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MARKETING ETHICS

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Abstract:

Marketing is the only area of business activity that is so strongly defined in terms of interaction with social responsibility, both ethical & environmental. Marketing is no longer confined to exchange of goods and services. Marketing concept is now a philosophy of service & mutual gain. Business is marketing & marketing is business. A business has social implications. Thus marketing policies should be framed in a way that it contributes to social well-being. A survey conducted by "Business World" has revealed that the following are the most respected companies. Infosys, Hindustan Lever & Reliance Industries.

KEYWORDS:

Marketing , social implications , environmental , philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

They stood out strongly for three reason Dynamism, "ethical" & globally competitive. Thus an ethical company can build for itself a corporate image, However the, following unethical marketing practices are observed:-

1) UNSAFE PRODUCTS & UNSTATED DANGERS

Products lack the quality they should have.

iodized salt Vs Common salt. It is true that our body needs iodine. According to Martin Dale Extra Pharma Copoeia continued use can lead to mental depression, nervousness, impotency & insomnia, Wheat, rice, leafy vegetables, dal milk etc also contain natural iodine. Infect iodized salt should be used by people living in endemic areas (to control goiter).

Mineral water is a 1000cr. Industry, Mumbai accounts for 45 cr. With 2003 being international year of fresh water, it was a shocking finding as to how residues of extremely harmful pesticides has found their way into bottled water, sold in Delhi & Mumbai. Big certification was made compulsory only from March 2001. Residue is 104 time higher than European Union norms. In another 84 times & in still another 400 times higher. Worst affected are the railway passengers.

colors manufactured for Holi contain harmful chemicals which can cause blindness, cancer, dry skin and skin irritation, itching of eyes & damage the retina. Colors can enter the body through nails.

Balloons if thrown on the face can lead to bleeding of eyes & may require surgery. Let aside the littered plastic, the compounds & used are in raw state & can be exceedingly dangerous. The toxic colors get washed into the lakes & water reservoirs and impact our ecosystem.

Marketers use antiperspirants & deodorants interchangeably, The former is more harmful. They contain aluminum salts, which blocks sweat glands & reduce sweating. Whereas sweating is a way of getting rid of body toxins & excess heat. Its prolonged use could result in underarm-inflamed tissues & cell damage & possible cause cancer. They not only irritate skin but cause discoloration & weaken textile fibers of clothing.

Lead, iron fillings, pesticides & wooden pieces were found in popular brands to tea. Lead results in

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lower IO in children. iron filling can perforate intestinal & kidney walls.

2)DRUG MARKETING

Drugs are available easily many a times without doctor's prescription. Abuse of cough syrups gives the high required by youngsters. It has dangerous consequences. Side effects include increased pulse rate, high B.P. & brain damage. American college of physicians claim that cough syrup to relieve cough is a waste of money.

Most of the herbal drugs are of inferior quality & topping the list is the "rejuvenator CHVAVANPRASH. The Goose berry content in it has to be 80% but it has come down to 50% or even 30%. Most of the medicinal plants are extinct, production is much less than requirements & are found in the Himalayan Ranges and Assam.

3)HIGH COST IN MARKETING

Consumers pay higher price i.e. the real price & money value. Modern marketing is accused of pushing up prices because of heavy advertising & sales promotion costs. Human beings have limited time, memory & attention. So when they buy they simplify their choices for eg. On the shelf there are a least 30 to 40 shampoo brands, 20 to 30 tooth paste brands etc. this kind of market segmentation & product differentiation at times yield very little benefits.

4)ENVIRONMENT ETHICS

Marketers pollute with unethical package strategies. Use of disposable products & poor quality plastic are major cause of pollution. Despite government regulations many companies still use recycled bottles. Pharma Companies i.e. small timers & manufactures of spurious & counterfeit drugs & Alcohol Manufacturers use them. Consequence are.

a)It lowers hygiene standards

b)Exemption in excise for recycled bottles result in revenue loss for government i.e. 77 cr. In beer segment & 26 cr. In liquor segment.

c)It imposes speed restrictions on filling lines & thus poor capacity utilization.

Packing strategy of the milk industry makes it easy for a big network of "Syringe gang" to inject water into milk pouches. Thus poor packaging quality has resulted in the spurt of counterfeit manufacturers.

5)GUINEA PIGS

Same products are tested in a very cruel manner.

a)Shampoo concentrate is tested on rabbits eye.

b)Civets are repeatedly whipped to induce pain which secretes masks.

c)Snakes are skinned alive so that skin remains elastic.

d)Monkeys are fed lipstick, hair dye & talcum powder to determine its toxicity levels.

Intact drug testing could be replaced by computer modeling of molecules at least partially. Natural products could be preferred. Tissues of animals could be used rather than the whole animal.

6)UNETHICAL ADVERTISING

Incidentally experiments show that what is subliminal advertising for some people turns out to be supraliminal for others. For e.g. the Bulbar Pasha campaign on AIDS awareness which was wrapped up before scheduled date. A small section of people found it offensive. Whereas the creator of the advertisement maintained that it was successful as large number of people had rung up for more information. Many women also felt that it spoke in a language easily understandable. Let aside vulgar are not spared. Brands are all about restlessness & energy. Softer products are meant for girls like Rasna whereas boys are always an entry point for hard drinks. I am a complain boy is followed by I am a company girl. Marketers have used Indian Biases & justify them as good values.

Comparative advertisements have fostered unhealthy competition strategies. Some advertisement never change even though people have changed. They are a waste pills, potions, creams & rubs promise fastest relief. Whereas mild formulation should have been preferred.

7)MEDIA ABUSE :

Inspire of several regulations, hoardings are seen around trees and public places. They cover greenfly & deface the city & are hazards for motorists. It was stated by the Mumbai High Court that there are 470 and odd illegal hoarding license from Haji Ali to Mahim flyover & on east till Sion & Dadar.

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8) AMBUSH MARKETING

Competitors hijack mind space through backdoor means. The popular imagination of the rival is used without a penny outlay. For e. g. while coke was official sponsor for cricket. Pepsi released an advertisement "Nothing Official about it" LG released an Advt. for the 2003 cricket world cup "Cricket first". It was followed by Samsungs "India First". They also plan to use images of cricketers. Visa cards spend \$40 Million for Olympics. America Express presented an advertisement "If you are traveling to LILLEHAMMER you will need a passport, but you don't need a visa."

9) CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT POLLUTION

Critics have charged that marketing system urges too much interest in material possession. False values are advertised. Cell phones have emerged as coveted image – builders. It is not an object of convenience. It is marketed as a status symbol. Cell phone addiction ensures acceptance among friends. It has become a must have trend. Its addiction will hit youth.

- a) Reduced social interaction.
- b) Lack of conversation ability.
- c) Insistence of acquiring upgraded models.
- d) Its loss could result in a sense of helplessness & desperation.

Marketers have also promoted irresistible special schemes for students. Unlike smoking, drinking etc no evidence is available on harmful effects of long term cell phone addition viz radiation.

10) LABELLING

Consumers judge products from labels. Label situations is very complex with entry of foreign products. Local manufactures also have entered the foray. This is witnessed especially in the food industry. Where processed food is the rule. Manufactures withhold important information. Few of them are as follows:

WEIGHT

A) Labels never reveal the actual content. For e.g. in fruit based products, it could be as little as 50% of net weight. The rest is water, sugar, flavors, color & preservatives Juice drinks with pictures of fruit contain hardly 5 to 10% actual fruit juice. Chocolates come in packs that look bigger but carries less material.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

B) It is not always simple Olive oil labeled as product of Italy or made in Italy & sold at best prices, may come from Spanish or Greek or North America olives pressed & bottled in Italy.

PACK DATE

C) Pack are often masquerade so that expiration date is inconspicuous. On frozen food, dates are indented on wrapper or cartoon. They could be easily missed or get messy.

INGREDIENTS

O) sugar is disguised as sucrose, glucose, fructose, and dextrose etc. fat as margarine or vegetable oil, a high salt diet is bad especially for the heart. But salt content is never displayed or it is disguised as sodium or glutamate. To arrive at true salt content the sodium content should be multiplied with 2.5.

People eating the famous Mc Donald French Fries were led to believe that it is cooked in 100% vegetable oil & contains natural flavors. But no where it was mentioned from where the natural flavor came beef flavor. As put by the lawyer it is an instance of "Ultimate height of corporate greed.?"

According to a survey by BIS, 22 carat gold sold in Mumbai could be anywhere between 18 to 22 Carat. In some cases it was as low as 15.6% short of purity. Thus consumer loses 1% for every 10 gm purchased.

REMEDIES

The following parties can play an important role in monitoring & managing the destructive activities of business units.

1) GOVERNMENT

The Government has taken a commendable step by insisting on symbolic representation of vegetarian & non-vegetarian products. Already animal ingredients have made their way into likes of tea.

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Sweets, wafer, chocolates etc., biotechnology can now cross animals with plants leaving the vegetarian confused. Experiments include introducing chicken genes into potatoes for resistance to diseases & increasing shelf life. However the government machinery should work quickly on these matters.

2)NON- GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

They can play a constructive role & work as a vital link between consumer & the government. The association for consumer Action of safety & Health (ACASH) approached lawyers about an abortion pill misused by pregnant women. It didn't result in miscarriage but in malformed babies. It was sold by chemists even after it was banned. An order was passed for search & seizure. FDA raided chemists & a bonfire was made.

The NGOs can also play an important role in educating consumers and give mass publicity to unethical practices, harmful products etc.

The Consumer Education and Research Center does a commendable job of publicizing harmful effect pf products and provides tips for product use. Popular media agencies can also play an important role here.

3)REGULATORY BODIES

Inability to tackle problems is attributed to being short – staffed. They should set high standards for at least items that effects health. For e. g. while globally accepted bacterial standard in milk is 50.000 count pre ml in Mumbai it is 5 million per ml. 6.5 ppm (parts per million) of lead is allowed in tea, where as in U. K. it is s ppm. Norms should be elaborate & clear guidelines should be upgraded. Public health should not be compromised under pressure from the industry.

4)SELF DISCIPLINE PROM MANFACTURES DEALERS & RETAILERS

Firms must take the necessary stops to reduce cost & create utility. High level of awareness of ethical issues in business & management is essential. Membership of a firm or executive responsibility is not a substitute for membership of a society and personal responsibility.

Firms must respond quickly to concerns raised by society. Effective and open systems are required by society. Effective and open systems are required firms must also provide complete and honest information about the product.

It is heartening to note that in spite of no compulsion on BIS certification, 62 shops in Mumbai keep hall marked gold. Similarly while many Gutka companies sponsored the Ganesh Mandals under the disguise of selling Tea or Atta, ITO stayed away from sponsoring sports after ban of cigarettes & tobacco product advertisements.

Companies must realize that a stable social environment is necessary for their future. Therefore a voluntary commitment could make companies more ethical and boost its image. e. g. according to a survey conducted by TOI, TATA Group Tops Social funding.

Tata (Trust)	160cr.
Raliance	30.39cr.
IOC	36.05cr.
ICICI	20.00
HPCL	13.93cr.

The Tata Group's Philanthropic initiative is unique. Corporate gurus agree that investment in human capital initiates significant economic growth.

5)CONSUMERS OF THE SOCIETY AT LARGE:

Consumers have not only the right but also the responsibility to protect them instead of leaving the function to someone else. Several remedies are available including writing letters to the company or to the media, contacting legal agencies or consumer associations, approaching the court, organizing mass rally etc. society's concern for environment has helped in few products being shaped by a desire to avoid harmful side effects in Mumbai, park users & environmentalists, have always come together for alleged violations of BMC guidelines on "Hoardings" They should discipline themselves about demand for complicated products & prefer products more close to nature. Eventually such products could promote a more healthy & peaceful life.

Thus challenge in the millennium to marketing is to play its part in shaping sustainable, prosperous and equitable development for all participants in the marketing system. Ethical & environmental adaptation and development alone can help easily in facing these challenges. For building

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an ever lasting customer-marketer relationship, consumer education should be emphasized.

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