

REINVENTING MARKETING – TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM

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Let me begin with the poser. Who was the first marketer? Going by the holy book it was the Satan in the guise of a snake who marketed the idea of eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden to Eve, who subsequently prevailed upon Adam to do exactly as the Satan had wanted. So God created the first law and Satan succeeded in getting that law violated. The Scripture tells us that when God created Adam and Eve and put them in paradise he laid down a condition. They could enjoy everything that was there in the Garden of Eden but for a proviso. They were not supposed to eat the apple that was there on a tree which they should not touch. That was the forbidden fruit and Adam and Eve were convinced and willing to obey the command of God. But Satan had other designs. Like a professional marketing genius who sells products and ideas by creating a need for them, he created in Eve a desire for eating that fruit. What followed needs no elaboration! Eve prevailed on Adam and like a true loving husband he did the honours. But the point that needs to be driven home is that the first ever marketer who created the first successful campaign was Satan. Marketing still remains devil's business, promoting consumption, selling more than what is needed, sometimes even what is not needed?

Against this backdrop we need to dissect the concept and practice of marketing, examine its objectives and evaluate its contributions.

Not to abandon the practice but to reinvent it. For creating a better world. Not that the world as it is, is bad. But for the reason that there is a lot of scope for betterment. Marketing then has a new role to play. The role of human values promoter rather than sales volume promoter.

We are in an era that is marked, or rather marred, by commerce. It is the pre-eminence of commerce that has created the present world that is full of contradictions and paradoxes. So we find that need has become synonymous with greed. Love has become a transaction and worship is a deal. Commerce has become the prime mover. So everything is commerce and commerce is everything.

MARKETING AS IT IS

There can be little doubt that marketing is a creation of commerce. Interestingly marketing is also a very potent tool of commerce. The sole purpose of marketing is promoting consumption or to use a popular jargon, arouse the animal spirit in man. What an irony. But that is the commonly understood purpose of marketing. And look at the consumption pattern. Look at the vulgar consumerism that is the new credo. So we find the world in a mad race. Everyone is running without knowing why he is running. That reminds of a very popular line from Alice in Wonderland that says -- in this world, to be in your place you need to run

twice as fast as you can. Call it the new normal or the new abnormal but that sums up the human psyche of the present times (Caroll, 2006) . People are not buying what they need. Rather they are needing what they buy. This consumption driven model may have brought about a growth rate which we are so proud to boast of. It may have given us the feeling of prosperity and development. But what about happiness and peace. Hatred, envy, insecurity are all on the rise. One of the tiniest particle of nature proved how vulnerable human beings are and how hollow their claims of invincibility (Pathak, 2018).

One may ask the question how is marketing blamed to be a cause of all this. Certainly not. No marketer has marketed all this. But excessive thrust on consumption has created a mindset that has led to all this. Can we reinvent marketing? This is the question we need to find an answer to. Excessive emphasis on commerce has cost us dearly. Let the focus change. Let there be a 360 degrees shift in marketing. Let marketing be a game changer rather than a game manipulator.

CHANGING THE GOAL OF MARKETING

A million dollar question that we need to ask today is can marketing create a better world. A difficult question to answer because the very idea of creating a better world through marketing may appear to be an antithesis to the purpose of marketing as it is commonly understood and practiced. But the idea certainly merits consideration. Marketing has given many things to this world. One view is that marketing has given God to this world. For the atheists as well as the agnostics the very idea of God is a creation of marketing. That, however, is for the non-believers.

Coming to the believers, marketing gave man to this world. After all it was Satan who sold the idea of eating the forbidden fruit to Eve that led to the fall of man from Paradise to this earth. That apart marketing has certainly changed lives and lifestyles, tastes and preferences, perceptions and perspectives, ideas and attitudes and most significantly consumption patterns. Converting needs into wants, marketing has flared desires and aspirations, wishes and dreams. That was what marketing could do and has done. But as we humankind come of age, a realisation dawns that marketing could have done something more. Rather, something else. It is this that needs to be pondered over. What does marketing need to do? How it needs to change the world? The answer would come from our reflection, an introspection to find out what the next goal of marketing needs to be. The answer certainly would come from within. There is need to change this world from commerce driven to conscience driven. In Freudian terms, transform the world from Id and Ego driven to Super ego. From want driven to need driven. From impulse driven to reason driven. From the so called realism to idealism. From the apparently right approach to an appropriately righteous approach. There is a need to change from consumption orientation to redemption orientation. And for that, the marketing process must now change its basic objective. Marketing was aimed at increasing sales volumes through creating wants and desires. It has to change its role to sell values now. There is a need to redefine and reorient marketing. From creating consumption needs to arousing higher order needs. The aim should be to make people believe in the ultimate goodness of humanity where integrity and honesty become the fashion and

greed and consumption are relegated to the back seat.

HOW TO DO IT

The disobedience versus freedom debate notwithstanding, let us admit that mankind has made tremendous progress ever since his act of blasphemy forced his ouster from the paradise. Paradise lost, thus, was humanity's gain. Backed by knowledge, mankind aspired for moon and got it. Mars also now seems a possibility. The progress in Science and technology, economics and commerce was immense. Mankind has taken large quantum jumps century after century. And the march is on. Yet a very important question needs to be answered - have these advances made this world a happier place to live in? Given the state of turmoil the societies are in, the answer to the question is perhaps not a simple yes or no. This then throws the greatest challenge for the present century.

Why, despite so much of knowledge, the problems of the society are growing? True, we no longer live in the jungle. And we do exercise greater control on the environment although the Corona pandemic proved our limitations. But the important point is are we happier. Maybe we have a lot of statistics to prove that but the fact may be otherwise. Dishing out data about GDP growth and poverty line indices is hardly reassuring when hunger and deprivation continue to push people to the brink. Prosperity is far more than statistics about GDP and per capita income. Per capita happiness is what matters. And we are found wanting on that count. People have greater control over health but less over well-being. Life expectancy has

increased but so has suicide rates. As marketeers sermonise on customer relationship management, matrimonial discords are on the rise. Number of high tech and knowledgeable teachers have grown but so have the incidents of school kids going on shooting spree in classrooms. Material growth then has not caused betterment of the societies.

The invisible hand is not working as Adam Smith had thought. Rather, it is not visible at all. In fact, Gandhi's trusteeship concept could make more economic sense than the right wing marketing gurus' propositions. The rich want to get richer and they don't mind if the poor become poorer in the process (Rajagopalachari, 1974).

There is something wrong somewhere. Somewhere along the journey of human experience man seems to have lost his soul. The world has become rich but the people have become poorer. Globalisation has brought different parts of the world closer yet people are distanced from one another. Life has become business and people a commodity. People are now treated as disposable material. The new education system has failed to inculcate values that old education system emphasized on. Values of compassion, tolerance and empathy. It is time marketing was made the instrument of ushering in this change of attitude. Emphasising the virtues of goodness instead of material gains, positioning values rather than valuables and realising truth rather than propaganda should be the goal of marketing. Simply knowing that our pace of development has become unsustainable may not be enough. We have to change the course and this is what marketing must do. When full coffers fail to enrich empty hearts, the futility of dollarization must be amply clear. More

than dollarization, marketing needs to create realisation. Conquering the moon makes little sense if hunger cannot be conquered.

The education has not achieved the desired objective. But the answer also lies in education. Education that makes good persons rather than engineers, doctors and managers. Formation of character must be the desired objective of education. If we succeed in this, the rest will follow. This is where marketing is to play a new role. Bringing about a change in the goal of education is an important agenda and this needs to be the challenge marketing practice must accept. Words like career, success, prosperity and development need to be redefined. The purpose of 4 P's of marketing is hardly of any use if they fail to serve the all-important fifth P that stands for people. It is a tall order but can be achieved. There has to be the will first, the way will come out (Pathak 2018 & 2013).

CONCLUSION

The problem is not that the world does not have enough. The problem is that some want more than enough. Can Social Darwinism as the rule of the market economy be an acceptable principle? Human societies are not jungles where the strong prey on the meek. Human societies are about compassion and camaraderie (Genesis). They are about love and relationships. The development process per se is always lopsided. It is the human endeavour that ensures its equitability. Let marketing change attitudes to make people accept minimalism and altruism as the new order of living. And marketing can do it. If marketing can make people crave for goods and services that are not necessities, so can marketing make people crave for goodness and empathy. There is a need to understand that goodness

is contagious, addictive and rewarding too. Only it has to be promoted and conditioned. Goodness too can be made the most sought after fashion provided it is marketed in the right earnest.

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