



STEALTH MARKETING TECHNIQUES AND THEIR ROLE IN ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS AND REDUCING COSTS

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 26 th August 2024 Accepted: 24 th September 2024	The era of globalization and modern technology is witnessing a change in customers' behavior and methods of searching for products, services, and decision-making. These changes require the economic unit to adapt to this change, because traditional marketing methods, such as costly TV ads that have become useless and do not reap the benefits of increasing sales volume and lack the excitement and motivation to attract the customer's attention. Advancing technology and using the Internet and social media has changed customers' habits, making traditional marketing methods often ineffective. With growing customer knowledge and awareness, influencing them has become less effective using costly traditional marketing methods. In order to promote accurate and targeted communication and marketing messages, economic units have begun to search for sophisticated methods that have the potential to influence their behavior. stealth marketing techniques may be the perfect solution. This strategy focuses on influencing customers without explicitly perceiving them, and relies on different techniques to spread promotional messages unaware and appears to be a natural interaction with the target audience and at lower marketing costs. For the purpose of answering the questions and hypotheses of this study, researchers designed a two-item questionnaire: item one is concerned with the variable of hidden marketing techniques, and item two is concerned with the variable of customer attraction and cost reduction. Some customers shopping at the mall have been selected. The results of the study showed the presence of significant relationship between stealth marketing techniques on the one hand and attracting customers and reducing costs on the other.

Keywords: Stealth marketing, Marketing techniques,

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the customer looks forward to the highest quality of the products and services offered by showing full price perception with no reluctance to replace the brand when it is possible to maximize the benefit against the cost paid. These changes prompt economic units to be able to attract new customers, persuade existing customers, retain these customers, influence their behavior, and develop their loyalty towards their brand. The use of traditional methods of achieving this has become difficult under great competition. Therefore, stealth marketing techniques represent an advanced promotional strategy as they require a deep understanding of the requirements and behavior of target customers without feeling that they are under a thoughtful promotional campaign through which products or services are introduced smoothly, naturally, and unremarkably in their lives without being aware of this. The most



positive implications of this strategy are the ability of the economic unit to influence the customer to decide the purchase decision for the benefit of its products in order to contribute to increasing market share which reflects its ability to achieve growth and survival without the need to spend significant marketing costs. Despite the advantages of this method, including its effective impact on increasing sales volume and reducing marketing costs, it may have several challenges as its style raises criticism about manipulation of customer culture and lack of transparency.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

Iraq's economic units view marketing as merely a traditional process that contributes to the disposal of products of goods and services. This is a problem in itself. These methods caused these units to suffer from a decline in their sales volume despite bearing a significant marketing cost. The adoption of modern methods of marketing now takes on new dimensions as one of the most important components of economic unity's success. Therefore, adopting smart and hidden methods that focus on unfamiliar marketing practices is an important way to stimulate customer's purchasing behavior and reduce high marketing costs. Research problem can be formulated through the following research questions:

1. Do traditional marketing methods lack excitement and motivation in attracting customer interest despite its high cost?
2. Does promotion through stealth marketing techniques (viral marketing, marketing through celebrities, brand promoters, video games, music, and social responsibility) contribute to attracting customer interest at the lowest cost compared to traditional promotion methods?

HYPOTHESES

Main hypothesis: The adoption of stealth marketing as a marketing strategy contributes to attracting customers and reducing marketing costs.

There are six sub-hypotheses that are based on this hypothesis:

1. Sub-hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between viral marketing on one hand and customer attraction and cost reduction on the other hand.
2. Sub-hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between celebrity marketing on one hand and customer attraction and cost reduction on the other hand.
3. Sub-hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between marketing through brand promoters on one hand and attracting customers and reducing costs on the other hand.
4. Sub-hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between marketing through video games, attracting customers and reducing costs.
5. Sub-hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between music marketing on one hand and customer attraction and cost reduction on the other hand.
6. Sub-hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship between marketing through social responsibility on one hand and customer attraction and cost reduction on the other hand.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to:

1. Highlighting the application of stealth marketing techniques as a contemporary strategy that helps economic units attract customers, reduce marketing costs, and outperform their competitors by making the best use of the lowest cost.
2. Understanding the customer's human behavior and how it responds to incentives and indirect effects in making a purchase decision.
3. Ensuring an effective and modern strategy that has the potential to influence customer behavior in an indirect way, attract customers, and explore weaknesses and strengths in customer behavior using non-traditional methods.

SIGNIFICANCE

This study is important as it:

1. Provides an important organizational approach to marketing where it contributes to understanding how stealth marketing techniques are used, influencing customers' behavior, and reducing marketing costs.
2. Contributes to the introduction of stealth marketing techniques to identify the most effective practices in influencing customers' behavior without feeling directly by providing empirical evidence data.
3. Helps economic units understand challenges, opportunities and how to interact with them.



DATA

The data of this research involves Dream City Mall, Rubayee Street, Zayuna neighborhood, Baghdad. It is a multi-story commercial mall that consists of a total area of 44,000 square meters.

The theoretical aspect

1. Concept of Stealth Marketing

The root of the word "stealth refers" to an act or action that is confidential and imperceptible, hence to "escape surveillance." Stealth marketing is one of the contemporary issues that researchers have begun to explore as a new strategic marketing concept that is being used by economic units to promote their products and services implicitly and indirectly. Also, this marketing is called secret or ghost marketing. The strategy of this marketing lies in the way it advertises the service or commodity to be provided to the target customer on the basis that it is hidden without appearing to be clear and by unblunt advertising practices. In other words, the commodity or service reaches the customer in unexpected ways and gradually without feeling it. Therefore, this method is more innovative in influencing customers' purchasing decisions (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004:44). This strategy attempts to learn about what customers think and then focus on it without knowing them by understanding their behavior, influencing their convictions, focusing on their preferences, devising the means that have the most to their mind, and motivating them towards the products offered. (Abraham ,2000:97) noted that stealth marketing is his maneuver under a scientific and thoughtful method to increase the market share of the economic unit. It is a method based on scientific and psychological analysis of the behavior of targeted customers before being perceived by competitors. Also, (Zyman ,2002:166) indicated that stealth marketing is a promotional style and an effective tool for the desired impact events on targeted customer behavior.

To illustrate the idea of stealth marketing more, there is an economic unit that produces coffee and to promote this product, the economic unit leases a shop equipped with all the amenities and beautiful atmosphere in a special place to open a coffee shop produced by this unit. This shop offers coffee to customers without feeling under direct marketing pressure or publicity for coffee. Here the natural response will come by passers-by entering the cafe to relax and have coffee. This achieves social interaction by interacting between customers and exchanging conversations about experiences in the quality of coffee and cafe space. This will increase the spread of naturally beautiful and influential words among acquaintances and friends. Over time, the coffee shop, coffee type, and how positive the experience is gradually revealed and utilized.

1.1.Reasons of Stealth Marketing(Abdul Wahid et al,2021:620):

- 1.The effectiveness of traditional marketing practices has significantly decreased in the face of the fierce competition created by globalization's consequences.
- 2.High frequency of criticism about the advertising industry and low impact.
- 3.The great development and incredible innovations in internet technologies, delivering advertising messages, social media platforms, and the proliferation of advanced equipment and devices that replaced radio and television.
- 4.The stalemate and limited opportunities in economic units coincide with the diversity of customers' wishes and needs and the rise in their ambitions.
- 5.Stealth marketing gives the customer credibility and confidence and reduces the anxiety they can experience. The customer can experience the product or service smoothly and without feeling that there is promotional pressure exerted on them. This behavior makes the customer more open and curious about exploring to learn more about the products offered.
- 6.Progressive detection of products or services provided provides an opportunity for the economic unit to establish a typical relationship with the customer based on understanding and trust.

1.2.Strengths of Stealth Marketing(Kaikati,2004:34):

- 1.Stealth marketing has strong influences on the customer's decisions and intentions.
- 2.Stealth marketing is a fast way to communicate and promote marketing messages.
- 3.Promotion through stealth marketing is less expensive compared to traditional promotional methods and this confirms the attitude of researchers.
- 4.Intensive promotion stealth marketing has a great influence compared to traditional marketing promotion.
- 5.Stealth marketing is a better promotional way than traditional marketing, especially with products that have high technical characteristics or have emotional effects



6. Stealth marketing methods are more effective and have a great impact depending on the use of the appropriate technique (there are different stealth marketing techniques).

7. Proponents of stealth marketing consider it more credible than traditional marketing.

WEAKNESSES OF STEALTH MARKETING

1. Weak control over marketing messages in stealth marketing compared to traditional marketing.

2. Stealth marketing messages are easily distorted.

3. Fear of misuse of brands which can cause unexpected reactions.

4. The gravity of targeting "non-target segments" stealth marketing.

5. Stealth marketing makes no use of it in marketing certain products, such as oil products, gas, and some chemicals.

6. The marketer's discovery has a negative impact on the location and reputation of the marketplace, as customers are assured that they have been deceived and misled.

7. Stealth marketing opponents consider it a deception, fraud, and a way to manipulate customers.

1.3. Techniques of Stealth Marketing

Stealth marketing involves several marketing techniques which are detailed as follows.

1-Viral Marketing

If we assume there is someone with an infectious viral disease, everyone you mix with is likely to become infected, the infection will be transmitted from person to person easily and quickly, and this will cause widespread transmission of the disease. If we apply this metaphor to viral moving to describe electronic marketing of services and goods, we will find that transmission depends on transmitting the marketing message similar to the spread of viral infection from one person to another. In the same vein, the viral marketing concept represents the rapid spread of the marketing message of the product or service to customers using various internet-based tools such as emails, Facebook, Instagram, social media networks, tweets, blogs, or the company's website. Viral marketing makes customers engage in marketing and purchasing products, the cost of viral marketing campaigns is very small by comparison to the scale of widespread spread among the target audience, and marketing will be effective (Alkhafagi & ALSiede, 2022:6).

Viral marketing can be seen as a double-edged sword. Although it is a fast and effective way of marketing, it can be used unethically by some competitors against competitors to hit their products and brand, send a fake message within a professional campaign, change customers' convictions about a product or brand of the competitor, spread rumors that undermine trust and credibility of what it offers and without knowing the source of this cheap message. Viral marketing can be achieved in these techniques.

-Word of Mouth

Sometimes the company itself promotes its products or services through a marketing campaign using word of mouth which is called WOM marketing. People may tell each other when they see new videos with YouTube, Facebook, or some apps and social networks, and this leads to spreading online within the launch of a viral marketing campaign. A study published by Magazine Inc. posited that 82% of fast-growing economic units use such strategies to market their products (Hendrayati and Pamungkas, 2020:7).

-E-word of Mouth

With the advancement of new technologies, another term has emerged, the oral electronic word (E-WOM). It is a statement whether negative or positive issued by any potential or previous customer about a brand, product, or online service. This means can reach many people and institutions. The standard that makes E-WOM more effective than WOM is its transporting speed, reaching more customers, and can be exchanged through multiple methods. Thus, viral marketing can be described as a marketing strategy based on encouraging individuals to convey the marketing message to others, contributing to the high rate of exposure to this message, the unlimited impact of this message, and the credible message composition of customers (Shankar, Jebarajakirthy, and Ashaduzzaman, 2020:8).

2-Celebrity Marketing

Celebrity marketing is intended to be used by the economic unit of community celebrities (artists, athletes, politicians, and any known or socially influential personality) to promote their products, services, or brands. This marketing depends on moving the positive image of celebrity itself to the product, service, or brand. This way, marketers can urge customers to imitate celebrities to buy marketed products (Schouten, 2020: 8, Janssen and Verspaget). Therefore, the economic unit can promote its unknown (mysterious) product or service using the positive impact



celebrity has on the customer to become recognized products and to participate in their renaming (Shakeel and Khan, 2011:9). The higher a celebrity rating, the more a celebrity adds effect to his hidden promotion campaign. celebrity marketing can work by:

-Traditional Celebrities

The use of actors, famous athletes, or models is an acceptable way to stealth marketing. The use of celebrities in marketing adds "celebrity value" to the brand, product, or service advertised to people.

-Bloggers

Using bloggers is an emerging method of hidden marketing. Blogger is anyone who publishes continuously on their online accounts and their influential productions are in memoir form and are presented to the reader in serial order. These products can include texts, photos, videos, links to websites, or other blogs. At present, many economic units are employing influencers on social media platforms to promote their products (Schouten, 2020:10, Janssen and Verspaget).

-Flogs

These new stealth marketing have recently emerged. This method aims to have a positive impact towards the products targeted for marketing by offering them spontaneously and unrealistically. The purpose of this method is to make positive effects among customers without their perception of who is doing it while developing comments and opinions that are "manufactured" and not real about the product. The main goal of these sites is to stimulate customer purchasing decisions (Maurya, 2011:9).

3-Brand Pushers

This concept refers to how customers get insight into people's rules or standards of conduct in specific situations. The Social Standards Theory states that people usually become aware of normative behavior by observing the behaviors of credible, attractive, and elegant people (brand pushers). These people pretend to be customers. This behavior can extend to setting up marketing when potential customers assess the market and brand data they may buy by looking at these people's behavior. Some people may mimic other people's behavior for believing that they can in this way obtain social acceptance. Therefore, potential customers closely familiarize themselves with product specifications and accept them spontaneously without realizing that they are under the influence of a marketing effort for a promotional campaign (Alkhafagi & ALSiede, 2022:9). brand pushers' strategy lies in the following practices.

-Collective Behavior

It is a social term for the definition of impulsive actions or behaviors of groups of people that suddenly occur without observing norms, traditions, or other social ideas towards an unusual attitude. Thus, these people are in the same impulsive way as one person.

-Social Proof

It is a psychological phenomenon that gives the impression that the behavior of others is correct and should be followed. That is what makes our decision a reflection of the actions of the people around us. The power that influences purchasing decision-making is called social evidence. For example, when deciding to buy something that is required to prove true by a number of people, they confirm that the seller is a source of trust and its products of high quality over the Internet (Talib & Saat, 2017:8).

4-Video Game Marketing

Video games are a kind of digital entertainment that has a high turnout of children and young people (potential customers). Through video games, the economic unit can have advertising opportunities to interact, integrate its brands, and make it an integral part of the game. Therefore, economic units manufactured for video games use brand logos in sports in the real-world tradition of sport such as auto racing and football. In exchange, video game makers get money from the brand owner. This makes economic units pay money for the inclusion of their product logos in video games (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004:46). Hence, marketers promote loyalty and brand awareness by customers in a non-explicit way through successful video games (Calvert, 2008:8). Video game marketing is done through:



-Agreement

It is an agreement between the economic unit (brand owner) and the video game factory to put its brand logo in the manufactured game.

-Game Developing

The economic unit can hire computer programmers to manufacture a game specially designed to promote its brand.

-Other Promotion Methods

Such as creating games in the form of contests and uploading their ransoms to social media sites.

5-Music Marketing

Music has recently gained considerable attention as a tool or technique for stealth marketing by including pop and rap music business messages as enjoying wide fame. For example, Coca Cola has contracted renowned music companies to sing ads in their favor among lyrics that sing about their products and rap music and pay tribute to their famous brands. Music songs have thus become one of the host models of products and branding because of the widespread dissemination of these arts, which are attracted by a large class of society. This technology can be expanded by using films or television series in this way and it is possible to use art marketing to describe this marketing.

6-Marketing Through Social Responsibility

The main objective of social responsibility is to make voluntary contributions and efforts to society in various fields and not to achieve profits. At the same time, this idea can be transformed into stealth marketing by exploiting the charitable work offered by the economic unit to enhance its reputation and promote its products or services. Therefore, social responsibility can be stealth marketing because of its social impact that can be shed towards commercial benefits. Also, the social responsibility of the economic unit can be combined with a good marketing strategy using modified and distinctive programs (Armstrong, 2008:16). This is done by building a good reputation and sending messages to society that economic unity cares about people and their lives. These practices can be a mask that hides the main goal of achieving greater sales and market share through the use of social responsibility technology.

2. Concept Attracting Customers

Customer attraction is an essential part of the marketing strategy because it aims to draw the potential customer's attention to the purchase by providing what is necessary for his masks of the quality of the product or service provided by the economic unit by showing the benefit that can be obtained. To attract customers, there are a range of activities carried out by the economic unit that require constant monitoring and evaluation for maximum success in the markets. Over the past decades, the business has witnessed a revolution in electronic information and the emergence of the Internet that helped to provide managers with a large amount of information that was out of their reach by providing it with a single click on the mouse. These developments increase management's effectiveness in using thoughtful methods towards customers and influencing their behavior.(Mohammed ,2021:332) explained the concept of customer attraction as a set of influential values that have the ability to guide customer behavior by influencing their conviction and purchasing decisions as reflected positively or negatively on the products and services provided. Moreover, (Al-Adhamy ,2022:75) held that customer attraction is the emotional correlation between customers and products provided by a business. Attracting customers after economic openness and lifting restrictions between countries (globalization) is not easy. Customers have become more open and conscious and their poor interest in them cannot be supplemented by the provision of advanced technology or greater information, but by finding modern ways to better manage their interest. Why satisfying customers requires knowing their needs, desires, reading their thoughts, and interpreting their behavior in consumption. Thus, (Al-Kubaisy ,2022:321) underlined four dimensions for customer behavior:

-Attention-Drawing: It is a process of understanding and interpretation initiated by the customer of the marketing information to which he is exposed so that he can identify and select certain marketing information without others.

-Excitement: Excitement represents emotional cognitive feelings that activate human capacity when the body interacts with external stimuli. Psychological vigilance is directly related to sensory and emotional processes such as perception and attention.

-Desire Creation: The degree of need or desire that the customer needs to exercise personal control over the environment. This desire is influenced by an individual's behavioral information.

-Customer Response: Identifying the benefit and emotional need of advertising which is often associated with the desire to solve or avoid a problem by satisfaction.

2.1. Customer Purchasing Behavior



The time came for the economic unit to realize that the customer is the focal point of any marketing activity and marketers must understand the customer's behavior. The customer's purchasing behavior is the pattern followed by searching, selecting, buying and using products and services offered based on the ideas he has in assessing the need and possible and expected satisfaction of the purchase decision. In other words, this behavior is a set of actions by the customer when exposed to an internal or external stimulus direction of desire or need that requires satisfaction by making a purchase decision for a particular product. The primary objective of the customer's behavior can be determined to meet the desire and satisfaction of the need by choosing from a range of alternatives available according to the expected perception of the level of satisfaction and satisfying the desire of each alternative. Interpreting customers' behavior to buy depends on studying their ideas in general and the methods they adopt in the trade-off between products and services offered that meet their desires and needs. In this way, the customer's purchasing behavior is influenced by all thoughts, feelings, and emotions that invade or surround his mind before and during the purchase and are responsible for the purchase decision (choice of product, place of sale, quantification, and time of purchase) (A-Rumaidy & Ismail, 2023:8) This means that the customer's purchase decision is influenced by internal personal factors such as psychological factors, level of desire, motivation to buy, size of perception, and level of learning. In addition, this decision is influenced by external factors such as environmental factors, social customs imposed by family, relatives, friends, and the class and religious culture in which he lives (Abu Warda et al, 2019:22). The most important of these internal and external factors can be explained as follows:

-Internal Factors

1-Need

The need is to feel indigent or incomplete for a particular thing, which drives the customer to behave by satisfying his need and overcoming the shortage.

2-Motif

Motivation is a set of irrational determinants of human actions such as needs, desires, illusions, emotions, habits, sensations, interests, lusts, doctrines, etc. But at the same time, customers may have the same needs but not the same motivations that make the purchase decision different from one customer to another despite having the same need. Motivations can be divided into:

-Main Motifs and Secondary Motifs:

The main motif is the forces that drive the customer towards satisfying his wishes and his innate need such as food, drink, and sleep. Secondary motifs are forces that drive the customer towards satisfying needs aimed at stability, safety, self-fulfillment, and other social needs.

-Rational and Emotional Motifs

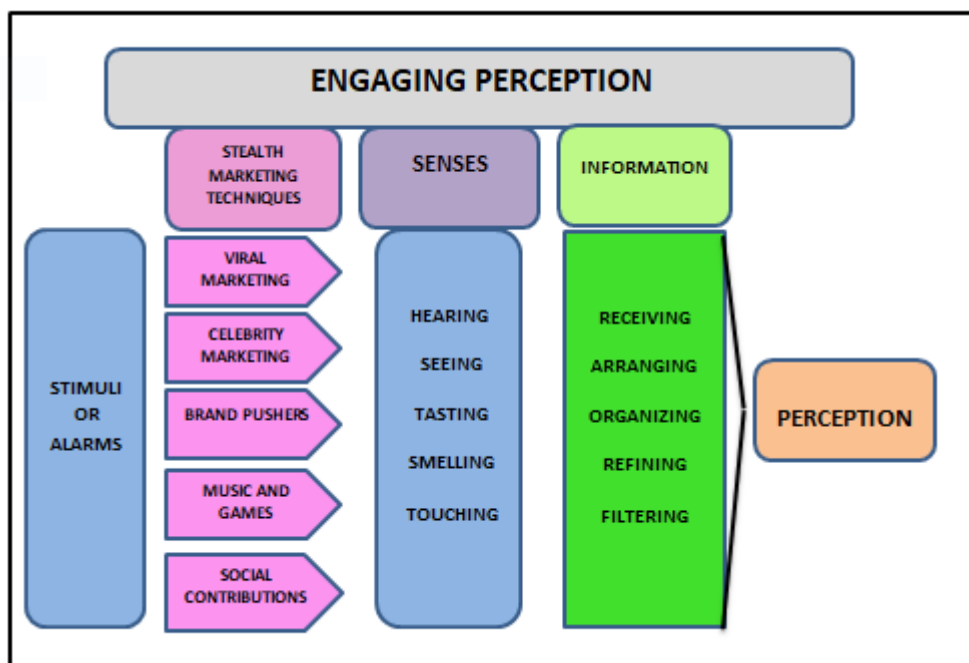
Emotional motivations are the forces that drive the customer to purchase products and services without subjecting them to objective evaluation, but merely to imitate the opinions or tradition of influential people belonging to certain groups. The customer may follow the purchase decision simply to be impressed with the exterior of a particular product. So, the purchase decision is spontaneous and without study or thinking, but just for tradition, love of showing up. Rational motives are the forces that drive the customer to buy products thoughtfully and rationally by differentiating between available alternatives based on objective and logical thinking to achieve satisfaction and satisfaction.

3-

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Perception in marketing is reception, arrangement, organization, and promotional the customer five senses, shown in the below:

(1): Perception promotion Al-Sumaidayee Othman (1998:137)



Numerous stimuli are encountered by individuals throughout their lifespan. Therefore, when an individual desires to acquire a specific product or service, they select and receive the appropriate alarm. This alarm clock accumulates information regarding the product, classifies and analyzes this information using their senses, and then transfers this information to the customer's mind for comprehension. The customer makes the purchase decision in consideration of these practices. The customer's perception is influenced by two primary factors: the characteristics of the conscious thing itself, and the mental and psychological condition of the conscious customer, including the time of perception and psychological levels such as intelligence, education, memory, interests, tendencies, expectations, and mood. Consequently, consumers' cognitive abilities differ despite their shared requirements and motivations and exposure to identical stimuli.

-External Factors

1-Cultural Factors

They are factors of a set of knowledge, doctrines, ethics, moral values, thoughts, and attitudes highlighted by customers towards different areas of their lives that constitute behavioral and consumer patterns that distinguish them from other customers belonging to other cultures.

2-Religious Factors

Marketers are interested in religious factors that would curb the promoter's freedom to use certain marketing methods, such as marketing for religiously forbidden products such as liquor as well as any other products that are forbidden by Islam.

3-Geographical Factors

People living in the countryside are in high demand for certain types of products and the rate at which they are ordered by city dwellers is reduced due to different habits, varying traditions, or varying climates.

4-Age

The uptake of new products and services varies according to the customer's age. For example, adolescents are more open to acquiring these products from the elderly.

5-Social Factors

The customer's purchasing behavior is influenced by several social factors, including:

-Social Status

There are several divisions to distinct societies based on income, living standards, occupation, and qualification.

-Authoritative Groups

There are affiliations of individuals within reference groups that have an impact on the behavior of the individual and these influences make the individual choose a particular behavior to satisfy his or her needs in a manner similar to that of his or her own group, the most important of which is family and clan.



3. Cost Reduction Through Stealth Marketing

Economic units use stealth marketing because it is often more efficient than traditional marketing. Stealth marketing helps build a positive brand image of economic unity without having to spend big on promotion. The requirement is that stealth marketing activities respect customer protection laws, transparency in order to avoid negative or legal problems. Also, there must be a marketing department that operates from a cutting-edge strategic intellectual perspective aimed at promoting a product or service at low costs by preventing wastage and loss in all marketing activities. This can be done through several innovative methods (A-Rumaidy & Ismail, 2023:4):

-Celebrities (Indirect Cooperation with Influencers)

Instead of paying large sums directly to influencers, the economic unit can collaborate with them to produce content (video clips or blogs) targeting a common class of customers, and it helps promote brand awareness of the economic unit without any additional costs.

-Investing in Public Commercial Relations

By participating in commercial and industrial events such as domestic and international exhibitions and providing support and social contributions aimed at achieving public benefit rather than remaining constrained by traditional advertising. These practices enhance the brand's position in domestic and international markets without the need for additional spending (Abu Warda et al., 2019:11).

-Cooperating with Strategic Partners

In order to get opportunities to exchange, promote, or make joint promotions, which helps provide marketing for products or services provided at the lowest cost

-Smart Use of Digital Spaces and Modern Technology

Using these platforms, including social networks and e-mail, helps to reach the target audience at the lowest cost and more effectively. As Alan Kay put it, "the best way to predict the future is to invent it." The marketing opportunity represents the need or desire that the customer aspires to and that the marketer predicts in advance. (Kotler, 1997: 45). A

Predicting and appreciating the opportunity is a difficult challenge that depends on the internal capabilities of the economic unit from analyzing and assessing the importance of the opportunity and the timeliness of its exploitation. In general, stealth marketing can be very effective in attracting customers and changing their behavior by building trust and naturally interacting with products provided by the economic unit. Using this strategy, economic units can maximize their profits at the expense of their costs and communicate with their audiences more effectively and cheaply.

3.1. Cost Reduction by Marketing Technique

The use of stealth marketing techniques reduces costs depending on each technique (A-Rumaidy & Ismail, 2023:5) and (Raouf, 2018:173);

1-Role of Viral Marketing

Viral marketing technology aims to promote products or services quickly and effectively by encouraging and supporting individuals towards sharing media content with others. This technology can contribute to reducing marketing costs by:

-Reducing advertising costs: Instead of spending big money on traditional advertising campaigns, they can contribute to achieving the same or better goals at a lower cost.

-Increased opportunities for interaction and access: viral marketing enjoys fast and large access between people. This means that the marketing message reaches customers with less cost and effort, providing the opportunity to provide the resources that the economic unit would have lost to attract them.

-Building a positive reputation: By sharing content voluntarily and with internal motivation enhances the credibility of the product. This creates a positive effect that leads to increased loyalty, which reduces the need for additional and costly promotional campaigns.

-Saving of human resources: Instead of hiring a group of employees for the purpose of running traditional promotional campaigns, the same management can be done by a small team working to achieve creative content and better.

- Taking advantage of free user recommendations: These recommendations may have a greater impact than paid ads as they come from authorized and reliable sources.

2-The Role of marketing technique through celebrities in cost reduction

The role of celebrity marketing technology is in reducing cost thanks to several factors:



-The celebrity marketing technology contributes to reach and increase the spread because celebrities have followers on various social media, helping economic units reach their wide audience class without having to spend any extra on traditional promotional advertising.

-Influencing the customer's decision in the procurement process through celebrity recommendations that have a significant role to play on purchasing decisions and more than traditional promotional campaigns making this effect more effective and cost-efficient.

-Contribute to reducing the need for paid advertising if celebrities have the ability to persuade customers, reducing the need to spend on additional ads

-Celebrity marketing technology contributes to rapid results in raising awareness of products and brand, reducing the need for extensive promotional campaigns.

-Celebrity marketing technology contributes to improving the return compared to traditional methods since the cost of collaboration with celebrities can be high but at the same time the benefit of customer interaction and high demand for products is more effective and economical.

-The celebrity marketing technology contributes to the creation of creative and attractive content with the ability to effectively promote the brand as it reduces the need to incur additional cost in creating additional content that is not economically feasible.

-Celebrity marketing technology contributes to building a long-term relationship with customers making the economic unit do not need frequent marketing or promotional campaigns.

Notwithstanding these advantages, there must be a clear strategy for the economic unit to measure return when collaborating with celebrities to align with its objectives.

3-The Role of Marketing Technique Through Brand Pushers

Marketing through brand pushers plays an important role in reducing marketing costs by:

-Reducing the need for paid advertising. This technique promotes products through the personal platforms of promoters who recommend the product while previewing the personal experiences of the promoter so as to reach the largest number of customers and achieve strong results at a lower cost.

-Brand pushers' credibility effectively promotes advertising campaigns by improving brand reputation, reducing the need for high-cost promotions, and raising the level of credibility.

-Brand pushers, through their personal relationships with their followers, contribute to increased interaction and engagement. Accordingly, these advantages enhance interaction and engagement, facilitate the quick and natural spread of messages, and reduce the need for costly content creation.

-Brand pushers marketing contributes to results based on personal interaction by providing a more appropriate personal experience. Therefore, brand pushers' ability to influence and reach the largest number of audiences will benefit from a decrease in marketing campaign costs, especially when they carefully select their promoters.

4-Role of Marketing Through Video Games in Cost Reduction

Video game marketing plays an important role in reducing marketing cost through (Fouda & Abdel-Rahman, 2020:19):

-Video game marketing reduces costs by integrating the game's product and service brands. This creates constant brand connectivity and enhances customers' loyalty without the need for advertising or costly promotional campaigns.

-Video game marketing contributes to making advertising unobtrusive, effective, and doesn't need to be expensive.

-Video game marketing contributes to spreading the brand's messages in an influential and compelling manner through gaming influencers across YouTube and Switch, which is more effective and less expensive than TV ads or other paid ads.

-Video game marketing contributes to raising brand awareness through free, integrated games that are more attractive to the largest audience. This method allows economic units to benefit from a broad mass base in marketing at minimal cost.

-Video game marketing contributes to collective interaction by creating communities, groups, and brand promotion clubs. Therefore, this method offers various ways to reduce costs and reach a wider audience.

5-Role of Marketing Through Music in Cost Reduction

Music marketing plays an important role in reducing marketing costs in a number of ways (Raouf, 2018:178), including:

- Music marketing contributes to increased interaction and remembrance. Beautiful, attractive, and distinctive music has the ability to enhance interaction with the brand, build an emotional connection with it, make it positive, and contribute to increased promotion without the need for costly or additional marketing campaigns.



- Music marketing reduces costs by producing low-cost promotional content using music at the heart of marketing content. This helps improve his reputation, make him more attractive and effective, and doesn't need much cost.
- Music marketing contributes to collaboration with musicians and bands that can provide better opportunities to promote the brand in a non-traditional style compared to traditional advertising campaigns. Also, artists have a large audience base that promotes brand awareness faster.
- Music marketing enhances customer loyalty, reducing the need for additional ads to attract new customers.
- Music marketing contributes to identifying and targeting audiences, and this can reduce the wastage of marketing budgets on pointless targeting towards an inappropriate audience.

6-Role of Marketing Through Social Responsibility in Cost Reduction

Marketing through social responsibility helps reduce costs through:

- Marketing through social responsibility contributes to reducing costs by enhancing the reputation of products and services provided by the economic unit. This positively reflects on the brand, and the presence of a good and strong reputation reduces the need for additional promotional or advertising campaigns, as the audience views units that support social responsibility issues as more reliable.
- Marketing through social responsibility reduces costs by increasing loyalty and belonging. In this way, the economic unit does not need to enhance customer loyalty, which reduces the need to invest sums in attracting customers.
- Marketing through social responsibility contributes to improved media interaction and acclaim. These practices highlight the brand and raise awareness of it without the need for significant investments in advertising.
- Marketing through social responsibility contributes to reducing crises to economic unity. Since crisis management can be costly, adherence to society's values and ethics reduces problems that may lead to increased costs.
- Marketing through social responsibility contributes to attracting talent. This method attracts talented, good, more committed, productive, and economically viable employees to their work.
- Marketing through social responsibility stimulates partnerships and opens doors to economic units with NGOs and other organizations. This creates opportunities for collaboration, marketing, and mutual promotion at low costs.
- Marketing through social responsibility contributes to supporting sustainability, reducing operational costs, improving energy efficiency, and reducing waste. These practices boost profits and reduce the need for additional marketing balances.

Practical Administration and Application

Sample and Data

The Dream City Mall is an important shopping and trading center which is based on Rubayee Street, in the Zayuna neighborhood, Baghdad. This mall consists of five floors with a total area of 44,000 square meters. The mall boasts a modern design, making it a popular shopping destination for the average Iraqi family. The mall houses a diverse array of shops, totaling approximately 250, offering a wide range of household supplies, clothing, shoes, electrical appliances, and electronic devices. Additionally, the mall includes a range of restaurants that offer international as well as local cuisines. Also, the mall offers a variety of leisure services and visitor-specific necessities, including a parking lot, children's areas, and a movie theater. These services make the mall ideal for the Iraqi family. This mall has been selected to be a sample of study due to the cooperation of management and staff as well as the abundance of shoppers and visitors.

Research Tool

To investigate the problem of this study and answer research questions, a two-item questionnaire has been designed. The first item is concerned with the main variable, that is stealth marketing, while the second item is concerned with the customer attraction and cost reduction. The customers of the mall, that is the shoppers and visitors, have been chosen as subjects or respondents to the above-mentioned questionnaire.

Sample Description

The tables below demonstrate the statistical description of the sample following demographic factors:

1-Sex

Table (1) below shows that males make up (21%) of the total sample size, while females make up about (79%) of that sample.

Table (1) Sex

Item	No.	Frequency %
Males	22	20.6



Females	85	79.4
Total	107	100

2-Age

Table (2) below shows that 27.1% of the subjects of the total sample are under 25 years, 28.9% of the subjects are between 25 and 35 years, 23.4% of the subjects are between 35 and 45 years, and 20.6% of the subjects are over 45 years.

Table (2) Age

Item	No.	Frequency %
Under 25 years	29	27.1
25 to 35 years	31	28.9
35 to 45 years	25	23.4
Over 45 years	22	20.6
Total	107	100

3-Academic Qualification

Table (3) demonstrates that 38.1 % of the subjects hold a bachelor's degree, 8.4% hold a master's degree, 4.7% hold a PhD, and 48.6% hold other diplomas.

Table (3) Academic Qualification

Item	No.	Frequency %
Bachelor	41	38.3
Master's	9	8.4
PhD	5	4.7
Other diplomas	52	48.6
Total	107	100

Testing the Reliability of the Scale

Reliability means that the questionnaire items are stable, consistent, and not contradictory. In other words, testing and retesting the items, or applying them to the same subjects twice, will yield consistent results. Therefore, the researcher calculated the reliability of the questionnaire items using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

To calculate the reliability of the questionnaire items, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient has been used to verify the reliability of the questionnaire items on the 107-questionnaire sample. Table (4) below demonstrates the reliability coefficients adopted in this study.

Table (4) Reliability factors of the designed scale based Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Variables	No. of questions	Alpha coefficient
Item 1: Stealth marketing techniques	42	0.939
First dimension: Viral marketing	7	0.800
Second dimension: Celebrity marketing	7	0.828
Third dimension: Brand pushers marketing	7	0.789
Fourth dimension: Video game marketing	7	0.758
Fifth dimension: Music marketing	7	0.737
Sixth dimension: Social responsibility marketing	7	0.743
Item 2: Customer attraction and cost reduction	12	0.714



Total	54	0.945
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Table (4) shows that the general reliability of the sample items is high, at 0.945 for the 54 items of the questionnaire. Reliability in the first item is 0.939, while in the second item it is 0.714. This indicates that the questionnaire is highly reliable and consistent and that it can be relied upon in the practical administration of this study according to Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) scale, which was adopted at (0.7) as a minimum (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

This subsection elaborates on and discusses the statistical results drawn after the hypotheses, aiming to investigate the impact of stealth marketing techniques (viral marketing, celebrity marketing, brand pushers, video game marketing, music marketing, and social responsibility) on customer attraction and cost reduction, have been answered.

1-Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance Indicator

To verify the linear interrelationship among independent variables, the VIF and the Tolerance indicator were used. VIF has been assumed to be smaller than (10), while the tolerance indicator has been assumed to be greater than (0.1). The table below demonstrates the results:

Table (5) Results of VIF test and Tolerance indicator

Variables	VIF	Tolerance
First dimension: Viral marketing	5.11	0.195
Second dimension: Celebrity marketing	4.08	0.245
Third dimension: Brand pushers marketing	6.69	0.149
Fourth dimension: Video game marketing	3.81	0.262
Fifth dimension: Music marketing	2.52	0.396
Sixth dimension: Social responsibility marketing	2.60	0.384

Table (5) above illustrates that all values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) are below (10), while tolerance index values (Tolerance) are greater than (0.1). These frequencies suggest that there is no problematic linear interrelationship among independent variables.

2-Test of Hypotheses

-Results of the main hypothesis test (There is a significant relation between stealth marketing techniques on one hand on customer attraction and cost reduction on the other hand:

1.Sub-hypothesis (1)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (viral marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

2.Sub-hypothesis (2)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (celebrity marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

3.Sub-hypothesis (3)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (brand pushers) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

4.Sub-hypothesis (4)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (video game marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

5.Sub-hypothesis (5)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (music marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

6.Sub-hypothesis (6)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (social responsibility marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

The correlation between independent variables (stealth marketing techniques), along with their related sub-techniques (viral marketing, celebrity marketing, brand pushers, video game marketing, music marketing, and social responsibility), and the dependent variable (customer attraction and cost reduction) is tested, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table (6) Results of correlation between independent variables and the independent variable



Variables	Correlation coefficient	Probability value
Item 1: Stealth marketing techniques	.769**	.000
First dimension: Viral marketing	.662**	.000
Second dimension: Celebrity marketing	.586**	.000
Third dimension: Brand pushers marketing	.703**	.000
Fourth dimension: Video game marketing	.758**	.000
Fifth dimension: Music marketing	.606**	.000
Sixth dimension: Social responsibility marketing	.589**	.000

**Statistically significant at 0.01

*Statistically significant at 0.05

As the table above shows, the correlation coefficient between independent variables (stealth marketing techniques), along with their related sub-techniques (viral marketing, celebrity marketing, brand pushers, video game marketing, music marketing, and social responsibility), and the dependent variable (customer attraction and cost reduction) is statistically significant at 0.01. This means there is a strong inverse correlation between independent variables and independent variables.

Results of The Main Hypothesis Validity (There is a significant effect of stealth marketing techniques on customer attraction and cost reduction)

To test the main hypotheses, the simple linear regression has been used to reveal the effect of the independent variable (stealth marketing) on the dependent variable (customer attraction and cost reduction).

Table (7) Results of simple linear regression

Variables	B	T	Sig.
Fixed limit	1.803	9.046	0.000
Stealth marketing techniques	0.584	12.336	0.000
Test Value (F)	152.174	Probability Value	0.000
Determination Factor (R²)	0.593	Modified Determination Factor (R²)	0.588
Durbin-Watson	2.046		

The results presented in the table above, as determined by statistical analysis, indicate that the analysis is significant. The Sig. value (F-statistic) is less than (0.05) and equal to (0.000). This indicates that the model is valid and that its results are reliable. The Durbin-Watson value, at 2.046, exceeds the R-squared value of 59%. This explains the lack of self-association and false regression. The R-squared value was 0.593, meaning that the interpretive power of the independent variables for the dependent variable is 59%. The adjusted R-squared value was 0.588, which means that independent variables affect the dependent variable by 59%. The remaining values (41%) are due to other non-model factors, including test accuracy-related random errors, the accuracy of measurement units, and others.

Interpretation of the Main hypothesis Results

The outcomes of the statistical analysis indicate that Sig. value of the independent variable (stealth marketing techniques) is less than 0.05, as it is 0.000. This suggests that there is a significant effect of stealth marketing on customer attraction and cost reduction. As for the equation of linear regression, it can be represented as follows:

$$Y = 1.803 + 0.584X1$$

where

Y: is customer attraction and cost reduction

X1: is stealth marketing techniques

Results of sub-hypotheses Tests

1.Sub-hypothesis (1)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (viral marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

2.Sub-hypothesis (2)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (celebrity marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

3.Sub-hypothesis (3)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (brand pushers) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

4.Sub-hypothesis (4)



There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (video game marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.
 5.Sub-hypothesis (5)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (music marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.
 6.Sub-hypothesis (6)

There is a significant effect of stealth marketing (social responsibility marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

To test the sub-hypotheses, a multiple linear regression has been used to reveal the effect of the independent variables (viral marketing, celebrity marketing, brand pushers, video game marketing, music marketing, and social responsibility) on the dependent variable (customer attraction and cost reduction).

Table (8) Results of multiple linear regression

Variables	B	T	Sig.
Fixed limit	1.380	6.557	0.000
Viral marketing	-0.007	-0.080	0.937
Celebrity marketing	-0.104	-1.695	0.093
Brand pushers	0.221	2.249	0.027
Video game marketing	0.340	3.806	0.000
Music marketing	0.147	2.515	0.013
Social responsibility marketing	0.080	1.466	0.146
Test Value (F)	32.756	Probability Value	0.000
Determination Factor (R²)	0.663	Modified Determination Factor (R²)	0.643
Durbin-Watson		2.219	

The results presented in the table above, as determined by statistical analysis, indicate that the analysis is significant. The Sig. value (F-statistic) is less than (0.05) and equal to (0.000). This indicates that the model is valid and that its results are reliable. The Durbin-Watson value, at 2.219, exceeds the R-squared value of 66%. This explains the lack of self-association and false regression. The R-squared value was 0.663, meaning that the interpretive power of the independent variables for the dependent variable is 66%. The adjusted R-squared value was 0.643, which means that independent variables affect the dependent variable by 64%. The remaining values (36%) are due to other non-model factors, including test accuracy-related random errors, the accuracy of measurement units, and others.

Interpretation of sub-hypothesis (1) results

The results of statistical analysis indicate that the Sig. value of the independent variable, stealth marketing (viral marketing), is higher than 0.05. It is 0.937, meaning that there is no significant effect of stealth marketing (viral marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

Interpretation of sub-hypothesis (2) Results

The results of statistical analysis indicate that the Sig. value of the independent variable, stealth marketing (celebrity marketing), is higher than 0.05. It is 0.093, meaning that there is no significant effect of stealth marketing (celebrity marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

Interpretation of sub-hypothesis (3) Results

The results of statistical analysis indicate that the Sig. value of the independent variable, stealth marketing (brand pushers), is higher than 0.05. It is 0.027, meaning that there is a significant effect of stealth marketing (brand pushers) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

Interpretation of sub-hypothesis (4) Results

The results of statistical analysis indicate that the Sig. value of the independent variable, stealth marketing (video game marketing), is higher than 0.05. It is 0.000, meaning that there is a significant effect of stealth marketing (video game marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

Interpretation of sub-hypothesis (5) Results



The results of statistical analysis indicate that the Sig. value of the independent variable, stealth marketing (music marketing), is higher than 0.05. It is 0.013, meaning that there is a significant effect of stealth marketing (music marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

Interpretation of sub-hypothesis (6) Results

The results of statistical analysis indicate that the Sig. value of the independent variable, stealth marketing (social responsibility marketing), is higher than 0.05. It is 0.146, meaning that there is no significant effect of stealth marketing (social responsibility marketing) on customer attraction and cost reduction.

As for the equation of linear regression, it can be represented as follows:

$$Y = 1.380 - 0.007X1 - 0.104X2 + 0.221X3 + 0.340X4 + 0.147X5 + 0.080X6$$

where

Y : is customer attraction and cost reduction

X1: is viral marketing

X2: is celebrity marketing

X3: is brand pushers

X4 : is video game marketing

X5: is music marketing

X6: is social responsibility

Conclusions:

1. There is a significant effect of stealth marketing techniques on attracting customers and reducing costs.
2. There is no statistical relationship between stealth marketing techniques, which are viral marketing, celebrity marketing, and social responsibility marketing, on one hand, attracting customers and reducing costs on the other hand.
3. There is a significant correlation between stealth marketing techniques, such as brand promoters, video game marketing, and music marketing, and their ability to attract customers and reduce costs.
4. Stealth marketing seeks to create indirect and unexpected reactions by customers without them noticing that they are under the influence of a promotional initiative, which reflects the evolution of the marketing process in more efficient and effective ways.
5. Stealth marketing effectively contributes to dealing with the changing and unstable challenges and conditions of the market. This strategy saves costs, ensures continuous interaction with customers, and builds solid relationships with them by providing content that meets their desires and stimulates their attention to their needs. Therefore, this strategy is effective in improving customer communication, reducing marketing costs, and increasing sales volume.

Recommendations:

1. The aspects and ethics of stealth marketing that can enhance customers' loyalty must be solidified as they influence their convictions and interest towards the brand.
2. Societal customs and norms must be observed, any practices opposing these customs and norms must be avoided, and the moral aspects of the celebrities and content creators hired to promote brands must be emphasized.
3. Promoters who are elegant, attractive, and experienced in seemingly spontaneous and unmade promotional techniques should be hired to promote brands.
4. Stealth marketing should be underscored as a successful strategy that influences customers' behavior and reinforces their convictions towards products and services offered.
5. Future research is needed to further investigate stealth marketing techniques, with economic units urged to support such approaches.

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