



Marketing models for India

Earthworm, Snail, Porcupine and Co.

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Competition is a reality. None of us can ignore competition. There is competition at home, in school, in college, in office and most certainly in the great Indian market-place as a whole.

If there is life, there is competition. The baby in the house competes for your attention, just as that brand new hair gel on the shelf is seeking out your attention amidst a clutter of competition weighing down the super-market shelf.

How does one really compete? Let me paint four models.

If I am to look around the nations of the world and correlate competitive models in current use, there are four distinct patterns that emerge. Four clusters that have whole sets of nations congregating in models, those seem to work for each of them differently and with different levels of efficacy. Needless to say, the peculiarities of each nation in question dictate the distinct choice they have made for themselves. Let's visit the clusters. And let's call them all kinds of animal names.

The earthworm model

The passive model of competitive reaction, the invitation theory is what is best practised by the earthworm. A rich worm, it knows the basics best. It is in constant touch with the earth that it seeks nourishment from and nourishes back simultaneously. A fundamentally strong being.

There are several problems in this model though. It is passive for one and non-reactionary; a model in the self-fulfilling prophecy mode; the best example of the fatalistic theory of the East in practice; when faced with danger, all it can do is continue its humble journey on the earth; competition kills this model with ease; there is no reaction. A fatalistic model of competition at its best!

Is the Indian marketer here?

The snail model

The common competitive model in practice by a whole host of nations, this model is reactively proactive. A clear cocoon orientation. When faced with competition and danger, there is a regression into the shell. The withdrawn marketer at play. The philosopher marketer even! The marketer who revels in the safety-static nexus. Waiting for the competition to just go away, so that normal life may resume again!

Is India here?

The porcupine model

This model tells the competitor clearly of the array of weapons that are available for retributive action. There is a clear emphasis on the display of the arsenal. It believes in the overt display. A clear détente model of competition. Avoids a lot of speculative action and is ready for the real battle.

Many marketers seem here.

The everyone else model

This is the model of the real-time player in competitive markets of the present and certainly the future. This is the real-time marketer. Reactive when necessary. Proactive when necessary. Guerilla in tactics when necessary as well!

This is a constant-change oriented model that believes in watching the scenario carefully and reacting accordingly. Making forays into proactive territory on a speculative basis. Never mind if even only one of those sixteen forays actually click! Life in the fast track of competitive marketing is pretty un-predictable and speculative. Change here is absolutely discontinuous. Making a decision on a point of competitive strategy based on happenings of the past and the present could be disastrous. The future never ever happens the way the past decided.

Change here is so discontinuous that it is aptly illustrated by the example of the baby-arrival process in the house. The first child in this baby-boomers house is born out of a Caesarian section, gone in for by an over-zealous gynecologist. The second baby of the house is therefore predictably to be one out of a similar process. Caesarian section! No! It isn't. Change is discontinuous. The second baby is a natural birth! The third child is due to happen then. This time round, its Caesarian section as well! Oops!

The fourth child of this baby-happy home is due. Change is indeed discontinuous. There is no predictability here. Guess what! This time round, the baby is actually conceived, carried and delivered by the father of the baby! Oops! Again! Change is indeed that discontinuous!

Shouldn't India be here?

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Yearbook of the United Nations

The United Nations Department of Public Information has launched the first-ever online version of the Yearbook of the United Nations. The Yearbook is the most comprehensive and authoritative work on the Organization.

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Effective positioning

Beating the big guys

<http://www.sme.com.ph>

SME.com.ph, The Philippines

Undeniably, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are on their toes against big, established companies. Although SMEs have a more definitive niche market as compared to their bigger counterparts, it is undeniable that while big companies rake in customers, SMEs get a small, meager portion of the consumer pie.

However, SMEs are in a unique, advantageous position. Alice M. Tybout and Brian Sternthan, in an article in the *Financial Times*' "Mastering Marketing" series, identified four effective tools that prove that great things come in small packages.

The Four D's of Effective Positioning showcases the four goals that all SMEs can attain to gain footing in the industry despite their size.

Brand definition. Define the brand carefully as part of the market. What does your business intend to do? If the company is into providing good food, streamline more by asking these questions: What cuisine should the business focus on? What type of service would the business like to be associated with - fast food, restaurant or deli type? Brand definition does not come easy though; it takes planning and constant restructuring to finally hammer down the specifications of the business. Once done however, it is easy to plot the next moves for company growth.

Brand differentiation. How does your business differ from the rest? What makes your products unique? This is where marketing of product features should be carefully examined. If you are into the restaurant industry with special focus on Jap-

anese cuisine, how does your restaurant differ from other Japanese eating places? You may consider selling the idea of guests seating in tatami mats or using organic vegetables in all your menus. The key is to clearly define the facet that makes you and your product rise above the rest. Remember though not to create too many differentiating features; less is often more.

Deepening the brand. To deepen the brand, the business needs to know much about the potential customers. What values are primary to them? What do they consider of utmost importance when transacting business with you? What will make them happy? Once answered, these questions can prove to be veritable opportunities to deepen the brand relation of the business to its end consumers.

Defending your brand. Even if a business is well established, continual review should be made with regard to brand positioning as well as the relationship with the customers' goals and objectives. This is especially true for smaller businesses competing against bigger, more potent companies. The business may need to subtly reposition its products and services from time to time so as to remain different and unique - the key is constant, low key changes; not too abrupt nor radical. You need to actively develop and introduce new features in the business, or else, your competitors will.

Although small in size and scope, effective positioning can bring leverage to an SME and its selling ability. After all, its not about size; its about strategy. □

WIPO's Distance Learning Programme

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has added five new multilingual courses to the distance learning programme offered by its Worldwide Academy. The new courses will cover arbitration and mediation procedure, patents, patent information search, basics of patent drafting, and trademarks.

Over 7,000 students are currently participating in the established range of distance learning courses offered by the Academy, which include: Primer on intellectual property, a general course on intellectual property, and advanced courses on copyright and related rights, electronic commerce and intellectual property and biotechnology and intellectual property. They join more than 86,000 individuals from around the world who have taken the WIPO online courses since the launch of the programme in 1999. Courses are offered in seven languages - Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

WIPO's distance learning programme aims to improve access to intellectual property-related educational materials. The distance learning initiative takes full advantage of state-of-the-art information technology and the Internet as an alternative to traditional training programmes. It offers new teaching methodologies, evaluation tools, and tailored means of delivery to expanded audiences. By using the Internet as a delivery platform, distance learning removes constraints such as geographical location and time.

Teaching takes place in the virtual environment of the WIPO Academy website (<http://academy.wipo.int>), where students may register for the courses. A network of tutors located in various regions of the world support students during the course. Students and teachers can interact as necessary during the course. Communication takes place through electronic mail and discussions with the responsible tutors. Assignments and final examination papers are submitted to the Academy's course administrator, who coordinates the continuous assessment of each student. At the end of the course, successful students are awarded a certificate to acknowledge completion of the course.

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