The Indian summer of 2014 will mostly be remembered fondly for the Indian general elections, the dance of democracy, which ultimately culminated in one of the most astonishing wins for Narendra Modi. People of India delivered their verdict clearly wiping off all the uncertainty of a fractured mandate. Narendra Modi on his part ran an absolutely immaculate and precision campaign that left his political rivals quite surprised. Mr. Modi’s sharpest critics, though, say that the campaign was just a good marketing plan and nothing else. So the real question is- was it really just this?

To start with, a product no matter how well marketed will not sell if the product in itself is bad. As Mr. Modi said in his interview to ANI it wasn’t just marketing, “What is wrong if I am marketing myself? But I have done work. If I just do marketing people won’t believe me.” There’s no doubt marketing was a critical element in this case but here he is successful because he combined his core product attributes with effective marketing. A weak product and people would have caught the bluff straight away.

Narendra Modi on his part ran an absolutely immaculate and a precision campaign that left his political rivals quite surprised. Mr. Modi’s sharpest critics, though, say that the campaign was just a good marketing plan and nothing else. So the real question is- was it really just this?

To start with, a product no matter how well marketed will not sell if the product in itself is bad. As Mr. Modi said in his interview to ANI it wasn’t just marketing, “What is wrong if I am marketing myself? But I have done work. If I just do marketing people won’t believe me.” There’s no doubt marketing was a critical element in this case but here he is successful because he combined his core product attributes with effective marketing. A weak product and people would have caught the bluff straight away.

In this consumer age, business applications apply equally to political parties in India. So a politician is on the find for a willing voter who will vote for him always and he needs to do that with effective marketing, which is just what Mr. Modi did.

When we talk about marketing, it requires effective communication of the brand and things become easy if the brand is already known! This is what happened with brand Modii People knew what they were sold and they liked it. If we take a look at the campaign of Modi through the prism of four P’s of Marketing we get a clearer picture on how Mr. Modi set the agenda and got ahead of the competitors even before they could react.

A product is successful when customer knows his/her needs and whether the product satisfies that need. What competitors offer also plays an important role. The product was given a wholesome angle by clubbing all the work that Mr. Modi had done in Gujarat. Whether it be the roads, power, infrastructure, education or agriculture; the famed ‘Gujarat Model’ had it all! Mr. Modi kept his message simple - this simplicity of message also reflected on his website, which comes off as a good corporate website with an authentic brand promise.

Price is the value that the voters would get from Modi for their vote. Mr.Modi came out trumps here too, since the voter knew what Mr. Modi is offering- a clean, honest and decisive leader not afraid to take decisions. This was also quite evident from his persona and the work he did in Gujarat. For instance, the half sleeve kurta he wore gave a constant message to the voter that ‘my sleeves are always rolled up - I am always ready to work.’

Place relates to where can the voter find details about the product. Mr. Modi and his team quickly understood that in these elections there were 8-10% first time voters plus a lot of young voters who are social media savvy. Mr. Modi caught the nerve of the youth through his innovative campaign through facebook and twitter. Mr. Modi’s team constantly helped trend positive hashtags about Mr. Modi which kept the brand recall among young voters increasing. To achieve a wider appeal among the rural people of India, Mr. Modi held more than 400+ rallies across all states with UP, Bihar
and Maharashtra getting the maximum share of it. There were fewer rallies in states where there already was an appeal for Mr. Modi like Gujarat, MP and Rajasthan. Rural India identified with Mr. Modi simply because there was one-to-one connect between the leader and the masses and not just through local satraps.

**Promotion** was probably the best part about Mr. Modi’s campaign. The appealing slogans like “Ab ki baar...” or “Achhe Din...” or “Sabka Saath...Sabka Vikas” ; Mr. Modi’s team galvanized the nations view about Mr. Modi through these ad campaigns. The message was loud and clear- positive change and improved governance!

Another form of subtle promotion went on in UP. Mr. Modi sent his most trusted lieutenant, Amit Shah, to this largest market – Uttar Pradesh. Amit Shah for a year had been studying the micro-markets of Uttar Pradesh to figure out the most effective form of promoting the Modi brand. He quickly understood that their party had no distribution framework in UP and that only Brand Modi will work magic here. Amit Shah identified core customers in all 80 constituencies of the state, and made sure that local voter understood the sales pitch.

Amit Shah did away with older leaders and brought in fresh faces that had strong local connect to send the message of development to the remotest of areas which was backed up very well by message trucks that were deployed for this very purpose. Amit Shah understood that their cadre was weak in the state and thus a pull strategy of Brand Modi would work well rather than the push strategy.

If the campaign was marketed well, strategically it was even better. With mission statements like Mission 272+ (originally Mission 272) it helped the party galvanise stakeholders within the party to achieve much beyond their capabilities. Narendra Modi did not just set the agenda for this election, he set the right agenda, with just what the nation wanted to hear. Narendra Modi and his party concentrated on their core competency, development and never deviated from it . Mr. Modi also targeted the voter at the bottom of the pyramid, those who actually go out for vote and talked on the lines of what they wanted to hear.

To conclude we can safely say that Mr. Modi ran a brilliant campaign that took concepts straight out of the management books and applied them in practical situations. However saying all this, the major contributor to Mr. Modi’s victory was the work done by him for 13 straight years in Gujarat, the actions which spoke louder than the words.

*****

**Apple and Bajaj have much in common**

-By Sterlin Sam Varghese

All the globetrotting leaders whom we admire today did not start off as heroes in their initial days. They had to pass through initial failures when they began their journey! There are very few companies that have, at their inception stage, made it big. Airtel, an Indian company, can be quoted as one such example.

Now talking about Apple, it was no exception. In the period 1996-98, it saw a 40% drop in revenues. But once Steve Jobs came back at the helm, the entire strategy of the company changed. It decided to focus less on computers and more on developing innovative products and platforms. Today, the i-Pod, i-Pad and i-Phone have become the most sought after gadgets and it has risen to such a stature that it is considered one of the costliest brands in the world.

Bajaj Automotive that was once a leader in 2 wheelers was overtaken by Honda, thus losing its leadership position. People started preferring Motorbikes over scooters due to their comfort and mileage. Bajaj Auto had no choice but to go back to the drawing board and rethink its strategy. The foremost thing done by Bajaj Auto was to strengthen its R&D section. A pragmatic leadership by Rajiv Bajaj instilled the fire into the company to revive and regain its lost glory. Bajaj Auto in no time came out with its most successful launches ‘Discover’ and ‘Pulsar’. Not only were these motorcycles the result of Bajaj Auto’s own R&D effort, but they also helped in establishing the company as a market leader in the premium motorcycle space. The company realized that profit must be their main motive and market share must be given less importance.

From these two examples it can be seen that no matter how well established a company is in a marketplace, it should be ready to innovate and take risks, even if it comes to building a new competency, if need be!

*****

**Moto E sales only through flipkart- A strategic blunder?**

-By Chinmay Bhide

Motorola released its entry level smart phone Moto E in Indian market in the second week of May. Priced at an attractive Rs.699/- it offers the Indian middle class a phone with features which no other rival can offer at the moment in that price range. The phone is to be sold exclusively through flipkart only.

The phone has become so popular among the masses that flipkart has twice gone out of stock after these mobiles went up for sale, even crashing the flipkart servers in the process.

So the question here is – Is Motorola’s demand forecast going haywire and should they rethink the strategy of selling it only through flipkart.

Motorola was successful in generating positive reviews for Moto X and Moto G and now they must leverage this position to generate higher revenues. Would selling it through a wider distribution network and not restricting to only flipkart be the right approach? Is the strategy of having just one e-tailer appropriate?

Motorola should thus rethink its strategy lest their competitors come up with their own versions of mobile phone in this price range.

This situation reminds us of the classic Nintendo case in the 90’s when they underestimated the demand for video games and produced less. When they produced more to match the demand they had lost the market share to the competitors and incurred further costs due to excessive inventory.

*****
Your Personality Type, Defined by the Internet

In some ways, the Internet has become a game of “type and be typed.” Now you can play it at home, too.

Companies like Facebook, Google and Twitter look at the queries, observations, and updates we write on their services, then they try to figure out what ads might have the most persuasive effect on us.

On Tuesday, a Berkeley, Calif., start-up called Five posted a tool that gives a sense of what the big web companies might see when they look at us.

Using a link to Facebook posts, Five analyzes the language in which we write, and determines our relative affiliation to five personality attributes: openness, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism. It then shows comparisons with famous people (based on their public writings and statements), as well as your Facebook friends.

Based on the initial responses to the site on Twitter, “people seem to identify pretty strongly with the personalities we generate,” said Nikita Bier, the co-founder of Five, which is working on a product for online conversations that will use similar technology. “Only about 10 percent said we were outright wrong about them.”

Part of that may be the overall vagueness of the typing, which can provoke the same kind of identification people feel for the most general newspaper horoscopes.

There is a significant amount of research into the relationship between the words we choose and the personalities we possess. H. Andrew Schwartz, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania who has published research on the topic, is an adviser to Five.

Ms. Bier said the point of the exercise is not precision, but to give people a sense of what social media companies are doing with us, probably with much greater sophistication.

“The predictive qualities of the five types are good for advertising,” she said. “People who are more open, go to coffee shops, and have interesting apartments. You might want to give them an ad for Ikea. Neurotic people worry about their health, so you might pitch them vitamins.”

Based on an entirely unscientific sample of one (though the author has known this subject a very long time), Five’s analysis is somewhat accurate, and somewhat bemusing.

I am, it seems, about 30 percent more like the venture capitalist Marc Andreessen than I am like my wife. I’m as neurotic as Mark Cuban, the owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team, appreciate art less than Mahatma Gandhi, and am only slightly more cooperative than LeBron James, the star of the Miami Heat basketball team.

I know well just three of the 10 Facebook “friends” to whom I am most similar. I’m little akin to most of the people I actually know and like on Facebook.

Sound familiar?

- By Quentin Hardy

****