only the main and important aspects of e-CRM in our research. **Horn et al. (2005)** described the interaction of consumer experience with the website thus mentioning the connection between CRM and e-business. The impact of such relationship attributes upon the attitudes of the customer is in three dimensions namely trust, customer satisfaction and perceived quality. **Fleischer (2001)** has included e-CRM as a part of the detailed and exhaustive strategy and implementation of CRM. There is a direct and indirect impact of CRM and e-CRM on profit, sales, customer satisfaction and loyalty (**Anton and Hoeck, 2002; Connelly and Yoger, 2001; Rust and Zahorik, 1993; Sterne, 1996**). CRM can bring a lot of benefits for the organisations and if CRM strategy is executed effectively then it can lead to attain bottom-line benefits for that organization" (**Anton and Hoeck, 2002; Connelly and Yoger, 2001; Rust and Zahorik, 1993**).

General e-CRM features include:
- Accounts Login/Membership
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Transaction Management
- Payment Processing
- Security
- Order Tracking
- Ability to track order status
- Website Local Search Engines
- Site Customization (Organization of links and Set of controls on the web pages)
- ease of Checkout
- Permission Marketing
- Customer Support (Email, Chat, Phone)

and many others (**Anton and Postmus, 1999; Richard A. Feinberg et. al., 2002**).

Site Customization is Web site appearance and organization of set of controls and links on different web pages is one of the main reasons for the Customer Satisfaction in context with E-Business and E-CRM. During the analysis and site comparison Kiddicare is at the top in this regard.

Security (Safety Needs) comes at the second ladder of the hierarchy of needs theory of Abraham Maslow. As all of these e-business companies provide the customers security against their transactions whether these are financial transactions, order histories, data privacy issues but at different levels. Kiddicare is taking special anti-fraud measures and login authentication policies other than measures which are common to all e.g. Bank Account details and information is authenticated against the third party databases and compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Maximum secure number of payment options a company provides to a customer always result in maximum number of business transactions with that company.

The term 'Membership' is explained in context of e-business as a secure place on website where user or visitor asks for a password. When the password is authenticated then the user visits the web pages protected by the password. This is a very important e-CRM feature and enables the firms to register users by asking and collecting their personal information. The other benefit associated with this feature is the flexibility of the companies to monitor the behaviour of the consumers at the site from time to time. Such knowledge is very important from customer retention perspective by looking at customer defect

patterns and current and potential customer profit (**Swift, 2001; Anton and Postmus, 1999**).

Secure Login is important, because it allows the customers to visit, manage and maintain their personalised information, keeps track of orders, order histories, personal information and most importantly the environment for making transactions. Once a customer enters his/her personal, addresses and financial information, he/she is no longer required to re-enter it for future purchases/transactions. Next time purchase activity only requires a customer to simply log on to his/her account, select the item, put it into basket/cart, check out and confirm the order. It authorizes the Company to deduct the required amount from the account (for which information was already provided through this Account Login) without requiring any information regarding bank account etc. Therefore, the Login Account and Passwords are very important.

Customer Service of the Kiddicare is excellent. They frequently communicate with their Members/Account holders and give instant reply in case of any communication made through any means, whether it is phone, Chat or Email. While Babyboodle is very less responsive and communicate very little. Kiddicare provides the Consumer and Product reviews sorted in alphabetical order when clicking through "Browse Consumer and product Reviews" link placed on main web page. Olivers and Babyboodle do not provide any such option nor any link or

tab for Customers nor Product reviews are found on their websites.

Live Chat is an important feature of e-CRM and Customer Support to get the immediate reply for any query regarding products, procedures etc. Website for babyboodle is designed, managed and hosted by iwebhosting which require a lot of communication and feedback between Babyboodle and iwebhosting.

With respect to Permission marketing, Kiddicare, Olivers and babyboodle all allow the users to subscribe for the newsletters and other information and updates regarding products. Olivers provide options for facebook, twitter, google, blogger under the Bookmark and Share link. *Local search engine*: It is very important e-CRM feature which permits the users to search anything on the website based on some specific key word. This is a way which enables the users to search the required content quickly on the web site and is very beneficial for the visitors searching for some specific information (**Feinberg et. al., 2002**).

'Ability to track order status': This is the e-CRM feature which gives the detailed information to the user for tracking his order i.e. current status of the shipping process. Knowing the status of the shipped goods gives extra comfort and satisfaction to the customers. Moreover, it facilitates them in synchronising other activities related to the use of that item while knowing about the exact position and other details regarding its delivery. As according to a Forrester Survey "58 percent of customers use customer service to find out when they can expect delivery of their order" (**Feinberg et. al., 2002**). Kiddicare provides an excellent order tracking system linked to it's interlink express courier service telling the customer about the package's current status until it is delivered to the customer. Olivers and Babyboodle do not provide the Order tracking.

Analysis and Discussion

Web pages of Kiddicare and information on them are very well organized. Screens are dynamically refreshed with new information all the time attracting visitors with new Product Information, Product pictures, Prices, Offers in terms of discount showing great saving options on the home/main page. Babyboodle's Main web page is attractive but other pages are not well organized. Screens are static and do not refresh themselves like Kiddicare. Products in dozens are listed on left side with repeated info overcrowding the website. There are only four links home, login, register and help. Very fewer things mentioned regarding terms and conditions. While Olivers has poorly organized the links for different web pages. Categories, Products, About us, Help & Advice, News, Contact, Delivery, My Account, My Wish List, My Cart, Check out, Login are the 12 main links placed on the main page of the websites as links for web pages. It has made mixture of too much information to

be placed at one place with very small fonts making it uncomfortable for the visitors to go through that information. Clicking on some of them takes to the same web page thus generating a need to combine some of them e.g. My Account, Check Out, Login could be combined as one link and so on. Screens don't refresh with Product Information and are static. Home Page is very long and information is not placed appropriately. Most of the space in middle and left corner is empty while a very little information about some products in a very lengthy column at the right making it very odd. Kiddicare allows the customers with maximum payment options through a variety of cards in addition to PayPal (Payment intermediaries) etc. Olivers also provide a lot of payment options including PayPal but Babyboodle provides very fewer options other than PayPal. Solo, Maestro, VISA, Master Card, PayPal is common to all of them, but Google Checkout and cash Ticket option are the wonderful payment options only provided by Kiddicare.

Password for Login is given by all these three sites. Kiddicare allows only five attempts to login to the account and blocks the access to account for the sixth attempt. Access permissions/new password is mailed on contacting kiddicare customer service through phone or Email. Their Customer Service is excellent and immediately responds with Email. Babyboodle blocks the access to account on sixth attempt only for 10 minutes in case of wrong password mentioned against Accounts Login. After 10 minutes, Access is unblocked automatically and any one can reattempt to login to that account. It repeats and within each 10 minutes time 6 attempts are allowed, so any person can try 60 times in an hour, which is against the security concern for a customer. Because, whosoever logs in to account, can make a transaction which is associated with the payments. Olivers does not provide any security and does not block access to account for any number of attempts in case of wrong password entered for an Accounts Login. Kiddicare does not allow the password of less than 6 characters without a combination of digits and alphabets, while Olivers and Babyboodle do not enforce any such policy.

Kiddicare and Olivers Provide Live Chat, real time instant messaging options besides other means of communication with their Customer Support while Babyboodle does not provide any such option. With respect to local search engines, all the three websites give search options for products only and does not provide search options for other policies, terms and conditions, deliveries, orders etc.

Ease of Checkout, Kiddicare is simple and easy for check out process, Olivers have added the options of MyCart and MyWishlist with the Checkout, Babyboodle also allows simple and easy checkouts. Terms and Conditions and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding Deliveries, Orders, Payments, returns and refunds are mentioned on all of these websites, olivers have put the Product guides of dozens of different products under help and advice.

Recommendations

Babyboodle should emphasize in enhancing its Customer's satisfaction through revised e-CRM strategies. In this regard it should revise its Website contents with the ease of use approach in terms of site customization, organisation of different links and tabs, checkout processes. Baby boodle should also consider the security aspect and provide its users with the enhanced security measures. Babyboodle should also provide the users with the Live Chat options and order tracking facilities, because these aspects are of prime importance for the customers while trading online.

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