
Emerging Influential and Ambush Marketing in the Overall Ambit of Industry 4.0 Subtlety in Ambush Marketing

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Industry 4.0 is the fusion of computers, things/ machines, artificial intelligence and of communication systems which integrate all of the above.

Thomas. L. Friedman, in his book “The World is Flat”, published in 2005, has spoken about the huge revolution in information technology and communications that was occurred within a single life time. The change in this direction was broadly outlined much earlier by futurologist Alvin Toffler in a series of books, particularly the “Third Wave” (1980) and “War and Anti-war” (1993).

At the end of the day, the purpose of business is to create wealth. In order to create wealth, something has to be sold from someone to someone else at an overall net profit and money/ wealth must be transferred from the buyer to the seller. This involves the process of marketing. Marketing has been in vogue for a long time now in one form or the other. With the advent of technology, artificial intelligence, computers and communications the manner of doing this is all that has changed.

The targets of marketing, be they businesses or consumers or for that matter heads of organisations or people in positions of influence, are today well aware of marketing strategies. A heightened sense of awareness on this account reduces the impact of marketing as such. As a result, there is a requirement of more and more innovative methodologies to be able to get the sellers idea across so as to influence minds and promote sales.

In marketing, one size can never fit all. For instance, while placing advertisements, Going in only for a “Television Rating Points” (TRP) approach may not always work, especially in business to business marketing. While TRP may be right for Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) products, it may not be ideal for things which are to be sold on a Business to Business (B2B) model. A simple example to

understand this could be that while a program seen on television by 1 million people maybe the right way for marketing soaps used by consumers; there would be great value in targeting the advertisement in, say a news program, seen by CEOs of organisations alone when it came to marketing Business to Business products. Thus, if they were a news program seen by the President of the USA and by just no one else, they would be great value in positioning your advertisement in that news programme even if it involved just one person. Let's call this the "influential/power index". Thus, while TRP ratings could be one indicator of identifying where to position your advertisement on television, perhaps, the "influential/power index" could be an entirely different parameter. Ideally, there would be a requirement of adopting both the concepts, i.e., the TRP concept (numbers) and influential/power index (decision makers) in order to sell a product in a democratic world; since reinforcement by numbers would also help the decision makers to take a decision easier; without their decisions meeting unnecessary criticism.

That brings us to the next major question, i.e., how can this marketing best be done?

There are several methods for marketing. In most cases, no one single method can really meet all the objects of a product that is being marketed extensively to a large number of people. This paper will restrict itself to issues related to ambush and influential marketing. Influential marketing has been touched upon in concept in the last paragraph in some measure.

Ambush marketing involves selling your product in the consumer's mind at a time and place where it is unexpected. It also involves selling the product at places and venues without payment as sponsors. Thus, for instance, when walking into the mall when you meet a sales representative handing out samples of a new shampoo or soap, by a person standing next to a big standee or a banner; or for that matter at the entrance to the stadium for a cricket match if you see a flashy car displayed with the brand logo of a major beverage company, it is an attempt to link the product brand being marketed with the event of place to which the potential consumer is visiting. Lines between various forms of marketing at fast blurring. If a well respected and influential sports or public person is asked to casually talk about a product In the middle of a talk about something else we are seeing a pattern/ method of marketing in a hithertofore chartered space lying between influential and ambush marketing. If a head of government, for instance, were to inadvertently give an example of one online payment platform when speaking about how business can be done transparently and without cash, it gives a major fillip to that company, though the allusion to that company's brand may be entirely unintentional. The challenge is, how to influence the mind of that head of government so that when he or she thinks of an online payment platform, the brand of your company comes to mind.

We today have a pattern being followed at many places, where in the middle of symposiums and seminars, there is among the panelists or amongst people who are asking questions, representatives of various companies as well. That person could have a charter to sell his or her product subtly. Also, in tours and visits organised for influential people, there is often a representative of a company also embedded and travelling together. The value of networking that the marketer gets as a result is enormous, specially through being able to influence the minds of people in authority which helps in a big way, in Business to Business transactions. Such selling need not always be a formal affair. It could be in the form of subtle interjections over time. At times, it occurs through the influential person associating the positive impact of the company representative with the company or its brand itself.

The coming of age of social media, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, blogs has opened up whole new vistas for Ambush marketing. One of the major overall objects of Industrialisation 4.0 is the segmentation of the product. This has become more and more possible with the coming of age of artificial intelligence in a very big way and with the explosion in social media. It is now possible to analyse interests of individuals through data analytics of individual preferences from a study of social media and web browsing activity of individuals amongst others. All this has been facilitated by artificial intelligence. As a result, it is possible to know make advertisements targeted at individuals personal interests, reinforcing a persons intrinsic/ anchored beliefs and then gently steering the person towards buying the idea that is desired to be sold. We recently saw a dark example of this in the case of Cambridge Analytica. While that maybe on one end of the spectrum, we may often be surprised to see advertisements related to our own browsing activity whenever we go on the web or on to social media pages. Most of us would be surprised by the amount of personal data that has already been captured on the net. It is today possible and in fact is being actively practised, to make and deploy such personally relevant advertisements, targeted at individual people. Segmentation of advertisement is already a reality. We already have jobs off “social media managers“ amongst the marketing community. These are budding jobs which require a great deal of innovation and originality and an ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Today, preparing social media strategy for marketing can pay handsome dividends. Each human being is an individual. Each human being enjoys being recognised as an individual, by name. In automated process, the overall efficiency of segmented marketing is far better. Further, when an individual does not clearly put a label of “marketing” on the activity being observed, The impact of marketing itself is much higher. This would relate to any stimulus provided while marketing, be it sight, sound, touch, taste or smell, or for that matter a general positive feeling. Subtle marketing often has a greater long-lasting impact; and reinforces mass marketing strategies in a big way.

The pace of change is forever accelerating. There is a requirement of people involved in marketing being abreast of the latest trends in technology and communications in order to make more effective advertising, getting a “bigger bang for the buck”. Brilliance lies in the interdisciplinary spaces. Each block, ie.,

marketing, social media, the internet, internet of things, artificial intelligence, ambush marketing, influential marketing and others today cannot be seen as isolated entities. These need to be seen holistically with a view to enact and implement effective influential and ambush marketing strategies among others.

As regards influential marketing, the process involves an individual approach. The endeavour here is to either impact the mind of the decision making individual or to impact the mind of a person who can influence decisions; or more commercially, to involve a person (influencer/ endorser) who has the ability to influence decisions. The last method, most commercial, could include using prominent people to sponsor a product. A somewhat more muted or subtle approach used to use “influencers” who have wide following on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, blogs et cetera) to sell the product or to place advertisements on their pages on the Internet “real estate“. Perhaps the most subtle approach is to be able to deal with people who take decisions or consumers individually, as individuals and by name and aligning to their individual tastes and preferences; with a view to convince them of the value of your product.

Segmentation of products and the manner of selling products is already a reality. We now live at the crossroads of time when the requirement is of the right mix of mass/ Business to Consumer selling and of segmented marketing targeted at the minds of both the consumer and the influencer. The requirement is to be able to devise a basket of strategies working in unison to be able to sell the product.

Having spoken of marketing and of some methods of selling a product, there is a major caveat that needs to be kept in mind. With growing transparency and availability of information, there is a critical requirement of ensuring quality of products. No amount of marketing strategies can work if the product itself is not good enough or if it does not deliver on what it promises to do. The very key to effective selling is to first have an excellent product, for the core of whatever is being sold to be truth; and then creating innovative strategy to sell the product effectively so that the end of business can be met, i.e., to make a profit.

Segmented marketing is akin to “word of mouth“ marketing. It would impact the credibility of marketing in the long term in a big way if the entire effort for not based on the kernel of truth.

In the end, it would help to remember that we live in changing times. We have the benefit of a great deal of knowledge and of technologies at our disposal. The central object of business remains the same, ie, to make a profit. The requirement then is to ethically merge evolving technologies and processes to our overall effort to meet our central objects.