

Shopping for Shoppers

A rather interesting quote I came across the other day read,
"If people went into stores only when they needed to buy something
and once there they bought only what they needed
the economy would collapse."

With the advent and growth of modern retail, there are two imminent shifts taking place in Brand Marketing. First, the store is no longer just a conduit for reaching products to the consumer; it is becoming a marketing medium- a 'theatre of sales'. Secondly, brands now need to focus on a new animal, in addition to the consumer- the 'shopper'.

Shoppers behave differently from consumers. With consumers the focus of the brand is on *consumption*. With shoppers, the focus is on *purchase*. Shoppers are increasingly making, changing or reinforcing their purchase decisions at the store. Worldwide studies by leading FMCG companies put this figure as high as 70%. In addition, the store is the second largest source of awareness, after Television, for information on brands and products.

Not surprising then, that the store is the new 'moment of truth' for brand marketers seeking to go beyond share-of-mind, to capture share-of-wallet. Brands will now dare to ignore the store and the shopper at their own peril.

Shopper Marketing: Converting Shoppers into Buyers

Shopper Marketing is the recent marketing discipline that aims at *converting shoppers into buyers*, through in-store brand solutions, for the benefit of both brand marketer and retailer. It leverages the store as a marketing medium for the brand and creates joint marketing platforms and programs with key retailers.

Like most marketing concepts, Shopper Marketing has its origins in the western world, driven by the likes of P&G, Unilever and Coca Cola. Emerging out of a need to influence shoppers in some of their largest 'markets'- the Walmarts, Carrefours, Tescos. Ever since, Shopper Marketing has been working for brands around the world to go beyond conventional merchandising and visibility creation to actually drive purchase.

There are three fundamental principles of retailing that shopper marketing works on:

1. Shoppers vote with their wallets.
2. Space always follows sales in the store.
3. It is in the interest of the brand marketer and retailer to expand the cake, before they can divide it.

Shopper Marketing simply put, is about *understanding and influencing shoppers to turn them into buyers*.

Understanding Shoppers: Learning How Shoppers Shop

Fundamental to Shopper Marketing is the understanding of shopper behavior and insights. Unlocking shopper insights calls for new techniques, as against conventional market research. Shopping is a social human activity and studying shoppers is based on the principles of Anthropology. To that end, it is an observational science and art. Store Tracking, Store Observation, Store Intercepts through hidden cameras or field trackers are some of the elaborate, painstaking methods used. There are no short cuts.

If consumers are profiled on demographics, psychographics, attitudes and lifestyles; shoppers are profiled based on *'Need-States'*.

Need-States begin with the *raison-de-etre* for the particular shopping trip.

One takes into account the shopper's motivations and drivers-what shopping means to her. Also in the cauldron are aspects such as, the length of the shopping trip, how the shopper navigates through the store, who she shops with, what is the size of her shopping basket, and so on.

Is the person shopping for self-improvement, reward, adventure, relaxation, socializing or just replenishment?

Is she a deal prone, convenience shopper or someone seeking experience and entertainment while she shops?

Is the shopping trip a two minute, 'grab and go' at a convenience store or is it a 'leisurely browsing', at a cosmetic section of a department store?

Is it a planned on- the- list purchase or an impulse spur- of- the- moment one?

Is she shopping with her friend or with her husband or with her kids?

Need States could vary by category/brand/retail outlet/occasion and even by shopping trip. It is a complex web of intertwined and interrelated factors, which are critical to unlock. For, only if you know *how your shopper shops* will you be able to plan the next step: to get her to pop your brand into her shopping basket.

Influencing Shoppers: Seeing the Store through the Eyes of the Shopper

Having understood your shopper, you now need to apply the learning to present your brand/category in the most inspiring and compelling manner to influence her to buy. Your brand in-store, must have a powerful idea and story to 'make her an offer she can't refuse'.

The brand must be imaginative enough to *see the store through the eyes of the shopper* and not just as a piece of real estate with shelves and aisles. The trick is to unsuspectingly lead the shopper to the real target- your brand. How are you going to *'Attract-Arrest-Acquire'* her from the point she enters the store, to when she is moving around and checking stuff out, till she actually picks up and puts the product in her basket. What are all the *'Connection opportunities and shopper zones'* in and around the store that you can innovatively use to engage your shoppers.

Shopping is a highly sensorial activity where see, touch, feel, hear, taste, smell are triggers to purchase. Much the reason why on-line shopping is never like the real thing, (a lot like on-line sex, you may think). Sensory engagement is a great shopper turn-on and interactivity is the key. Shopper marketing ideas need to be hi-touch, hi-feel, turbo charged for the senses. The truth is: *shoppers first emotionally own products, before they actually buy them* and the senses are the portals to emotion.

Lastly, in Shopper Marketing, *the obvious is not always the most apparent*. It is not about demolishing the store or department and starting from ground zero. More often than not, it is about discovering little things about shoppers that can make a big difference. For example: It is a well established fact that 'when men try they buy'. So, trial rooms in the Male Apparel section should be easy to locate, abundant, comfortable and inviting!

Charles Darwin said, "It will not be the strongest or the most intelligent that will survive, it will be the one's most responsive to change."
Shopper Marketing is upon us. Are we ready for the change?

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