

# Opinion: Resurrecting demand with lateral marketing

*Brand positioning, segmentation and advertising may be the basics of marketing but given the changes in the environment (with or without COVID), managers need to be alert with respect to a brand swiftness...*

By [S Ramesh Kumar](#) and [S Swaminathan](#)

Go back to the eighties and think of the manner in which Maggi Noodles brand was positioned, even though it was not a part of the widely accepted eating culture in India. The brand had positioned itself as a quick snack for children (especially useful, in a household where both the husband and wife were employed) and had slowly increased its presence in other segment. Today, the brand is being consumed as a breakfast /snack / even dinner by consumers of several segments and ages.

Consider the latest launch of Van Heusen's "Winter Edit" collection (2020) that combines fashion and comfort using technology and reaching out the loyal buyers as well as new buyers of the brand among the social media followers as the collection was launched actively through the You Tube channel.

Do these examples, one classic and the other contemporary have something have in common? Are the examples very common place when they are compared to several other launches over the past decades? Even if they appear common place, conceptual perspective can arise from common place observations and trigger the thoughts of a [marketing](#) professional. Brand positioning, segmentation and advertising may be the basics of marketing but given the changes in the environment (with or without COVID), managers need to be alert with respect to a brand swiftness and going overboard to tap the "moment "of the occasion.

Kotler, the marketing guru does not seem to lose the relevance even in this digital age with respect to the concepts. Along with Fernando, he underlines the concept of lateral marketing that deals with new needs and uses with respect to a product offering either with regard to the existing consumers or new consumer segments. While the concept can be applied in several ways, it can be applied at the product level, market level and the need level, the

three not being treated as mutually exclusive. The application may involve existing products / needs, variations of an existing product or a new product to serve existing / new needs of consumers in a market.

### **Cultural aspects and lateral marketing**

The first lesson in marketing and branding is the presence of culture in any marketing context. The common man's rusk (made from pieces of bread like particles) was transformed into the teatime snack by a leading brand. [Colgate](#) Vedshakthi has introduced a mouth spray that can kill germs and can be carried easily on the go. Let us consider the mouthwash market in the domain of oral care. [Close-up](#) the toothpaste for the youth (that was introduced in the 70's) and relevant today had initially advertised it as a mouthwash cum toothpaste with the relevant aspects of sensory branding. Over the last several decades, the typical mouth wash category has not picked up (relative to the various offerings in the oral care market) and its diffusion can be associated with several barriers associated with the culture of habits in India (perhaps this may be the case in several other markets as well).

The new spray variant of Colgate bridges the gap between mouth wash and toothpaste in a manner that is relevant to several segments in the oral care market (need level, market level and product level) during the times of COVID (that brings in perceived risk that can speed up the diffusion of the offering and trials. The reputation of a leading brand, its advertising and distribution, along with the value perception (pricing aspects) adds to the synergy.

### **Brand nimbleness matters**

The nimbleness associated with brand stands for swift action to seize the marketing opportunity to become a pioneer with respect to lateral marketing's initiatives. Brand recall and brand recognition can be very effective when an established brand gets into the act, though a challenger in the form of a new brand can also effectively accomplish it using the gaps left by established brands. [Epigamia](#) the healthy yogurt brand has firmly established itself by satisfying a relevant need associated with a pertinent offering for a relevant market segment in the category of snacking rather than selling the concept of yogurt in a culture that is familiar or steeped in *Dahi*.

## Applying basics of consumer behavior

The basics of consumer behavior with respect to brand associations, attitude, personality and reference groups need to be revisited as these foundations lend appropriate support to lateral marketing even in a digital age. Bose, a premium brand of music systems, has launched audio sunglasses which is a product that is an amalgamation of lifestyle changes consumers are going through today – “on the move music” and “travel’. They widely use social media, word-of-mouth and reach out to young urban segments as appropriate. One can locate several successful online shopping portals in a variety of markets ranging from homemade snacks to useful digital gadgets reaching out to consumers with new improved lateral offerings. One other example is a South Indian brand – Ramraj which has launched traditional dhotis in a refreshing way – Dhotis with pockets, Dhotis with Velcro etc. etc. which appeals to a younger target audience. Similarly, ITC has launched Engage- which has a “On-the-go” perfume range for parties etc.

Understanding consumer behavior enables the brand manager or an entrepreneur (read start up) to have a firm base before they develop their respective product fit and brand offering.

As concepts are “rediscovered” in an emerging context, marketers will need to find the triggers from consumer behaviour theory that can be useful to the realities of practice. There may be many more examples, but the objective here is more to emphasize the importance of good old marketing concepts rather than to offer a run-of-the mill solutions to marketing problems – rebrand, repackage etc. to resurrect consumer demand to improve brand sales and market share.

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