

## THE ILLITERATE MARKETING GENIUS

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### **Abstract**

All the marketing genius is not limited to thick volumes of attractive books only. Marketing as a discipline is not the copyright of white collars or intellectuals only. Marketing is happening all around us but we ignore it we fail to learn from it. We need to rethink the popular route of theory to practice and look for successful practices to build true marketing wisdom. Many times our vision our perspective gets corrupted which spoils the fun of learning and marketing.

The article talks of few such experiences which made us realise that Brand building and customer relationship management are being practiced impeccably by these relatively less educated and less resourceful people in their own small but smart ways.



### **Introduction: In pursuit of marketing wisdom**

Like any other Sunday it was evening time with a list of vegetables and few grocery items to be purchased on my WhatsApp. I was heading towards the local vegetable market or Sabzi Mandi as it is popularly known in India. Sabzi Mandi is a place which may be organized or unorganized located in close proximity to a residential area and may be home to some 50-100 vegetable vendors selling variety of vegetables as required by Indian households.

Bound by my resolution of “No to Plastic” with a shopping bag in my hand I was moving towards the center of market. “Arre Sahab agar galey nahin to wapas kar jaiyega (Sir, if it is not softened on boiling you can return the same).” I clearly recognized the voice of Kallu one of my favorite vendor, the tone of his voice and his confidence captured my attention and I realized Kallu was trying to convince a customer while referring to taro of colocasia, a vegetable which comes with high risk that whether it will soften on boiling for further usage or not. I could see that gentle response smile on the face of customer before picking the packet from him. Seems Kallu is expert in witchcraft and he has been my favorite vegetable vendor from whom I have been purchasing my seasonal vegetables for almost 7 years now since I shifted to this new locality. As I reached to his shop I just narrated the quantity of vegetables required and he did the needful and was quick to add the total money which I owed to him.



With a gleam of satisfaction and accomplishment I headed to Mustafa, who like kallu was my preferred vendor for staple vegetables like Potato, Onion etc. “Arre Mustafa bhai aaj purse to ghar hi bhool gaya, abhi aakar de deta hoon (Oh Mustafa I just forgot to bring my wallet today, I will go fetch the wallet and will pay you)” before this elderly looking customer could

complete his story, Mustafa cut it short by adding with emphasis “ Arre Baabu ji, na hum kahin ja rahey hain na aap, abhi doobara aaney ki zarurat nahin hai, jab agli baar aaiyega tab de dijiyega (Oh Sir, neither me nor you are going anywhere, there is no need to come again, pay me whenever you visit next time)”. Mustafa said it so emphatically eliminating any gap between his spoken words and intentions, thus ensuring that the elderly gentleman agrees to the same. As he moved I ordered for 2 kilograms of potato and 1 kilogram of onions and moved to my next destination in haste but I must admit the price of just 1 kg of onion came as a shocker to me.

As I moved towards my last destination for tomatoes and as I picked one, Raju the shop owner whispered gently “Baabu ji aap idhar se le lo ye maal accha hai (Sir you take from this side, this lot is better)” indicating towards another heap of tomatoes. I almost involuntarily and indebted in his concern started picking from another heap as if his words have done some magic to my subconscious mind. After carefully selecting the best possible from the lot I slipped them carefully in my shopping bag and headed for home.



Vegetables are becoming costlier year after year, 600-800 INR spent on vegetables each week, how will a common man be able to fulfill his requirements with this sky rocketing prices, what the government is doing to curtail the same and with many other thoughts I never realized when I reached home.

In between dinner and sleeping time, I often enjoy “my company” or have few minutes of “me time”. As I was enjoying the company of thoughts or rather absence of them somehow whatever

happened in Sabzi Mandi struck my mind, the interaction which Kallu, Mustafa and Raju had with their customers triggered a plethora of thoughts and emotion in my mind some familiar and some new. In these pool of thoughts, I realized that these thought somehow aligned themselves together in one direction and suddenly appeared more meaningful. As I delve deeper with these thoughts I realized that their behavior established a better connect with their respective customers and thus generating a preference over other shopkeepers in the market. The more I related their behavior to brand preference or preference of a specific marketer the more amazed I was as how these relatively lesser educated people knowingly or unknowingly are practicing such powerful and fundamental principles of brand creation and strengthening their relationship with the customers.

### **The Golden takeaways of journey**

The principles I learnt in my classes were revisited in Sabzi Mandi and may be outlined as:

a) Confidence and assurance holds the key: Kallu's behavior reinforces the belief that confidence holds the key to customer connect. Confidence in quality of your product, confidence as reflected in communicating the same to customers affects the mindset of customers and generates a positive response for your product/service. Assurance is a strong weapon to tackle the "what if" algorithm in customer's mind. A strong assurance of what the marketers will do in case the product fails to deliver the desired/promised performance seals the fate of marketers and puts the relationship on right track. Confidence and assurance are keys which can unlock potential in any market. This is very much in sync with Kellers brand equity model where credibility and product quality contribute in building your brand. Confidence in buyer seller relationship is very crucial and leads to satisfaction and cooperation (Das and Teng, 1998)

b) Forget Trade Mark build a Trust Mark: Trust since ages has been the glue to human relationships. Probably marketers were late to realize the same and still this happens to be more a topic of academic discussions rather than practice. The conversation which happened between Mustafa and the elderly customers clearly indicates that trust is more to exhibit than merely reducing it to academic deliberations. The front line employees have the biggest responsibility to create trust in interactions. Do organizations have guidelines to define the conduct of their

behavior and train them regularly on “Trust Building” communication style? Trust should be like objective function of solver in MS Excel and all decision variables should always lead to attainment of trust. Even marketing strategists have emphasized time and again on trust as a major building block in building customer relations. Trust has gained importance in marketing researches as well and is considered important for relationship building and strengthening as well.

c) Customer Concern Rules: Trust as an outcome and customer concern as ingredient is a perfect recipe for winning customers in marketplace. A genuine concern for customers is more effective than few thousand bucks spend on advertising to communicate you care. Concern is reflected in behaviour and may lead to trust in relationship. A genuine concern clicks instantly while a fake one is irritating and every consumer is god gifted to decipher between them. A seemingly trivial action or a bunch of even common often heard words may do the magic. Even simple words like “Get well soon” coupled with a genuine concern can do magic to patient similarly a simple statement gently whispered by Mustafa did the trick and will keep on giving similar benefits to the marketer. Concern for customers should be more actions oriented rather than being reduced to the vision or mission statements only. Customer Orientation is documented as one of the most crucial factor for success in sales (Dwyer et al. 1987; Keillor and Parker 2000, Martin and Bush 2003, Cross et al. 2007; Pousa and Mathieu 2013; Swenson and Herche 1994)

In these thought I never realized when I was taken over by sleep only to get up in morning certainly more enriched and enlightened marketer. Today it was not Monday Blues but hues of wisdom to be applied to workplace.

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