



Evalube Lubricants' Marketing Communication Strategy for Vehicle Lubricants in Building a Brand Image

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ABSTRACT

In the increasingly competitive automotive lubricants industry, companies are required to implement effective marketing communication strategies to build and maintain their brand image. PT. Wiraswasta Gemilang Indonesia (WGI), as the manufacturer of Evalube Lubricants, faces the challenge of enhancing its brand's competitiveness in the market. This study aims to build the brand image of Evalube Lubricants in Bandung by applying the theory and concepts of personal selling, specifically through the implementation of prospecting & qualifying, pre-approach, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing, and follow-up. Personal selling was chosen because it enables direct interaction between salespeople and consumers, thereby fostering more personal relationships and providing in-depth product education. The research method used is a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive automotive lubricants industry, companies are required to implement effective marketing communication strategies to build and maintain a strong brand image. PT. Wiraswasta Gemilang Indonesia (WGI), as the manufacturer of Evalube Lubricants, faces significant challenges in enhancing its brand's competitiveness in the market.

Data from the Top Brand Award (2024) shows that Evalube ranks fifth, far behind major competitors such as Castrol and Federal Oil, indicating difficulties in strengthening its brand image in the minds of consumers. Therefore, PT. WGI has adopted a marketing communication strategy based on personal selling as an effort to improve brand image and customer loyalty. Personal selling was chosen because it enables direct interaction between salespeople and consumers, which can build more personal relationships and provide in-depth product education.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the personal selling strategy implemented by the Bandung branch of PT. Wiraswasta Gemilang Indonesia in building the brand image of Evalube Lubricants, with a focus on the implementation of the personal selling stages and the obstacles encountered. This study is expected to provide strategic insights for the company to optimize the use of personal selling and enhance its competitiveness in the national market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication Strategy

A communication strategy is a guide for planning and managing communication to achieve objectives. It involves understanding the audience, crafting messages that capture attention, and selecting methods for delivering those messages. Methods of message delivery can be redundant (repetition), channeling (understanding the audience), informative (providing clarification), persuasive (persuading), educative (educating), and coercive (compulsion).

Marketing Communication

Marketing communication is a means for companies to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about products and brands. The goal is to influence consumers by providing information, engaging in persuasion, and fostering collaboration. Marketing communication strategies involve segmentation, targeting, and positioning. The marketing communication model includes the sender, encoding (message design), media (channels), decoding (message interpretation), and feedback.

Personal Selling

Personal selling is defined as face-to-face interaction between a salesperson and a consumer to create, improve, and maintain a mutually beneficial exchange relationship. Its objectives include prospecting, targeting, communicating product information, selling, providing service, and gathering information. The personal selling process consists of seven steps: prospecting & qualifying, pre-approach, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing, and follow-up.

Brand Image

Brand image is consumers' perceptions and beliefs about a brand, as reflected in brand associations in consumers' memories. Factors shaping brand image include the strength of brand associations, the favorability of brand associations, and the uniqueness of brand associations. Brand image indicators include corporate image, product/consumer image, and user image.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze Evalube Lubricants' personal selling marketing communication strategies. This method was chosen to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subjects holistically and in depth, as well as to provide strategic insights for the company in optimizing personal selling and building the brand image of Evalube Lubricants.

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach. The descriptive approach is used to investigate and recount events and phenomena in the lives of individuals or groups, with data obtained in the form of words and images rather than numbers. This allows the researcher to describe in depth how Evalube salespeople implement personal selling strategies and their role in shaping the brand image.

Data collection was conducted through two types of sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from the research subjects and is authentic, objective, and reliable. The techniques used included face-to-face interviews to exchange information and ideas, utilizing both semi-structured and structured interviews to deeply explore the informants' knowledge and beliefs. The researcher conducted direct field observations to gather research-related data. Secondary data was obtained from indirect sources, such as company documents, books, and previous studies. The technique used was documentation, which served to complement the observations and interviews to produce a valid picture of the research.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study shows that the personal selling marketing communication strategy implemented by PT. Wiraswasta Gemilang Indonesia (WGI), Bandung branch, is highly effective in building and strengthening the Evalube Lubricants brand image. This strategy enables direct interaction between salespeople and customers, which facilitates the persuasive and in-depth delivery of product information, as well as builds more personal relationships and customer loyalty. A 43% increase in sales volume following the implementation of this personal selling strategy serves as evidence of its effectiveness in attracting consumer interest and strengthening the brand image.

Evalube Lubricants' implementation of personal selling follows a systematic process known as the Basic Call Procedure (BCP). This process includes:

1. Customer Prospecting and Qualification: This initial stage involves identifying potential customers through market research and direct outreach

to stores or repair shops, as well as collecting data to ensure the effectiveness of the approach.

2. Initial Approach (Pre-approach): Salespeople analyze the needs, preferences, and consumption patterns of potential customers—including competitors' strategies—to craft effective communication.
3. Approach: The first interaction with a potential customer is conducted in a friendly and professional manner to build a relationship and create a positive impression.
4. Presentation: The salesperson explains the product's specifications, advantages, and usage in detail and persuasively—often with a demonstration—tailored to the customer's needs.
5. Handling Objections: The salesperson listens to the customer's objections, understands the reasoning behind them, and provides convincing solutions, such as proof of quality or a discount.
6. Closing the Sale: Once objections are addressed, the salesperson guides the customer toward making a purchase, often by offering promotions or recommendations.
7. Follow-up: This stage ensures customer satisfaction and builds long-term loyalty through ongoing communication and after-sales service.

This study confirms that *personal selling* is a vital marketing communication strategy for building the Evalube Lubricants *brand image*. The success of this strategy depends heavily on the *salesperson's* ability to interact directly with customers, educate them about the product, and build long-term relationships, even as competitive market challenges persist.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that the marketing communication strategy through personal selling implemented by PT. Wiraswasta Gemilang Indonesia (WGI) plays a crucial role in building and strengthening the brand image of Evalube Lubricants in Bandung. Direct interaction between salespeople and customers allows for the delivery of product information in a clearer and more persuasive manner, which ultimately builds closer relationships and increases customer loyalty. Personal selling has proven effective in increasing brand awareness and fostering positive customer perceptions of Evalube Lubricants. A 43% increase in sales volume following the implementation of this strategy also indicates its effectiveness in attracting consumer interest and strengthening the brand image.

This personal selling strategy is implemented through a systematic process called the Basic Call Procedure (BCP), which includes prospecting & qualifying (identifying and qualifying customers), pre-approach (initial contact), approach (engagement), presentation (product demonstration), handling objections, closing (sales completion), and follow-up. Each of these stages is designed to ensure that salespeople can identify potential customers, understand their needs, provide in-depth product education, address objections, and build and maintain long-term relationships.

Although effective, the implementation of *personal selling* faces various obstacles, particularly during the *prospecting & qualifying* stage. Major obstacles include intense competition in the lubricants industry from major brands that already dominate the market, customer perceptions that prioritize low prices over quality, customers' limited technical knowledge of lubricants, and a lack of customer response to *follow-up* efforts. Other challenges include difficulties in building trust with new customers who are loyal to other brands, as well as obstacles in negotiating prices and payment terms. However, with a proactive approach, personalized communication, clear education, and consistent product availability, Evalube Lubricants can increase customer loyalty and strengthen its position in the market.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the implementation of a marketing communication strategy through *personal selling* by Evalube Lubricants salespeople in Bandung is highly effective in building and strengthening Evalube's *brand image* as a high-quality product. This strategy is carried out through systematic stages, starting from *prospecting* (identifying potential customers), *pre-approach* (introducing the product to customers through persuasive communication), *presentation* (explaining the product in detail), *handling objections* (addressing customer concerns), *closing* (confirming the purchase), to *follow-up* (follow-up visits and periodic check-ins). This approach helps customers better understand the product's benefits, thereby increasing their trust and loyalty toward the Evalube Lubricants brand.

However, there are major obstacles faced in implementing *personal selling*, such as fierce competition with other, better-known brands, customer objections to competitive pricing, and consumers' limited understanding of lubricant products. Additionally, the lack of response from new customers to *follow-ups* poses a challenge in building long-term relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes several recommendations. From an academic perspective, it is recommended to conduct further research using *mixed methods* to gain a more comprehensive and statistically measurable understanding, as well as to conduct similar research in other regions to assess the effectiveness of Evalube's *personal selling* strategies in the Indonesian automotive market. From a practical standpoint, the Bandung branch of PT. Wiraswasta Gemilang Indonesia needs to continue providing regular training to sales staff on more effective communication, negotiation, and product education techniques. Additionally, it is important to develop a more proactive customer education strategy, implement more attractive loyalty programs, and devise more personalized and value-added *follow-up* strategies through various digital communication channels to enhance customer loyalty and address competition.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study suggests several directions for further research to deepen the understanding of Evalube Lubricants' *personal selling* marketing communication

strategies. From an academic perspective, it is recommended that future research employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach will yield more comprehensive and statistically measurable results, providing a deeper and more quantifiable analysis of the effectiveness of *personal selling* strategies.

Additionally, similar research is recommended in other geographic regions of Indonesia. The aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of Evalube's *personal selling* strategy in the broader automotive market, given that market dynamics and characteristics may vary across regions. Thus, the findings from this follow-up research can serve as a valuable reference for academics interested in further examining marketing communication strategies in the automotive lubricants industry, as well as provide a more comprehensive insight into the role of *personal selling* in building a product's brand image.

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