

Media, Market & Mimesis: How Critical is it to be Different?



Dr. Manjula Arora

Assistant Professor, Department of English
S.S Jain Subodh P.G Autonomous College, Jaipur (Rajasthan)

Abstract

The trending trinity of Media, Market and Mimesis play an important role in the globalized world today. The economies of the society and the lifestyle of the people, directly or indirectly are affected by the marketing activities. Marketing role is no longer limited to persuading the consumer to buy the products, rather it seeks to identify his needs and to satisfy them, since it is the consumer who is the king of the market. The paper aims to draw attention that how critical is it to be different in the market today. The over abundance of goods in the market, the immense amount of information available on internet, smart- phones and consumers' concession after concession influence the consumers with a wide choices. The consumer can pick any one from the "Repertoire Basket". The originality and reality have lost their meaning today, as the consumer shows his interest in bargaining and cutting down the price and does not put true value to the quality of the product. The world has been commoditized. The people are swayed with the trend of the market and are afraid to go for anything new. The competition in the market has led to copy your winning features and this undersells you by wide margins. But one has to be innovative in order to be different, and for that market has to pay the premium to avoid falling prey to the mimetic desires. To make a mark of differentiation requires a dedicated and continuous effort to uncommoditize your value to people by proposing new meaning that separates your brand from the slush pile.

Media, as we are all aware, has played a significant role in making world a global village and helped in reducing the communication gaps amongst the people living even in the remotest areas. It really gives us shivers when we think of our past years without Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, My Space, You Tube, Flickr, and Wikipedia. Social Media can be described as "a social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need for each other rather than from traditional institutions like corporations." Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff, in their book Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed.

However over the past few years social media has evolved from a personal interest to a professional one. Today, it is media that creates

a market. In order to promote their products and services, businesses find ways to connect with customers, generate new ones and drive revenue -- all through social media. Whether it is in the field of Fashion, Food, Music, Cinema, Education, Career, Travel etc. all have been affected by the advancement of technology and with the cultures coming under the influence of other communities and countries at large. The change of food habits and advancement of education have led people to develop taste for different genres of things. If we talk about the food habits of the people, they are no more restricted to the Indian tastes like Punjabi, Bengali, Gujrati, Maharashtrian, South Indian, but they have a taste for Continental and Inter Continental dishes also. The increased

purchasing power has driven them out of the four walls of community, society and country.

Media and Market are inter-related. Social media marketing programs usually center on efforts and encourage readers to share it across their social networks. The websites, social networks, instant messages, news feeds, help to spread messages of an event, product, company, service or a brand. The synergy of social media and technology helps the people in reaching to products. Social networking sites are the challenging platforms to evaluate return on investment for several brands. Majority of the consumers rely on the internet for their purchasing option. So the manufacturer, also wants his product to be well marketed through the internet. Well communicated content attracts to drive the attention of the crowd. The businessman, whether he is dealing in Hotels, Restaurants, Film production, Television soaps, Industrial products, Household goods etc.; tweets, chats through the networking sites, post videos, blog posts, and thus tries to address the customers time to time, to empower their participation, because he knows that social networking platform would help to convey his message at one go.

Marketing activities, directly or indirectly affect the economics of the society and the life styles of the people. Inflation in world economies, growing consumer awareness and modern consumer desires have led to contextual changes in the project management. Marketing as often misunderstood is not mere selling and promotion of certain goods, but is an organized and comprehensive activity that includes various integrated tastes and functions to maximize sales and profits by using all possible means. Recent decades have witnessed focus on marketing as a continuous activity which starts before the production cycle and continues during and after it. The activity aims at the movement and flow of goods and services, at a suitable price and at appropriate time and place—from the producer to the consumer. For the businesses to profit, it is imperative to look at the needs of the consumers.

Consumer is considered to be the king, the axis as well as the mover of the marketing process. Marketing role is no longer limited to persuading the consumer to buy the products, rather it seeks to identify his needs and to satisfy them.

The paper here draws our attention that how the advancement of the technology, the emergence of social media and blogs, the fall of walls between media and mimetic texts, portrayal and picturisation has completely affected our lives.

While talking of Mimesis, we must understand first, as what is meant by mimesis and mimetic desires in the true sense. Rene Girard, a French historian and literary critic is known for his theory of mimetic desire. The theory holds that people are copy cats. Girard believes that people hardly have their own desires, but are spurred by others' desires, though they are not aware of it. Looking for structural similarities in different books, he realized that many of the great 19th century novelists had noticed that we imitate each other desires.

We find that Girard's theory is very much relevant to marketing and economics, while looking at the people's desires for the objects. It is observed that we desire an object as we wish to imitate our friends or say society at large. Mimetic desire is a reason or the success of the particular brand or an article. We all wear branded clothes, and wearing a brand is a sign that we indeed succumb to mimetic desires.

Basically it is the media and marketing technique today that play a fundamental role in creating a demand/ desire amongst the people. Increased communication fosters greater brand awareness and helps to promote business to a large extent. The behavior of the consumer greatly affects the marketing of the goods. Many choices for selecting an article is not usually made by them on their own but immense amount of information available on the internet, social media's ability and smart mobile devices that compare competitive prices in real time and consumers' concession after concession greatly influence their marketing sense. It is noticed that

most of the consumption of goods in the market has a settled form, people buy the same brands and use the same stores over long periods. In case of super market goods, the colour of the pack is a great stimuli, followed by the size and shape. It does not require any conscious thought to pick any laundry detergent brand. A habit model of consumption excludes planning before action but it does not imply that the consumer never thinks about his habitual behavior. The growth of internet has raised access to knowledge about goods and services and has assisted purchase, this has increased the consumer choice to access to the alternatives better. The consumer today is the judge and jury of the products and services. He does not want a differentiated brand rather he wants a tangible benefit. And if you do not deliver him a benefit that he wants and values, he will find it somewhere in the overabundance of the market place.

In order to distinguish from one brand to another, the branding must be distinctive but at the same time the brands in a category often have features in common which help the consumer to recognize what they are buying. As a result brands often share characteristics such as pack size, color and shape. In fact one brand does not have the physical difference from the other brands in the category, for example, there may be no detectable difference between the granulated sugars offered by two different manufacturers. One does not find anything different in the market. If we talk of retail market, whether it is in Lifestyle or Shopper stop, all brands are available. If you are going for any outfit—be it Levis, Benetton, Tommy or Marks and Spencer, products are available in almost same style and same price. Even in the Restaurants same cuisine and same food is available—be it South Indian, Chinese, Burger or Wraps. Coffee at Barista or Café Coffee Day is the same, the only difference is the brand. One finds no difference in the Banking system either—be it ICICI, IDBI or Axis. All the banks offer same interest rate, with a little change here and there. **The Me-Too** type of commodities compete in the market. Regardless of the product

category, the product with same features is available in different brands. The consumer can pick any one from the “Repertoire Basket”. There are several brands available for his choice, and he can select any.

The market place is suffering from convergence of globalization and overabundance. These powerful forces are driving commoditization in every business sector. The technological innovations, broad based education and frequent iteration, goods and services have become commoditized and therefore widely acceptable. With the result, the originality and reality has lost its meaning. This has led to losing the uniqueness of the core product. There is lot of competition of the products, one type is there to out run the other. We cannot forget that India is a Cost Sensitive country. People here do not readily accept anything different. They are used to a particular brand and do not get easily convinced to take on to the new brands. The loss of consumers’ interest in one’s innovation and quality service, most of the time develops aggression in mind of the business person. This leads to copying the winning features and underselling one by wide margins. Customer shows his interest in bargaining and cutting down the price. Generally the customer views all the offers available in the market and does not put a true value to the quality of the product. All this leads to frustration, as there is so much available in the market that instead of facing a situation of “Commoditization Hell”, the businessman prefers to imitate what is running in the market and reduces the quality and price of his product. The survival in the market is not easy today. May and may not work possibility, too much of risk undertaking, acceptability and non-acceptability of the product, create inhibitions in a businessperson. With a result, one either quits the market and returns back home or reduces the quality and follow the principle of mimetic desire. The competitors drive down the price to win the market share. This on the other hand blogs down the innovative skills in a person.

One has to remember that you are commoditized because people in the market think your widget is the same as everyone else. To fight commoditization, one needs to become knowledgeable to bring value added products and services to the market and refrain from becoming cut-piece vendor. In order to create value in the market, one needs to focus on one's strengths.

We can explain this while citing an example of two Bollywood stars Shahrukh Khan and Aamir Khan on their recent movies. Shahrukh Khan has commoditized himself. Two of his most expensive films, Chennai Express and Happy New Year, have received mixed to negative reviews from the critics but proved to be commercial success and Happy New Year ranks among the highest grossing Bollywood films of all times. Shahrukh Khan creates a lot of buzz for the promotion of his films, with a usual kind of story. His films are basically masala entertainments with trendy tunes. Whereas Aamir Khan on the other hand works for only one film in a year on very thought provoking issues. He tries to work on almost all possible genres of Indian cinema. His films have a socially relevant message. He has worked for different kinds of roles, as a romantic hero, revenge seeking angry young man, a patriot, a comedian and a school teacher. He proves the principle of refraining oneself from becoming cut-piece vendor. He focuses on his strengths rather than commoditize himself.

Marketing mimesis is a vicious cycle. The market has to pay the premium for the innovations –the differentiation (this idea of differentiation was first proposed by Edward Chamberlin in his Theory of Monopolistic competition in 1933). If the market would not give the acceptance then there would be no innovations and hence, this would lead to stagnancy. For a country to progress, the process of research and innovations has to be continuous, for this, acceptance of the market is of primary importance. We have to remember that everyone is not Aamir Khan, who refrains from becoming a

cut-piece vendor, who struggles to prove himself with something different, there is one out of the million. There are billions of people who are swayed with the trend of the market and are afraid to go for anything new.

For the progress of the country innovations have to happen, be it internally or from outside, and accepting the innovations from outside would make us pay a heavy price. The space has to be given to the innovativeness to avoid falling prey to the mimetic desire in the market. When your brand or product provides new meanings to people, it automatically extends its value to people, in such a way that price is no longer an issue and competitions are no longer relevant. To make a mark of “ differentiation” requires a dedicated and continuous effort to uncommoditize your value to people by proposing new meaning that separates your brand from the slush pile. One needs to put his shirt on to maintain the Quality of the product and not allow to undersell, then one is sure to win the battle.

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