

Summative Assignment for PS 456 Consumer Psychology

Proposal Plan for Yumist Foodtech Pvt Ltd

Introduction

Among the few of its kind, Yumist is an android mobile application that allows consumers to place orders for meals, and delivered within twenty minutes. The startup began in October 2014, and was launched by Alok Jain, who brings his techno-food expertise from his experience as CEO at 'India's Yelp' - Zomato. It is co-owned by Abhimanyu Maheshwari. The operational hours are between 12 pm and 3 pm currently, which the owners are working on expanding once they have more employees on board. The meals are very reasonably priced, (from Rs 85 upwards).

Operating in Gurgaon (the cosmopolitan, commercial hub of Delhi), and currently operating in CyberCity, the business model of Yumist includes a centrally located kitchen, where meals are prepared fresh, everyday. Users of the application get to pick from a pre-decided menu every day on their phones, and the meals are aimed to give a 'home-cooked food' appeal.

Being one of the few players in its market segment, Yumist competes with other Food apps like FoodPanda, with its advantage being that it makes and delivers its own food. Currently having 500 customers, and a team of 50 workers, Yumist has recently received 6.2 crores from VC Orios Venture Partners.

The enterprise's strengths clearly lie in their supply chain and delivery system, which is quick and efficient, as well as in their comfort food approach, which the customers mention to be a happy departure from the McDonalds and KFC's of the world. However, the enterprise has a few areas on which it needs to work. Some of these are:

- There is very limited customer- service provider interaction, i.e. it is not a very collaborative process, and consumers have no say in the items provided, or have any platform where they can voice their opinions and share ideas with the company's menu makers.
- The company has not taken any branding initiatives, and its focus is limited to logistics, with no strategy to create an image for itself.
- The company also has no declared sustainability initiatives, which in today's world is a must.

Hence, this essay will address these issues by providing four recommendations to improve Yumist's overall marketing strategy. This will be followed by theoretical justifications for each of these recommendations that will draw from various theories in consumer and social psychology. The recommendations will be based on the broader framework of installation theory, and its three levels of consumption, i.e physical, psychological and institutional.

Memorandum

To,

Mr Alok Jain, C.E.O, Yumist

Mr Abhimanyu Maheshwari, C.O.O, Yumist.

Dear Mr Jain and Mr Maheshwari,

It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. We would like to begin by thanking you for bringing such deliciously cooked 'home styled' food to our neighborhood and to our workstations. It is really a welcome change from all the standardized packaged meals that this city has been used to, for a long time. After a very long time, this city is being delivered food that reminds us of our mother's cooking.

We would also like to extend our heartiest congratulations to you and Mr Maheshwari for the deals forged with Orios Venture Partners. The consumers are quite excited to see how Yumist has given the traditional 'dabbawaala' system an interesting twist. By being one of the very few of its kind, Yumist is truly an innovative concept.

The venture's strengths clearly lie in its supply chain and logistics system. Yumist's menu and style of food is a clear reflection of the expertise you bring from your food and tech background at Zomato, and will surely help Yumist go a long way.

Hence, the only thing left to make this venture a sure fire success would be a few innovative marketing strategies, that could help it develop an image and a brand, and reach the consumers in a more personal and engaging way.

To help achieve this purpose, I would like to outline a few recommendations for Yumist's marketing team. These ideas are based on branding initiatives, building an image, providing an experience, and being sustainable.

The broad framework will be 'People, Planet, Profit.' (Sheth et al, 2011), which has its foundations on the three pillars of consumption, i.e. the consumer, nature, and the business.

The suggestions are as follows:

1.) Build a brand image

This will help bring in a personal element in all the meals, and a brand logo that

depicts and embodies this image. Yumist should pick up on its consumers' feedback as being something that reminds them of home-cooked food. This gives Yumist the reputation of a venture that wants to take care of its customers, by feeding them not just food, but also warmth and love, while being efficient at it. Hence, an important addition to the brand is an image or logo that compliments this idea. (Buttle & Westoby, 2006). The idea of the logo should involve a mother holding or preparing a meal, with a caption below that could read, 'Yumist- 'Ma ka khaana in minutes (Mom's food in minutes).

2.) An online community on the website, named "I am Yumist".

Allowing members to share their thoughts on an online platform will facilitate the building of such a community. The page can start an open dialogue between consumers and Yumist's PR, where the consumers can suggest meal items, what they would like to see in the menus, and also share their mom's recipes that Yumist could incorporate in their menus. Yumist can also post meal items and incorporate the one that wins maximum votes (likes on facebook), in their weekly menus. Hence, this online community will help the customers, but will also help spread awareness about Yumist as a brand, thereby bring in better business (*profits*).

3.) Food Trucks.

Yumist can start a system of stationing Family Food Truck Sunday, where they station a meal truck outside housing complexes, and serve Sunday breakfast. The objective would be to provide a memorable event for families, which helps Yumist establish itself as a 'weekend tradition'. If successful, the trucks could also operate on a weekday outside commercial complexes, (since Gurgaon is the hub for most head offices in India, this would be an easy and quick way of spreading awareness of Yumist's food (*profit*). This once again lets Yumist be seen as a company that provides Yumist with a reputation as a brand that wants to give its customers (*people*) a good time.

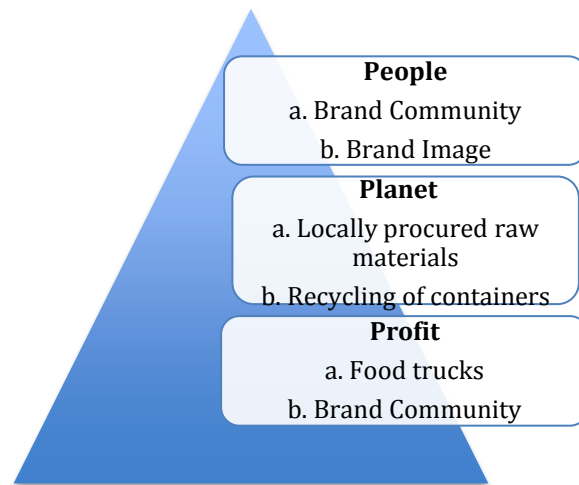
4.) A 'green meal' policy. This will involve the following:

a.) Local procurement

Sourcing produce from farmers directly, and slowly starting a system of home-grown produce will ensure good quality ingredients going into Yumist's cooking. Direct procurement can also help Yumist purchase their raw materials at cheaper rates, more so if they are grown by the owners (avoiding market mediated supplies), in turn helping them reduce the cost per unit of production, leading to low prices for the consumer. Hence, it will be beneficial from all three perspectives, i.e. *planet, people, profit*. This also allows consumers to see themselves as being part of the sustainable consumption community ('my meal is green'), and yumist as the venture that allows them to be ethical consumers.

b.) Recycling containers.

These practices will allow its customers to see Yumist as an enterprise that supports sustainable consumption.



We hope these suggestions help Yumist gain wider acceptance and become Gurgaon's go-to app for all kinds of comfort food.

Yours Sincerely,

Sampoorna Nandi.

Theoretical Underpinnings

1.) Persuasion Techniques used in Memorandum

A systematic approach has been applied to persuade the two CEOs to apply these strategies to their venture. This is based on Ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964). This is an approach, which includes the following tactics:

- Flattery: Admiring the person's qualities, achievements, placing them in a positive light and highlighting their successes. This was used when talking of how Yumist has managed to strike several successful deals with other enterprises.
- Agreement: Agreeing with their beliefs, viewpoints. This method was utilized while talking about how the strategies and mechanisms used by Yumist so far are the right ones.
- Help: Giving the impression that we want to look after the interests of the person. This was highlighted in how help to achieve their goals was offered by outlining the recommendations as something that would support Yumist in achieving success.

2.)Theoretical basis for suggestions

The suggestions are embedded primarily in the installation theory, which looks at the world as a series of installations. These involve physical affordances (limits to uses of products/spaces); representations (skills to interpret products/services); and social institutions, social/environmental rules that control our behaviour with objects/services. (Lahlou, 2011).

The following suggestions are:

1.) Building a brand image of its meals being fashioned after ‘Mom’s homemade food.

- The theory of *possessions and extended self* explains how our identities are extended to people in our lives. (Belk, 1988). Hence, we will favor any product/service that reflects the identities of people that contribute to our sense of self. If Yumist fashions its food as being similar to what our mothers cooked for us, this brings in a personal element to its product, and makes consumers look at it as something that they can symbolically extend their identities to, i.e. mothers.
- The importance of food and eating in families has been suggested by Valentine (1999), which plays a role in helping family members derive their identities. This is especially relevant in Indian societies, where the wives and mothers are regarded as experts in cooking. Hence, any brand that upholds this philosophy and recognizes the importance of this segment has special significance in the minds of Indian consumers.
- Another concept that underpins this recommendation is the idea of *nostalgic marketing*, which suggests that nostalgia becomes an aspect of our preferences because it is an inextricable part of our consumption experience through its ability to evoke emotions. (Goulding, 2001). A study was done on nostalgic branding for food, which studied advertising of products/services that used elements that evoked people’s yearnings for their past(objects, people, events). These themes, when triggered in people’s consumption experiences, led them to view the concerned product/service more favourably, thereby increasing likelihood of buying behaviour. This was explained through a *positivity bias* that people have in their memory systems, which makes them inclined to remember positive instances from their lives. (Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner 1993).

Hence, if Yumist advertises its food and food (brand) image as being something that evokes memories and mental images of mother’s cooking, (something cherished in their younger days) this will lead him or her to view the food with more positive emotions, and thus facilitate repeat ordering, thereby creating a sense of loyalty towards Yumist. This has been substantiated by a research which showed that Nostalgic advertising evokes a more intensive mental image which has direct positive effects on consumers attitude toward the product. (Bambauer-Sachse, S., & Gierl, H.

2009). Therefore, this type of branding is especially helpful, when it offers products that create vivid mental images in consumers' minds, which is appropriate in the case of Yumist's product, i.e. food.

This recommendation is built on the socio-psychological representation pillar of the installation theory, where our inner knowledge and schemas regarding mother and food makes us psychologically interpret Yumist's food as something favourable and positive.

2.) Building an online community on the website, named "I am Yumist".

- The suggestion for the online interactions is based on the idea of building an online *brand community* for Yumist. This brings consumers who share an interest in a specific product or service, together, so that they can create their own set of ideas and values for the product (O'Guinn and Muniz, 2001), Membership in these communities allows consumers to derive an aspect of their own identities. (I am Yumist), which if advertised by the company, automatically instills confidence among new users. (O'Guinn and Muniz, 2001). The community would become a platform where yumists share pictures of their recipes or reveal a few 'family secret ingredients' to fellow yumists. Consumers, through their suggestions and ideas will also function as 'prosumers' i.e they contribute towards the production of goods and services. (Kotler, 1986).
- A related concept that supports this suggestion is *Brand Hijack* where consumers are the ones who reshape the brand's meaning and endorse it to others, and is a phenomena where 'marketing managers aren't in charge anymore, consumers are.'" (Wipperfurth, 2006, p 6). When consumers share their ideas regarding what and how they would like Yumist to prepare meals, share their love for Yumist's food; it will give their customers the feeling that their ideas and feelings are actively contributing to Yumist's values, which helps this venture builds it brand in the most legitimate way, i.e. through real experiences of its customers.
- In light of the above, one can explain the validity of this suggestion also through the self-serving bias, where if Yumists are personally involved in suggesting meal items and recipes, they will assume responsibility for the successful and superior quality meals that is delivered to them, thus enhancing their self-concept. (Wolosin et al, 1973).

Given that yumist's physical affordance is entirely technology based, this suggestion also has its roots in the concept of digital projection, (Lahlou, 2008), where all individuals in cyber space have their own digital representations. (I am a yumist is a digital representation based on an online platform). Hence, it's essential that with the growing technological affordances, the actors' representation of these affordances be understood to design a product.

3.) Starting a system of Food Trucks

- The recommendation for having Yumist establishing a food truck system can be understood through the concept of *experiential marketing*, where an experience is something that a company ‘intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event’. (Pine and Gilmore, 2008, p 2).
The idea behind having the weekday food truck concept outside commercial complexes (with which Yumist can have tie-ups) is to allow Yumist trucks to become a food hub, where consumers come for food sampling and be provided with take away menus in case they do not have android on their phones. It could arrive during lunch break, where groups of colleagues could come out to enjoy hot ‘home-styled’ food, at ‘dabba’ rates. This could become an exciting relief from the regular ‘mess/canteen’ food, which workers may get tired of eating, as this would be an experience for the employees to look forward to every once in a week. This staging of an experience allows Yumist to engage its customers in an intimate way.
- Experiential Marketing would be beneficial for Yumist since it is a form of ‘guerilla marketing’ that would bring the brand to the consumers. (Levinson, J.C, 1994). It would also help the company save some of its supply chain costs as it would bring a large group of customers together instead of going to each and every household, thereby also helping to reduce carbon footprint for every motorcycle out for delivery.
- The suggestion also addresses the consumer need for *atmospherics* in consumption. (Kotler, 2001). A truck stationed near a park of a commercial or housing complex allows Yumist to take advantage of the pleasures of the natural environment, which has become increasingly important to consumers. This is because they now care about the *total product*, which includes the atmosphere in which it is being provided as well. Atmospherics depend primarily on aural, olfactory and tactile dimensions (Kotler, 2001), which in this could be manipulated by playing some pleasant music (old classic Hindi songs on a Sunday morning to induce the weekend leisure spirit), the smell of fresh food cooking in front of the consumers once orders are placed, and the pleasant chirpings of birds and natural fresh air could add to the environment.

This recommendation is based on the physical affordances level of the installation theory, where consumers arriving at the food truck can have a new affordance through the actual experience with the product, by tasting yumist’s food.

The social institutional level is also embedded in this recommendation as yumist would need to tie up with stakeholders in the form of commercial and residential complexes, with whose co-operation it would be able to operate.

4.) ‘Green meal’ policy.

- The last recommendation for Yumist to commence a ‘green meal’ policy is

based on the idea of 'mindful consumption' on the part of the consumers, where they are allowed to fulfill their roles as responsible members of society, who are concerned about the ways in which they utilize resources, how it affects them, the welfare of their community and of nature in general. This makes them want to modify repetitive, acquisitive, and aspirational behaviors, i.e. the essence of wasteful consumption. (Sheth et al, 2010).

Hence the three pillars of mindful consumption is caring for the self, which involves leading happier, healthier and longer lives; the community, which involves the well-being of one's friends, and family, and for nature (ecological sustainability). The essence of mindful consumption lies in being consciously aware of the required change in mindset as well as behaviour of the consumers.

Therefore, Yumist can help their customers realize their consciousness for mindful consumption by allowing them purchase from an enterprise which locally sources their ingredients (without supermarket mediation), and which enables them to consume food that is fresh, devoid of chemicals or added preservatives. (caring for self) In similar vein, Yumist can bring to the attention of their customers that they themselves can recycle the plastic containers. (Caring for nature.).

- Additionally, if Yumist has a system of taking group orders that economizes on quantity, it fosters a sense of sharing and good-will among the employees eating together during lunch break, or the family or friends eating together. They become aware of their identities as ethical consumers who are eliminating wasteful consumption, thereby fulfilling their roles as 'mindful consumers' (caring for community).
- This also elevates a consumer's status and role in society as someone who is a 'green consumer'. Therefore, Yumist consumers, in addition to being part of the I am Yumist brand community, can also declare that 'My meal is green'; thereby making them feel morally superior to other consumers. This is based on the concept of signaling (BliegeBird et al, 2005) where consumers use demonstration of social position to gain access to better material possessions, or 'social capital'. (Bordieu, 1986). Today the need to market products and services as satisfying green consumption is highlighted, as this is attractive for people who would like to attain an 'affluent identity' or status. According to Hurth, it is relevant to symbolically relate 'affluent' and 'environmental' identities for market offerings, so that regular low impact purchasing is related to desirable identities (as represented by the green consumer identity (Hurth, 2010))
- This suggestion is also rooted in social identity (Tajfel, 2010), which posits that people want to belong to groups which they deem as desirable and from which they derive their identities. This can be understood in the context of consumers wanting to be part of the 'green community', a group that is

desirable and from which they derive their identities as responsible consumers. This could be applied to Yumist itself, where the company would want to appear as an enterprise that belongs to the group of businesses that undertake ethical sustainable measures of production. (Tajfel, 2004) for e.g. Local procurement of raw materials.

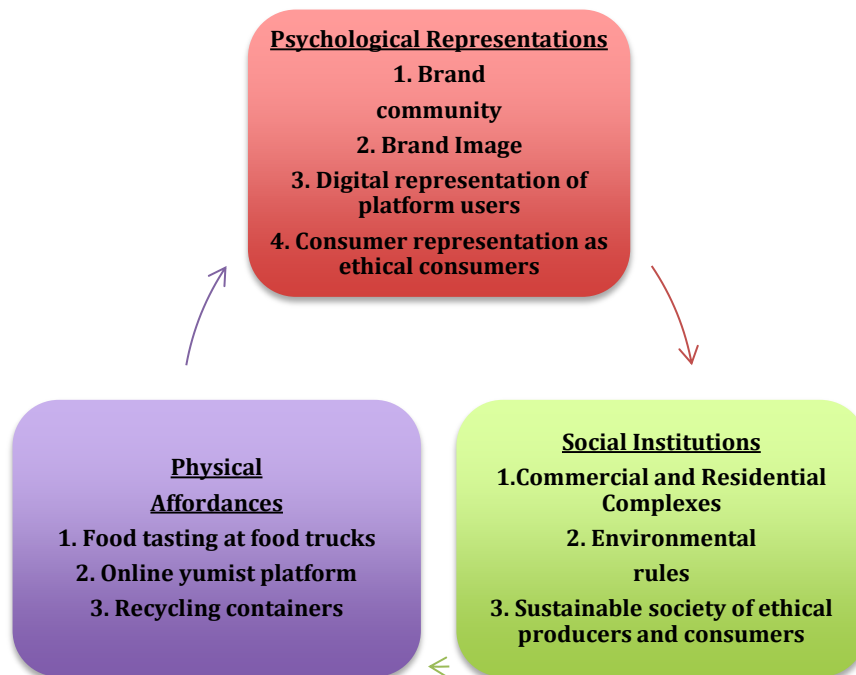
This recommendation is built on all three layers of the installation theory.

The physical affordances can be understood through the reducing of consumption and ordering responsible amounts, as well as recycling containers

The psychological representation is embedded in how consumers view themselves as mindful or ethical consumers if they indulge in responsible consumption.

The social rules are implicit in how consumers and producers are becoming part of a sustainable society, which is abiding by the rules of the environment to reduce environmental impact of their production and consumption.

Installation Theory framework for recommendations. (Lahlou, 2008)



Conclusion

This essay has sought to provide recommendations that are firmly grounded in a model of sustainability (people, planet, profit), while also looking at the practicality of their implementation. It takes into account all the layers of consumption through the broader application of Installation theory, which deals with the actual product usage, its favourable representation in the minds of consumers, and involvement of key stakeholders to successfully execute these ideas. However, in light of the suggestions, their limitations lie in the narrow market segment, i.e middle and upper middle class, who have access to the virtual world and its affordances. Hence, for future considerations, Yumist could also develop a target segment to include older populations and lower middle class populations for wider acceptability.