

Marketing 2002

Changing the Basics

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Foreword

Having read all those American books and case studies in Marketing, Finance and Economics I had always wanted to have a course with pure Pakistani marketing concepts and case studies. Most of the western concepts, business methodologies and trends don't apply to Pakistan.

After completing their studies students find it difficult to cope with their surroundings. This article points to all such predicaments which a business student faces. It draws an outline for a marketing curriculum where a student gets acquainted with ones own market thus leading to a more practical approach towards MBA training.

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Desperate times call for desperate measures. At times, abnormal decisions are made to restore normalcy. The rapidly changing demographics of business require constant evolution of strategic planning, creative thinking, adaptation and sustaining competitive advantage. Marketing is as demanding as ever. In these demanding-times pressure on Marketers to bring about positive results is at its peak and such special occasions require special treatment. Some quick thinking with carefully planned maneuvers and on-the-spot creativity can save the day. No matter what the treatment, the doctor needs to know the basics of medicine and in this case the ABC's of marketing. This article attempts to discuss and rejuvenate the process by which students in Pakistan learn the basics of marketing.

Back to School

Philip Kotler's famous "Principles of Marketing", have, for long been the only book taught to marketing students in almost all business schools throughout Pakistan. I had gone through the same process when I was doing my MBA. This is a useful book where technicalities are blended with case studies and examples forming a nice approach to the subject. When it comes to business, unfortunately, Pakistan is quite different than the US. The complete business model and the ingredients involved therein are all different in composition and character. That is why we are missing out on those creatively lusty minds, which can bring about a domestic revival of Marketing.

Students are not given the correct mix of marketing during their training in many business schools and as a result when they pass out they keep on searching for the perfect moment and the perfect company to practice the steps they have learnt from their books. The moment never comes and the company doesn't exist! In the Pakistani business society, Marketing has become synonymous to selling. By a marketing person employers actually mean a sales person who can

bring them more business by making direct calls. In fact, chances for situational case studies presented in foreign books and applied to Pakistan are very few. We may learn about Harley Davidson or Wal-Mart but we cannot reinvent the wheel through same footing, our wheels are made in a totally different style, and that is, the Pakistani Style!

We need to equip our new, budding Marketers with the vision that form the foundations of our business. Referring, to western marketing techniques and procedures, is good to improve ones vision or insight but that only comes when you have a sound and solid foundation to build upon your Marketing imagination. As a first step, whenever a Marketing course is taught include as much of Pakistan as you can.

No matter how well written western books are they are written under a different set of variables and a totally different environment. The producer-consumer relationship is based on a completely different structure and a different society. There are numerous books on human psychology of exceptional scholastic excellence. No doubt, they are good but are they well suited for us as well. Do they define the psychological attributes of Pakistanis and Muslims too, has the author gathered enough data from all corners of the world before laying an absolute set of rules, theories and formulas to define the intricacies of a human mind. Does the author's segment include Chinese, Japanese, Pakistanis, Arab and Russians as all of these have different set of personality attributes governing their behavior and thus the society in which businesses are conducted. Why do multinationals have different policies for different countries? Surely the governing rules are different but the society for which they have endeavored has a different chemistry altogether. Since Marketing is all about people, teachers should adopt a policy similar to these multinationals; think globally and act locally.

The Market in Marketing

Once Pakistan is made an imperative part of all Marketing training one can now start injecting the Pakistani market into Marketing. The basic concept being that students find it easier to grasp and apply living marketing examples which they see every day and they don't live in the U.S, they live in Pakistan. Give them Pakistan and you'll see the difference. You would find them much at ease when entering practical lives. Not everyone becomes a part of a multinational or go abroad to wonderland. Construct a course around Pakistan! Students find it easier to grasp even the most difficult of techniques or processes originating from the world they live in. This will open up their minds and put them on the road of creative marketing imagination.

Marketing is everywhere! Look around you and you'll find Marketing in all corners of Pakistan. Your favorite Sweet Shop, Grocery Store, Restaurant or even the Pan-Wala would become living examples for your Marketing class. You all know about Sony, Phillips, Coke, Pepsi, Nike, Microsoft, Honda, Nestle, Lever, P&G (Procter & Gamble) what they did in the U.S or Europe is not much of help to a freshman in Pakistan but if one uses the same companies and use their Pakistan based operations as examples and case studies, one could easily understand and apply each and every step, model, function or even a definition presented in a standard marketing course. Bridge the gap between Pakistan and marketing. Bring the market back in marketing!

The Right Formula

Developing the best approach for a Marketing class is the most important task for marketing teachers. Many have started including Pakistani examples in their course structures, unfortunately these are seldom planned or more often the result of a spontaneous thought. Let's consider that you are teaching a fresh marketing class and need to develop a formula or a theorem for your approach. The best formula, in my humble opinion, would then be:

Pakistani Market (Complete Course) + Pakistani Case Studies + Practical Marketing + Reference Book (Like Philip Kotler's "Principles of Marketing")

This is an altogether different approach. Now you have to plan and prepare a course from level zero and find examples, success stories, failures and metaphors from the Pakistani Market. Following the 'Philip Kotler' "Principles of Marketing" in totality would have been a much easier one but since your students need to learn marketing from a Pakistani perspective you will have to work hard to facilitate their learning. A person who has never gained any work experience is different than the one who discontinued his studies and went for an early job during his career. Early jobbers have better knowledge and experience of the Pakistani market than a person who has been studying throughout his life. This type of training is ideal to abridge the gap and provide students not only with practical marketing knowledge but also with an insight and exposure to the realms of global marketing.

Now that we have developed a formula lets dive into some details. The Pakistani market includes all local and multinational businesses and products marketed in Pakistan. For Pakistani case studies you just need to keep your eyes and ears open and you'll find success stories and failures all around you. It doesn't have to be a big multinational even a small burger shop will do. Teach your students applied marketing. They learn through unforgettable experiences. I, for one, have learnt a lot about customer relations, product positioning, distribution, market planning & strategies, advertising and selling through practical approaches during my training. The most important part of this course outline is the use of a marketing book. If you ask me, I would go for more than one reference book. These books should only be used to add value to your student's knowledge. They must act as reference points and consulted only to gain a broader vision and a different perspective.

Made in Pakistan

Our marketing Book is all over Pakistan; companies, products and individuals, all chip-in to form the topics and chapters in our book. How many of our graduating students know about our local industry, what national and multinationals are producing and how competition is evolving in Pakistan. How many of our marketing students know about companies like Hilal confectionaries, Candyland, National Foods and A.R Foods. Do they know that products like LifeBuoy, Lux, Sunsilk, CloseUp, Supreme, Dalda, Lipton are all Lever Brother products while products like Pantene, Ariel, Ascend, Camay, Safeguard, Vicks are all Procter & Gamble's. Each and every product has something to add to our marketing course and should be placed in its appropriate place. Don't forget your local market, I'm sure it must be full of potentially quotable examples you can use in your next marketing class.

There are Media Rivalries and product wars exemplifying strict competition in our consumer goods industry. You will find creative moves and equally creative responses, discount wars and value adding measures all showing that our marketing spirits are still alive. You just need to do some pick and polish stuff and you'll be heading for a real treat for your students.

Changing the basics of a not so productive marketing course is becoming more and more imperative since Pakistan needs aspiring marketers who know about Pakistani products well enough to market them. There may be three broad categories of marketers in Pakistan: Those who market for the local market, those who market for international markets and those who market for both the local and international markets. Local and international marketing are both specialized fields and demand a separate marketer specialist in his arena. Nonetheless, in all three cases developing strong ties with your domestic environment and local produce is important. The basic product idea, its history and the theme (concept) behind the product everything matters. We need to

plant and nurture a breed of marketers who can create a constructively productive marketing environment within Pakistan. Once we have established a strong infrastructure we can expect to see a highly competitive nation. Our marketing students need to be equipped with the very ingredients of Pakistan. Tell them who they are and they'll show you what they are capable of!