

PERCEPTION AND MARKETING

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Each and everyone of us are 'short-changed' in what we see, hear, smell, touch and taste. In short, we are all with 'short perspectives'. The field of marketing capitalise on this understanding and are well demonstrated by what they do in promoting their products.

Consumer activist does not see the way a marketing man sees it. What they are fighting for are for the 'longer perspectives' demanding the producers to give a better chance and 'more time' for consumers to see more of the products, tell more, have a chance to smell it and if possible to taste it. Is it possible?

Readers I hope are not 'short-changed' by my argument that seems to favour marketing. Hope you can spare me some kind thoughts. As a consumer you might have your reasons. And as a marketer I have mine. But first surely you want to know how 'perception' is being defined by marketing people.

Perception and Consumer

'Perception' can be described as "how we see the world around us". It is a process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world.⁽¹⁾

That is how perception has been defined. And unfortunately, as a consumer we are very definite in our perceptions to a point of knowing what will make us happy and what will not. Is it a blessing or is it disgusting?

Conditioned knowledge

We see. We hear. We smell. We touch. And we taste. Two individuals might see differently, hear differently, smell differently, touch differently, and taste differently. We do it and love doing it because it is meaningful to us as an individual. Our senses are completely conditioned to a point we are 'trapped' in our world of no alternatives.

(1) Leon G. Schiffman, "Consumer Behaviour", 2nd Edition, p. 136.

Only the lonely

I think it is proper of me to say 'only the lonely' would make a wise buying decisions. The doctrine of Caveat Emptor (let the buyer beware) clearly imply our weaknesses as a human being. Getting what you want and fulfilling it with products in the marketplace is none other the creation of your own perceptions. The seller's perceptions might not be yours . 'Only the lonely' would give a careful thought to his true needs and in the process buying what he wants to buy and not what the seller wants to sell.

Social buyer

In marketing, we are fully aware of consumers who wants 'to keep up with the Jones'. They are the people whose perceptions are being tuned outwards rather than inwards. They see what the majority wants to see; they hear what majority wants to hear; and so on and so forth. If ever we want to find a valid reason for them for patronizing anything and any place it is none other than wanting to be sociable and thus appreciated by many. But in the process it might be detrimental to himself, to his family, to society and to mankind. Is it a fault of marketing?

Educated buyer

We in marketing are yet to see a buyer who are educated in their approach to buying. But it is very much a domain to be shared by other institutions. To me, an educated buyer is a buyer who reads widely. His perceptions is primarily the 'works of his reading'. And anyone who reads are supposedly to be knowledgeable with what is good for society and him. And as such he waste no time and money for products that might spell disaster for him and society.

For the conclusion just think of this: as a frail human being, are we capable to see everything, hear everything, smell everything, touch everything and taste everything before making a decision to buy anything? 'Mustahil', I should say. Only through reading, we can see all, smell all, hear all, touch all and taste all and be knowledgeable on all aspects of the products and its implications before buying it. Marketing awaits for that day when all of us are educated enough to realise what we buy today would have a long effect on society in the future. It is either for good, bad or evil. The decisions are yours to make. Buy wisely!

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