

Blog : by Aishwarya Gupta

Marketing :

What is marketing? In simple terms marketing is a tool which is used to increase sale/reach/awareness of a product or service . Tv commercials , Billboard banners , Free sampling in malls or even Election campaigns are all examples of marketing . While good marketing can reap huge benefits , a misconceived or undercooked marketing strategy can create havoc .

A good ad is simple to understand and conveys its message clearly but cleverly . A good ad is the one which creates long lasting brand recall . For example most of us would still remember ads of Lijjat Papad , ECE bulbs and tubes , Hamara Bajaj etc. One thing common in all the great long lasting memory ads is that all are simple and are directed straight to the target audience . Knowing your target audience and USP of your product is of utmost importance . In this regard , I feel detergent ads are the worst . All of them seem to be similar . It is very easy to recall ads of detergent as they are shown on tv screens through out the day but very difficult to recall the brand . For example we might not tell the brand in ad whether it is ad of rin , surf or ariel until the end of the ad although we have seen the same ad for thousand times . Here creativity matters . Here being different matters . If you cant be the best atleast be different . Also you should know the USP of your product . For example Sony never highlights features and specifications of its laptops although it being a technological product . It always highlights its style and comfort quotient , because laptops with better features and specifications are available in market at much cheaper prices . So why would anyone buy a sony laptop , well show him style and comfort . Get it?

A good ad is one which is so good that people recall and remember the brand for ages .For example people still remember ECE Bulbs ad even though the company itself has closed years ago . Also a good ad is one which is so bad that people still recall and remember the brand for ages . Bear in mind that purpose of ads is not creating awareness about the ad but creating awareness about the product . For example ad of PSM soaps was so bad that I still see PSM soap in my dreams . Everybody has seen one bad ad in his childhood that he still remembers . Well the purpose has been served by the ad nevertheless . It is to be noted that brand value has not been diluted by that ad .

Sometimes it is better to not to do marketing or advertising at all or just do select marketing . Confused ? Take for example BMW , Rolls Royce , Armani etc. When was the last time you saw ads for any of these . Well luxury brands restrain themselves from mass marketing . Not just because they have select class market but also because they want to maintain their exclusive touch-me-not elite kind of projection . For example why do people buy BMW in India . Hell it is easy to drive a maruti on such bad roads and traffic jams in India . Well people buy BMW because they want to show everybody that they can buy BMW . The thing with luxury items is that higher the price higher the sales . I don't think BMW would fare better if it slashes its price and announce it in Amar Ujala . Luxury items only sell if they are not readily available . Luxury items have to be rare and difficult to get . Only then it can maintain its charm . For example an Armani would not remain an Armani if it starts getting sold at pantaloons .

Also not so luxury brands but having their unique identities adopt hide-n-seek policy . For example Apple products . Apple rarely advertises its products and launches them at last in third world countries . There are two reasons for that , first it does not advertises its products

because it does not want anybody to buy apple product because of its specifications and all . People should buy apple because it is apple. Motorola xoom has much better specifications than ipad and not even 1/10th the sales . Secondly the delay launch in third world countries is made to make first world consumers feel privileged and thankful to apple and the delay creates more hype and curiosity in third world countries as it is they are always awed and overwhelmed by their western counterparts and are ready to copy anything in rage there . Ever noticed all great musicians come on India tour only when they are hell old and nobody cares about them in their home country . For example Bryan Adams , Guns n Roses etc.

Now , why do people buy anything? There can be two broad reasons :

- 1) They need something . ex bread
- 2) They want something . ex car

And why do people sell anything? There can be two broad reasons :

- 1) They need to purchase something else and for that they need money . ex bread
- 2) They want to purchase something else and for that they need money . ex car

Selling is an art and science both . Purchasing is purely economics and behavioral science . What do people look for before making a buying decision . Commonly only two factors are said to affect the decision . Namely –

1. Price
2. Quality

Price of the product is said to be directly proportional to the quality of the product . A consumer tries to strike a balance between the two before making a buying decision according to his budget and taste for quality .

But , according to me there is also a factor “X” which affects the buying decision much more than the price and quality of the product . I feel this factor X makes up for atleast 80% of all buying decisions . Take a look –

- You buy a LG Tv just because your neighbour has purchased one.
- You buy apple ipad just because your friends think its cool to have one .
- You buy LG tv just because your jijaji has recommended it and you cant say no to his recommendation .
- You buy LG tv just because it reminds you of someone .
- You buy LG tv just because you hate japan .
- You buy LG tv just because your boss has one and you think all successful people buy it.
- You buy LG tv just because everybody else have Samsung or Onida or Sony .
- You buy LG tv just because you loved your LG phone .
- You buy LG tv just because you hated your Samsung phone .
- You buy LG tv just because you find the female receptionist at LG store really hot .
- You buy LG tv just because the local LG dealer is of same caste .

There are numerous other instances when this factor X plays an important and sometimes definitive role in making that buying decision . It is very hard or nearly impossible for companies to tackle with this factor X as everybody has its unique factor X affecting his buying decision .

There is also one other factor that affects the buying decision , I will call it factor “Y” . It is much more powerful than factor “x” and it works on macro level . Companies tend to benefit or lose because of their country of origin , political climate or geographical location of their manufacturing plants etc. For example -

- How many of us would like to buy a Bangladeshi or Indonesian Perfume ?. We tend to buy perfumes and other luxury items originating from countries which we think are hygienic , clean and quality conscious .
- An Indian would always hesitate buying a Pakistani product . It is always difficult selling a product in a country having hostile or uncomfortable relationship with product’s country of origin .
- We always hesitate in buying chinese products just because an environment of cheap mass produced low quality products has been created for all Chinese goods . We are reluctant to buy a chinese fridge made by a chinese firm abc because a chinese scooter of made by Chinese firm def did not work properly .
- Racism also plays a part . We think all first world products are cool and all third world products are shit . You know olivepad is half the price and similar in specifications as of ipad .
- We follow blindly what rich and famous do . Or citizens of rich and powerful countries do . It is very cool to go on a country tour on a Harley Davidson , not so cool on a Bajaj Eliminator .
- Work ethics have different meaning in different countries . In India it is a common practice that a potter who sells pottery for a living to teach his son the skills of pottery , in western countries this can translate to child labour and harassment .

Companies undergo massive marketing campaigns to negate the affects of factor y . Remember marketing campaign of Lenovo products using purchased IBM logo ‘Thinkpad” . It tries to distance itself from other chinese companies . Nowhere you could find that lenovo is a chinese company unless and until you google its country of origin .

This preoccupied mind of a prospective consumer is the ultimate challenge for all marketing strategies and campaigns .

Should we give what a consumer wants ? The answer according to me is NO . It is a very low profit highly contested market . As it is I don’t think a consumer knows what he wants , he only knows what he needs . Take example of Maggi – Nobody had ever gone to nestle and said that we want instant noodles , kindly invent them and launch them . Nestle through its research and no market survey was the first one to invent and launch instant noodles . It forced consumers to change their taste and preferences for snacks . So , instead of asking consumers what they want , it is much more rewarding offering a product and forcing the consumers to want them . It is risky but then what is not .

I met one Mr. Alok Dutta last week before my car accident . He kept on going about his past successes and future successes to come . He said that he was a perfectionist and does not settle for anything less than the ‘Best’ . I replied that I doubted if he was the best looking guy in the world or had best wife in the world or best house in the world or was wearing best shirt in the world or best shoes in the world or drove best car in the world . I could go on and on but he stopped me midway and said what he really meant was he would not settle for anything less than the “best what he considered was best” .

See , here lies the truth . Nothing is best in the world . Best is most commonly used or misused word by both consumers and companies alike . Consumers always ask for the best , companies simply provide what is on offer and simply say they are offering the best .

Which is best – coca cola or pepsi? ferrari or lamborghini? Mercedes or Bmw? Armani or Gucci? Carlsberg or Heineken? Etc. etc. Nothing is best . Its all about your personal preferences and liking . What you like , you think is the best . An American will always say America is the best country in the world and give even solid reasons for that , we indians will say india is the best country in the world and we have our own reasons .

Companies do not try to make best products , they just try to make what you may like . Take a look on changing mobile phone trends – from sliding phones to fm phones to bluetooth phones to gaming phones to camera phones to currently touchscreen phones .

One thing that is to be kept in mind is monopoly does not exist , may be in yesteryears in some products but not today . There is competition in everything . And I mean everything . Even if you spend billions of dollars and start a company called Boing and make aircrafts , there is always Airbus . Get it? Even if you are a ‘rickshawallah’ there is competition . A roadside passenger calls you , asks for freight for a ride till mall road , you say 20rs , another rikshawallah shouts 15rs , the passenger goes with the other one . Even if you are a begger there is competition . A person comes out of temple , dozens of beggars flock around him . He gives pennies to few of the beggars and shoves away rest of them . Remember if you are not running and just standing still soon you will be left behind because others are running . A shopkeeper was content with his shop and life , he did not add value to his shop or products for years and just thought that everything would continue to be exactly in future as it is in present . Soon before he could realize another shop sprung up eating away all his business .

Competition is the essence and reason for existence of marketing. Marketing is the sole differentiator between a product that gets sold and the one that does not . Without competition a company can seriously harass and take undue advantage of consumer . For example – Microsoft for years charged us for windows versions which had no significant changes which were really of use . Competition enables a healthy market benefiting the consumer and keeps companies on their toes . While companies catering to same audience have similar products . For example – can anyone tell a raymond from reid&taylor without seeing the label , it is marketing which can turn a competition into no competition For example – competition for apple ishmm....apple itself .

Sometimes no marketing is good marketing as discussed earlier . Sometimes it is wise to just shut up . For example – when elections are coming , and people really want change then it would wise to just shut up and do no or little electoral campaign . The reason is if you do heavy campaigning , meet people going door to door , hold massive rallies etc then people may get too familiar with you . So , if they want real change then they just might choose an unknown face . They wont choose you because you wont then be representing change and novelty .

While doing my MBA from GHS-IMR , I learned in my marketing classes that there is nothing that cannot be sold if you have skills . After I did my MBA and joined my father’s business I learned that there is nothing that cannot be bought if you have money .

In world we are living in , everything gets sold . Even garbage industry is multi billion dollar industry today . If you know how to sell you can sell almost anything from aircrafts to used condoms .

Well , just for an example how can anybody sell a used condom . Can you ? Yes , you can if have the skills . There can be numerous ways 1)Tell people it was used by a big celebrity 2)It brings good fortune 3)Keeping it by bed can enhance your sex life 4)Infertile women can get pregnant 5) Removes impotency etc. Ofcourse all these ways amount to lies and fraud . Then how can we sell it without lying . Well , 1) People can keep it as souvenir 2) Also people selling their used condoms are selling their part of private life , you can share that by buying them 3) A complete couple biodata with family history , place and time of intercourse can be given with the used condom which increases its appeal and trust .

Now you see you can sell everything .

One thing I want to tell about me . I never cheated in my life . Not in any exams . No matter how important it was and how under prepared I was . In our world a report card is thought of nothing less than a crystal ball , telling past present and possible future of the person . Hah . I never cared for marks . Infact I had made a paper aeroplane out of my graduation marksheet and flew it off . I only cared about learning . I still remember my marketing guru's one teaching i.e. get out as soon as you close your business deal with someone because after closing the deal the customer would only haggle and squeeze you to get some more juice out of you . It really helped me . Once I had just got a big order form a big firm . The purchase manager then offered me coffee . But , I just said 'no , thank you' shook hands and got out . On my way back I saw my biggest competitor entering the office . The purchase manager after 30 min started calling me on my cellphone , I told him I cannot come back as I had gone too far from his office . Had I stayed in his office for coffee who knows I just might have lost business to my competitor .

I also remember one case study about a soap factory . One soap factory was facing a unique problem in its packing line , many soap wraps would go out of factory without having soap in them . I mean empty soap packs were being dispatched without having soap in them . It was very difficult to distinguish empty soap packs from packed ones . What could be the solution to the problem ? Well the ingenious solution was to just put a pedestal fan against the assembly line. Empty soap packs would just fly off . But is this the only solution , although it being an excellent one but not the only one according to me .

There are always atleast three possible solutions to any problem . I will name them as -

- 1) SEX – simple and expensive (often given by production manager)
- 2) CHIN – cheap and innovative (often given by accounts manager)
- 3) OPERA – opposite and rewarding (often given by marketing manager)

In the above case Sex would be to simply put an x-ray type of a machine or scanner on assembly line to scan the soap packs or put a weighing scale under the assembly line which would measure weights of all soap packs passing over it . Chin was to put a fan over the assembly line . Now what would be Opera . Well in my opinion Opera would be to announce a prize on all empty soap packs returned by customers . And actually promote it via marketing so people would think that you are giving away empty soap packs intentionally . Your Distributors , retailers and end consumers could become very happy by this initiative

and your sales might just increase . People would also just get curios how in the world do you manage to pack thin air into soap pack instead of solid soap . Hah .

As I told you earlier I never cheated in class . There is solid reason for that . I noticed while doing my MBA that my classmates would spend hours just deciding upon font size for their powerpoint presentation . They would fill their stomachs with books and spit it out in exams . I found it very amusing and depressing at the same time . I used to bunk a lot just because of these reasons . I could not understand that if you are such a study holic then why aren't you in IIM . Listen , I m not in IIM because I m a mediocre student , my teachers are not teaching at IIM because they are mediocre teachers . There is no point excelling at mediocrity if that's a word . If you had to study that much then you should have studied to clear CAT and enter IIM . Anyways even if I topped the college what would have been my initial salary offer , 10000-15000 . I could not survive on this paltry sum . I needed unusual so I did unusual . I used to bunk college and go to factory . I was doing mba for my business , so I could leave mba for business not business for mba . Also more importantly I did not want to make presentation on what lee iococa did , I want to imagine what I would have done in the situation .

I was proved right though at the end . After college we all had to write an application for security refund . Most of my classmates literally copied the application from me . Just imagine bookworm mba graduates copying simple security refund application . Guys , if you like to study then study so hard as to enter Harvard or Cambridge else don't fool yourself .

Pardon me if you find me bit harsh or self praising . I am just saying what I feel . I am on bed right now . I don't know for how long . I don't know will ever anyone read what I am writing . But then I never cared for anybody else . I can never sit idle That's my boon that's my curse . I made a website sitting on my college computer while others were selecting font for their presentation . I think its crime for anybody in his 20's to sit idle . I think its always more satisfying to become a billionaire than being born a billionaire .

I have many passions , one is buying domain names. Right now I own pukistan.com , mumbaiocan.com , fridgebottles.com , selectcopypaste.com , islamvsjudaism.com , jihadi.me , mujahid.me , hinduism.es , unitedprogressivealliance.com etc.

Right now I am torn between ambition and satisfaction . One gives hope another one gives happiness . Western world is based on ambition whereas our culture is based on getting satisfied with whatever little god has given . How to strike a balance between the two ? When ambition turns into greed ? When laziness wears mask of satisfaction ? What I expect from me ? How much is enough ? All these questions have many answers but are they correct ? who knows . I know what barrack obama should do , what sonia gandhi , manmohan singh , putin should do , no idea what I should do . lol

Other Thoughts :

There are only two kinds of people in the world , one who have money and one who do not have money , there is no other kind . If I have money then I do not care what people think or say , if I do not have money then people do not care what I think or say . We all say that a person should have a pure and good heart , a heart made of gold . See even here we compare the purity and goodness with a precious metal .

There is a honesty range for everybody unique to him . For example if I find a 10rs note lying on dirty road I will not pick it up because of hygiene and all but if I find a 1000rs note I will certainly pick it up . Also if I find a bag having 10lakh rs lying on road I would return it to police . So my honesty band is roughly below 1000rs and above 10lakh rs . I can be dishonest between 1000rs to 10lakh rs . Everybody have their own unique bands . But , sometimes you just can't afford to be honest . A person whose children are dying of hunger has no concern for honesty so his honesty band would be very flexible , more like a rubberband . After his children are fed and his basic needs are fulfilled he might just return to his fixed honesty band .

It was people coming alone in big sedan cars to the tv debate shows who were more concerned about how nano car would increase traffic on roads and how it should not be allowed to be launched . But we all have double standards . Ever noticed that anybody driving faster than you is a maniac and anybody driving slower than you is an idiot .

We live in a hypocrite world . A world where winners are praised losers are ridiculed . We all look at the result and not at the process . Now with my foot firmly in my mouth I am going to jump the gun by saying that I don't think Hitler was as bad as he is made out to be. Don't get me wrong , I hate Hitler as anybody else . But I think he has been singled out as epitome of villainy while others who have done much more horrific acts have gone unnoticed just because he lost the war . Enlighten me if I m wrong , had he won the war would we still be cursing and scoff at him . I think praise songs would have been written for him had he won . We are neither that honest nor that brave to take side with what is right , we just take side with the winner or powerful . If it is not the case then why there are still atrocities and genocides going on the world , there are still countries oppressed by ruthless dictators . How many of us dare to take a stand against them ? Tell me the difference between Hitler and Alexander The Great . Both invaded foreign lands for personal gains and killed innocent people . The only difference is that the latter won and former didn't . Also Alexander being a european waged wars against middle east , central and south asia and not against powerful countries of today , hence the title Alexander The Great . Everybody hates Hitler for using gas chambers in his concentration camps but does anybody realize russian prisoner of war camps were no better , sometimes even worse . Captured germans would be skinned , roasted and tortured by all thinkable and unthinkable means . Nobody talks about atrocities done by america in vietnam or japan in china . Also are we to believe that killing lakhs of innocent people by nuclear radiation is more humane and acceptable way than to kill prisoner of wars by poisonous gas . A big Hah . Unfortunately history is written by survivors . Once again I beg to clarify that I hate Hitler , god knows I do , but I don't support glorifying other villains just because they are of your country , caste , religion , ethnicity or simply because you like their hair style . Ever noticed that if you win , no committee or panel is set up to study the reasons or causes of the win but if you lose all hell breaks loose . A loser is always questioned and scrutinized . I read it somewhere 'winning is not the most important thing , it's the only thing' .