

## **MY EXPERIMENTS WITH MARKETING!!!**

**-Sandip Chakraborty, PGDM 2013-15**

Can Marketing be taught? Or is it something which can only be learnt from experience? Or is it something which you either have in you or you do not have? I always believed that Marketing can be learnt from experience. In my eagerness to become a pro in Marketing, I set out to learn Marketing from my own experiences, even before I completed the first term of my PGDM. But the first hindrance that I came across was this simple question – “From where do I gain experience?”

Before being an MBA student I was a student of Animation. The beauty of animation is that it cannot be taught beyond the principles of animation and the functions of MAYA (3D animation software). The rest is self-learning. I call it – ‘my way of learning’. I simply loved the option of being able to practically apply anything taught in the class, right after the class. I had expected a similar model of learning for Marketing. Needless to say, I was disappointed. So I thought that if the course doesn’t offer me a chance to learn through experimentation, let me create my own methods. After some contemplation an idea struck. Won’t it be a fine Marketing exercise if I make an attempt to increase the sales of the little Nescafe shop inside our college campus?

Often it happens that when an idea strikes, it feels very good at that particular moment. Sometimes they are so exciting that we get all charged up and sit up straight. If they are a little more than exciting, we might stand up and start packing up and down. The problem starts when we start looking into the finer nuances of the idea. This is when the idea doesn’t look rosy anymore. Even if it looks rosy, we become aware of the thorns just beneath the rose.

I had always considered myself to be a creative and artistic being. The accuracy of this idea is debatable. I had always felt that I should find out a way to make some money from my creative and artistic skills. What is that immensely creative and artistic service that I could provide which would make customers come running to me? How would I differentiate myself if I were to produce a service for my fellow batch-mates? What would be that right price of my services which would feel just right to my prospective customers? After a good amount of brain racking I conceived a CUBE. Now, what is so special about conceiving a cube? Read on to know, my dear friends. A cube has a total of six surfaces. When a cube is placed on a flat surface, one face touches the surface and the rest of the five surfaces are visible. Out of these five surfaces, one is the top surface and the rest are four vertical surfaces. Now imagine if we use these four vertical surfaces as four photo frames. The user would have the option of rotating the cube on its axis and face any one of the photos of his choice. The top surface could also be used as a photo frame or to write something nice. This was the idea of the product that I thought I could sell.

I started with making some sample cubes. I stuck square pieces of thermocol back to back to create a cube. This was then placed inside a cube shaped casing created from chart paper. Finally the pictures were stuck on the surfaces of the cube. The shortcomings of this idea became apparent when I completed my first samples. The process was tedious and required very accurate measurements to be taken in order to make a perfect cube. This could be done if there was free time, but where do you find free time in the rush of project submissions, classes, quizzes and

exams. However, I was determined. I said to myself that I should not be deterred by the fear of working extra hard. So I started to think about approaches to market my product.

How would I introduce it? I tweaked with the idea of launching a video advertisement for some time. Later, I stumbled upon a better idea. Well, at least I felt that it was a better idea. If I could place a sample cube in a location where there is a lot of student traffic, people would look at my product and get curious about it. They would perhaps ask questions about it and finally come up to me to get one made for them. I considered several locations like the front desk in the library and the front desk of the computer lab. None of them felt very apt.

Finally, I came across an idea that felt just perfect. I could place the cubes in the Nescafe shop. But, how do I convince the shopkeeper to place the cubes on the counter of the shop? I approached him and said that as a part of my efforts to boost the sales of his shop, I wanted to place something attractive on the counter. I said that I would deliver him two cubes where each face of the cube would depict the various food items available. The top face would carry the name of the shop. He looked very interested. Finally, when I asked for the name of the shop, he started to think. After a pause he replied "Student Corner". Then he said that the shop did not have a name and it was simply called by the Nescafe board it carried on top.

I learnt two lessons from this experience. First, obtaining place in any commercial space is not a joke. The term 'shelf space' is not to be taken lightly. Before placing a product in any commercial establishment, the space available needs to be studied in detail and

analyzed. All possible pros and cons needs to be weighed and only then a decision should be taken. The second lesson was a bigger lesson. Today I understand that when a product or service is launched in the market, its sales pitch is not complete until the functions of the product and differentiating factors, if any, have been explicitly communicated. The customer should know what he is getting. The idea of using curiosity as a means to attract customers to a product could be a good idea. But the process of generating curiosity should give some solid clue to the customer about what is to be expected. If no clue is given, the prospective customer will never get the clue that we are making a sales pitch using the element of curiosity. Today when I look back at this incident, I feel so dumb. How could I ever imagine that cubes would generate curiosity among people?

I spent my time in reflecting upon the mistakes that I had committed. It also dawned upon me that the idea of making cubes would have failed anyways because it would just not be possible for me to cope with this additional activity along with academic pressure. I also realized that the option of discussing any new idea with friends before planning an execution must not be ignored. After all, friends are a source of collective wisdom.

This was not the end of my adventures with marketing. I made new mistakes and learnt new lessons. I am yet to taste that ever elusive taste of success. But I am truly glad about one thing. I am glad that I could figure out a way to learn marketing in my own independent way where lessons are learnt from failures and experiments.

It is 'my way of learning', as I had mentioned earlier.