



DRIVE A 360 DEGREE BRAND EXPERIENCE...

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- Companies must capitalize the 6.8% GDP growth projections
- New Marketing techniques must be tried to win consumers
- Marketing must ensure sales pick up

Quote

“For a company to get the best on a 6.8% GDP growth, new marketing tools must be tried. It is said that people will forget what you said. They will also forget what you did. But people will never forget the way you made them feel. The 360 degree brand experience is about the latter”

At last weeks *MTI brand forum* there were many interesting best practices shared. The one thought that captured my attention was the concept called the *360 degree brand experience*. There are many of us who practice this at work, but are not aware of it. Let me flesh this out and demonstrate its use in Sri Lanka.

It is said that people will forget what you said. They will also forget what you did, but people will never forget the way you made them feel. The 360 degree brand experience is where at every contact point that a consumer can come with your brand, is captured creatively by a company, so that some sensory appeal like visual, hearing, touch, taste or smell is stimulated. This impact is said to have a greater propensity to drive consumer purchase is what the research reveals. In Sri Lanka McDonalds tends to come very close to practicing this, with face painting being done together with the sampling apart from stimulating the taste, smell sensory receptors with the food that is being served. Visual appeal can be stronger and together with McDonald related music. On the latter two aspects Odel comes closer to driving a clear identified brand value.



Throw away models

If one wants to practice the concept of the 360 degree brand experience, the most important thing to do is to throw away those models, best practices or structured strategies that you have been using in business.





Start with a clean sheet of paper where you at first map the consumer behaviour as per reality. Then, at each step of the way you need to articulate as to how the brand can be made to connect with the consumer. This is what the 360 degree brand experience is all about in simple words.

Although it began as a media planning tool, 360° has since expanded to embrace the entire process of communicating with customers and prospects. In our new media world – having moved from manufacturer-controlled to consumer-managed, companies have been forced to rethink how to reach people. “If you are talking about reaching the consumer, you are missing the point,” says Wenda Harris Millard, chief sales officer at Yahoo! Inc. “You can reach anybody. The challenge now, because of media multitasking, is connecting with consumers.” So using new media tools to deliver a 360° approach means understanding each one’s relative strengths and ability to influence the consumer:

1. **Talk to your media planners** and understand the strengths and weaknesses of each - which ones work best at generating message reach? Conversion? Consideration? Purchase? Which offer efficient regional or local audience coverage?
2. **New media options are creating new ways to measure engagement** and need to be included in the campaign metrics pages of your plan. For instance, what is the value to your brand of watching a video on You-Tube, writing on someone’s wall on Face book, or collecting an email address?
3. **Work closely with your research owls** and see what the correlation of media usage is on conversion and purchase. What new media options are more efficient at delivering buyers than others? What’s the cost per lead per vehicle?
4. **And, since many of us see the poetry in program ROI** calculations, it’s about getting the media investment to align cost-efficiently with the above insights.

This essentially is what 360 degree approach to marketing and business management is in today’s competitive world of business. However a point to note is that some companies employ a chief activation officer, or media integration planner as cues they understand the new ways to connect with consumers so that rather than using all elements of the communication process, selected tools only are used based on the consumer touch points with a potential consumer.

About time

Whilst there can be many issues in Sri Lanka’s economy, the fact of the matter is that in the last quarter 2009 growth topped a 6% from the 4.2% in quarter 3 which means the economy has turned around. Sri Lanka is poised to cross the 6.8% mark this year and we must use all the modern techniques so that we can determine how best we could ride this wave of growth.



The logic being, almost seventy five percent of the GDP of the country is driven by the private sector which means that unless organizations do well this year, there cannot be a macro economic growth as forecasted.

Hence, if you want to be brand competitive in this high growth market one way out is to practice this new concepts called the 360 brand experience. As I mentioned, research reveals that companies who engage in the *360 degree brand experience* tends to have a higher propensity to get picked up at the point of sale. So, just go ahead and use it. There is nothing to loose.

Naumi story

One of the best examples in the world on 360 brand experience is the small boutique hotel in Singapore, that focuses on the business sector called Naumi. From the parking bay to the elevator, from the reception to the hotel room that includes the television remote, guests experience a 360 degree sensory experience that supports and reinforces the brands unique brand's position.

The architects of the hotel have also devised the original Naumi music, Naumi personal concierge Aide, Naumi fragrance and a personal chill out place that gives every sense of the body to experience the unique touch of Naumi. I guess this concept may not be sensationalized in the same way in Sri Lanka but, Vil Uyana, HSBC or even the Body Bar in Jawatte may be practicing some elements of this concept in the service industry.

But to really get the best of this concept, potential consumers need to be exposed to it. It is only then, that the sales number begins to pick up and this becomes a business concept. If not it just remains a sexy piece of work that the marketing department revels in and watched with envy by other departments.

Taking it further

To take this concept further, let me capture a study done in the 1980's in a nursing home. On one floor the residents were asked to make their choice on the pots and plants and were also allowed to water them. Collectively, they were also asked to choose a day to run a weekly movie on one night. On the other hand residents in another floor, got the same exposure but the choices were made by the staff.

After some time, it was observed that the patients on the floor with a 'sense of control' not only became more cheerful and active but also became healthy. After 18 months under the regime the death rate on the 'sense of control floor' was half that of the 'no control' floor. This is the next stage of the 360 degree brand experience that can be taken to. The self esteem of being asked to choose and being trusted drives up satisfaction and loyalty towards the brand.

The best case in point in Sri Lanka is where the Sri Lanka Tourist Board and CNN has creatively conceptualized a cyber space on the concept of a 360 degree brand experience.



This is the first promotion that I have seen where a 360 degree social net working campaign induces a customer to select the itinerary of dream vacation in Sri Lanka through CNN either by using Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and Flicker and the winners get their dream holiday free. This includes 9 of their friends that makes the experience unique. If the real experience matches up to the dream holiday that was sketched by the traveler then we have the best endorsement that the company can really shout to the world.

How Brand SL use it

From a more macro end this concept can be made use of. Let me take Tourism industry once again.

A typical visitor to Sri Lanka on route to Sri Lanka can be exposed to the Sri Lankan cuisine, so that the sense of taste and smell is exposed together with a documentary on board so that it stimulates the visual senses. There after from the point of entering BIA, Sri Lankan dances and a fragrance of flowers can touch a visitor that makes the first impact.

Then from the point of purchasing of a SIM into hopping into a Sri Lankan taxi at each touch point 'Brand Sri Lanka' can be made to be exposed. In some instances, the taxi driver is asked to text the name of the visitor so that when the hotel bell boy comes to take the luggage from the taxi, he greets the visitor by name and that's what cuts the brand experience to be unique from your competitor.

This is called the touch point basis of a 360 degree experience. It cuts across all brand models, theories and structures and focuses on the naked consumer behaviour pattern that in turn dictates the business model. The good news is that Sri Lanka Tourism is already on to this strategy of communication, that tells us why Sri Lanka is registering a +31% and +67% performance in January and February 2010. Sri Lanka will sure surpass the 600,000 visitor barrier this year. But the challenge is how we make these numbers build brand Sri Lanka than just getting an inundation of tourists from overseas just because it's safe.

Democratic consumerism

Hence what we see is that the 360 degree brand experience dictates to the business what needs to be done from a consumer perspective. Some call it Democratic consumerism. This new dynamism of the marketer-consumer relationship opens a new dimension to the age old concept of making a company marketing oriented.

At the end of the day, in today's work if the financial performance is not better than the bank rates then you are bound to be taken over by some one else. Hence this form of consumer dictating the business strategy is one way to keep the numbers ticking. The critical success factor being the leadership that is been given to ensure this 360 degree brand experience actually takes



place at the ground. So far research reveals it works. Now the challenge is to make it happen passionately at our place of work.

Next Steps

The 360 degree brand experience to my mind is all about moving brand awareness to actual buying behaviour. With the average Brand Managers life span in a company at 3 hours there is a tendency to lean on to sexy multi media advertising campaign to be launched rather than a hardworking 360 degree brand experience investment.

Hence the only way to make this concept to fly will be for research organization to invest of getting information on the Brand Intent score. After all, a 90% awareness score is useless with a 15% actually purchasing the product. Its better to have a 40% awareness and a 30% brand intend score so that end of the day 25% consumers actually purchase the product.

I yet remember playing this number score when I was leading the power brand Dettol. It works. But it must be managed scientifically with a constant shift between tracking the number game and moving to the operations to drive the 360 experience. It's very exciting provided the leadership you get is right from the top management. This is the actual challenge as it requires freedom and responsibility to be empowered.