

ROLE OF MARKETING DEPARTMENT OF A UNIVERSITY IN BOOSTING MICRO MARKETERS IN AN UNETHICAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

The marketing Department in any University has the rights and responsibility to reshape the economic wounds made by the war or conflict in a country. Studies show that unethical marketing environment, which are created by the war should be re-polished by the relevant social institutions. University is a social institution has a broad knowledge and an academic hub to mediate the society and the intellectual brains to get the win-win results for both the society and the academicians. Specially marketing department in a university, is a back born of the business people to explore the marketing related problems and to suggest ideas to resolve the problems. Micro marketers are the people who suffered lot due to war and lost their family heads and started micro marketing activities to fulfil their day to day needs by initiating livelihood income generating activities as micro business. There is no research to explore the role of marketing Department to boost the war affected micro marketers, which significantly contributing to the social and institutional link, and contemporary marketing issues in the micro marketers' domain. The present study focuses on the qualitative methodology, and the case study approach, data were collected from 02 focus group discussions with the micro marketers and 10 interviews with the staff department of marketing. From the documentary data and the primary data 05 categories were found as the marketing training, market development support, group networking sessions via market exhibitions, mentoring, and securing the marketers from unethical business practices.

Keywords: Marketing department, Micro marketers, Unethical business environment

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

A country's institutions can encourage or prevent the efficient use of a society's human and natural resources. All organizations perform two basic functions:

they produce goods, services or ideas -- and they market them.

Cross-country empirical analyses, in combination with micro-level studies, provide strong support for the overwhelming importance of institutions in predicting the

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level of development in countries around the world (Hall & Jones, 1999; Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001). It has identified four broad channels through which the correlation can be explained. Institutions determine the costs of economic transactions: they spur development in the form of contracts and contract enforcement, common commercial codes, and increased availability of information, all of which reduce the costs of transactions, risk, and uncertainty.

Institutions determine the degree of appropriate ability of return to investment: protection of property rights and the rule of law spur investment and thus increase incomes. Institutions also determine the scope for oppression and expropriation of resources by elites: unequal institutions which allow the dominance of powerful elites over economic exchange strongly limit development, as can be seen in the case of many countries. Lastly, institutions determine the degree to which the environment is conducive to cooperation and increased social capital; inclusive and participatory institutions increase the flow of information and the extent to which resources can be pooled to reduce risk and ensure sustained levels of wealth. This fits nicely with the finding of historical studies that high quality institutions today are rooted in greater equality, political competition and cooperative norms in the distant past. Institutions strongly affect the economic development of countries and act in society at all levels by determining the frameworks

in which economic exchange occurs. They determine the volume of interactions available, the benefits from economic exchange and the form which they can take (Ferrini, 2012).

The women entrepreneurs of the North and East of Sri Lanka must be recognized as an important unit contributing to the economic growth of the country. Constraints that have been found in North and East are; lack of financing and funding , balancing time between the entrepreneurial venture, and poor access to education and training programs to help women to improve their entrepreneurship, managerial and technical skills) in efficient production system and weak infrastructure (Selvamalar, 2011)

Market development is a sub field of enterprise and private sector development, in which the goal is to stimulate inclusive economic growth, that reduces poverty , this often require that market development programs work not only at the level of individual small enterprises/households, but also with large enterprises associations or government institutions that engage in and influence, (Nourse, Gerstle, Snelgrove, Rinck, & Mcvay, 2007), the more vulnerable individual in the post war marketing environment , the more likely they are rely on markets for the livelihoods (Chronic Research Report, 2008).

As post war Sri Lanka gears itself towards sustained fast growth and achieving upper middle status, the important of

attracting greater investment from abroad has raised to the fore. Although Sri Lanka has a steady inflow of foreign investment projects into the country over time, Sri Lanka hood to encourage more trade friendly environment by introducing many business strategies (Wijesinha, Ekanayake , &Mahendra, 2013).

Innovative strategies are lacking in the Sri Lankan context, innovations come from the entrepreneurs, who make them happen and ultimately depend on a society's responsiveness and ability to transform research into high exports, to thing that add value to the economy, encourage these entrepreneurs with appropriate policy support is important by setting business environment, and business access to incentivizing commercialization of inventions (Baumol, 2012).

Ethical marketing involves making honest claims and helping to satisfy the needs of customers. Besides being the right thing to do, ethical marketing can have significant benefits for business. Unethical practices could be seen in the contemporary marketing environment are,

1) **Misleading Advertising:** Outright false advertising is illegal. For example, reporting that product is safe for people to use when it isn't can land the customers in serious trouble. Misleading advertising might not rise to the level of false advertising, but it's unethical and can hurt business reputation with the public. For example, if the marketers claim their product is much better than it

actually is, their business will appear untrustworthy.

- 2) **Exploitation:** Manipulating people by exploiting their fears is unethical. For example, exaggerating the risks people face so you can sell to the customers insurance is a form of manipulation, as is tricking customers into buying overpriced or useless extended warranties. This approach is called the "fear-sell" tactic and is especially nefarious when it targets people who are disadvantaged in some way. For example, the fear-sell tactic is often used by insurance salesmen to trick low-income earners into buying unnecessary insurance (Mike Saren ,etal, 2007)
- 3) **Spam:** Delivering a sales message to potential customers is part of a marketer's job, but it's unethical to flood consumers with an onslaught of advertisements -- especially when they have not given to express permission to contact them. For example, email spam and robot-calling -- using automatic dialers to contact many people without permission -- typically are unethical marketing activities. Further, these practices might anger customers rather than attract them to the business.
- 4) **Pushy Sales Tactics:** It's a salesperson's job to convince customers to buy a product, but being overly aggressive is unethical. An unethical salesperson might bully the customer into making a quick decision, perhaps by lying about how the deal will expire soon or how another customer is interested in the same item (Mack, 2015).

Micro marketing is the application of geo demographics to consumer marketing. (Whitehead, John, 1988) The subject of micro marketing was developed further in an article in February 1990, which emphasized understanding markets at the local level, and also the personalization of messages to individual consumers in the context direct marketing (Whitehead, 1990) Micro marketing has come to refer to marketing strategies which are variously customized to either local markets, to different market segments, or to the individual customer.

Micro marketing is a marketing strategy in which advertising efforts are focused on a small group of highly targeted consumers. It requires a company to narrowly define a particular audience by a particular characteristic, and tailor campaigns for that particular segment; this technique, though, can be more expensive due to customization and an inability to scale up in size effectively (Weitz, Barton & Robin Wensley, 2002).

The marketers who have entered into the post war marketing environment have succeed well and gain profitability in a short period and have a good name among the customers. They build retail outlets and capture the customers and became as the market leaders. Micro marketers boycott against the advertisements and selling strategies of the market leaders who have come to the post war marketing environment. They are not aware of the ways how to compete with the competitors. It

shows that they have to consider the factors which, have to be researched to know the real winning power in the market.

The success of a business depends on its ability to rebuild and manage its commercial relationships, with customers and other stake holders. Therefore it is needed to develop marketing strategies for boosting the energy of the micro marketers. Micro marketers are lack in knowledge of business management, and mentally, physically effected, and have many business related and other problems.

The Marketing Department at Jaffna University provides students with programs and classes designed to help students grasp marketing's critical role in analyzing consumer needs and the importance of securing information designed to ensure that goods/services and ideas created by the firm match buyer expectations. Programs include a major in Marketing, Marketing Research, and a minor in Personal Selling. Award-winning faculty and staff are here to challenge academically and help to design a meaningful plan of study.

Marketing is more than a function or discipline. It's a mind set: a way of looking at the world that is customer-focused, insight-driven and ever-evolving (Anderson, 2004). Businesses must identify what exactly a consumer wants from a product or service. There is little point in providing something that does not meet consumer requirements - They will not buy it. The marketing

department in any business organization aims to ensure that consumers buy the products/services and that they aim to do so (make repeat purchases). The role of the marketing department is to find out what consumers want today and will want in the future. Consumer trends must be considered in order to anticipate future needs. This is especially important in markets where trends and fashions change rapidly or where technology changes regularly.

Marketing Department in a University has the responsibility to ensure whether the customer requirement are met by the educational services provided by the University, they are supposed to ensure the sustainability, survival and the quality of the degree offered by the University. University is a social institution, which aims to service to the society by giving educational services as well as the researches for boosting economic development in a country. Academics are creative and enquiring. They have to rapidly do research for boosting their knowledge to lay audiences. They spend many months, sometimes even years, researching, and experimenting, observing and analyzing data, to produce a carefully annotated, well referenced, well argued, and logically coherent article for publications (Samad, 2005).

An important role of universities is to develop new ways of understanding physical and social worlds. One approach to developing new research perspectives on the world is to involve a greater number of

voices in the interpretation, use and conduct of research. Research helps to understand the world and if this research is only led and understood by certain sections of society its approach and findings are likely to be limited by the ideological and conceptual assumptions and priorities of those groups (Gough, 2007).

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) and American Heart Association (AHA) have worked jointly to measure and improve the quality of cardiovascular care. This effort has led to the development of clinical practice guidelines, performance measures, data standards, national registries, and appropriateness criteria for cardiovascular care. Academicians' should actively engage and promote the active research with the participation of the relevant bodies (Brindis, Ralph, Spertus, & John, 2006). According to the study of Macduff and Netting, (2005), there are fundamental organizational and institutional issues that need to be considered, even in successful collaborations in which personal and professional differences between the practitioner and academician are not prominent. Staff in the marketing department create value through innovative research and teaching if given the opportunity. When that happens, then perhaps business and management education will have reached a degree of maturity that justifies being taken seriously by all concerned. At least that beats being swayed by insouciant student whims, self-interested management whining and ridiculous regulatory rhetoric (Piercy, 2011).

Because of the 30 years of civil war, marketers in the Northern Sri Lanka, suffered lot, end of the war encouraged rebuilding the business capacity, but unethical business environments a new emerged unacceptable market flow in the war effected society. It is the responsibility of the social institutions to secure the business community to rebuild and redevelop from the brawl, marketing department is a one unit of University have a responsibility to serve the people, therefore this is a needy to have answer the role of the department for boosting micro marketers in an unethical business environment.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample and Data Collection

Data were obtained using 2 focus group discussion with micro credit marketers, and in-depth interviews with 10 staff attached to marketing department of University of Jaffna. Unswerving with other marketing studies of a similar nature (Flint woodruff & Gardial 2002; Kohli & Jaworski 1990; Tuli Kohli & Bharadwaj, 2007), this study used purposive sampling technique to select informants based their ability to provide an understanding of the phenomenon. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling scheme. Its purpose is to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues, and develop explanations and theory rather than provide generalizations (Corbin & Strauss 2008).

Primary data have been collected through focus group discussions, and

interviews as qualitative method. Questions were kept open ended where opinion was sought and the respondents have something to tell from his experience. This was done to give scope to the respondents to express themselves freely. Researchers followed the procedures specified by Krueger and Casey (2009). During the focus group, one of the co-authors played the role of a facilitator, facilitating the discussion and allowing informants to guide the discussion flow and content. Interventions were made only to clarify certain aspects of the discussion.

Focus group discussion were digitally recorded, translated and transcribed. Interview data were written and transcribed. Focus groups data totaled approximately 05 pages. Toward the end of 10 interviews, researchers encountered the same themes over and over, and no new insights were emerging from the data; a case of **theoretical saturation** (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

QSR International's NVivo (version 09) software was used to manage the focus group, and interview data. Transcripts were reviewed as the data collection to identify emerging ideas and specific themes, which guided subsequent data collection efforts. To code the data, open coding and axial coding schemes were used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In open coding, researchers identified important concepts using in-vivo codes (concepts based on the actual language used by the informants). Next the in-vivo codes were grouped into higher level concepts called first-order categories, based on some

underlying similarities between them. Next, the researchers used axial coding, wherein searched for relationships between and among the first-order categories, and assembled them into second-order themes. These second-order themes were used to understand the emergent framework (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

In Table 1, in-vivo codes and representative informant quotes for specific in-vivo codes were presented. In table 2, first-order categories, the second-order themes, and the marketing strategies that emerged from data were presented.

2.2 Reliability and validity issues

Based on Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Silverman and Marvasti (2008) to maintain data trustworthiness and indemnify analytical thoroughness NVivo (version 09) software as the data management program was used exactly maintain the informant contact records, focus group transcripts, field notes, and other related documents, as they were collected.

Proportional reduction in loss method was used to assess the reliability of coding scheme. The proportional reduction in loss for the current study was 0.71, which is well above the 0.70 cut-off level recommended for exploratory research (Rust & Cooil, 1994).

The outside researcher experienced in qualitative methodology were asked to conduct an audit of our empirical processes

to insure the dependability of the data. This outside researcher went through the data to assess whether the conclusions reached were plausible. These peer debriefing processes (Corley & Gioia 2004) provided with an opportunity to solicit critical questions about data collection and analysis procedures. These discussions also allowed to have our ideas scrutinized through other researchers' perspectives.

To protect validity, present study followed five unified procedures recommended for qualitative research (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008): (a) respondent validation, (b) refutability, (c) constant comparison, (d) comprehensive data treatment, and (e) deviant-case analysis. Respondent validation, also known as member checks (Creswell 2007), needs that researchers go back to the respondents to validate the findings that emerge from the data. To do so, researchers shared the findings with the study participants and asked them to offer their views on our interpretations of the data and the credibility of the findings. Refutability means that researchers seek to disprove the assumed relationship between phenomena. By having a two side perspectives from the micro marketers and the staff in the department. Data collection was stopped when no further new findings emerged after reaching theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Comprehensive data treatment means that the researchers examine the data thoroughly and comprehensively prior to drawing conclusions. Since all the interviews and focus group discussion

were included in the findings The NVivo (version 09) software was used to manage the data, and inspect all data thoroughly.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In interpretive study, researchers work to understand the phenomenon under the study (Charmaz, 2006). Examining the 05 concepts became the next step in the analysis process. At the initial coding stage researcher found 40 initial codes/concepts (Charmaz,2006), then at the second stage axial coding 20 categories or concepts identified from the 40 initial codes , then 05 core categories were identified as a roles of a marketing department in boosting micro marketers in the unethical business environment.

In discussing the findings, ideas that are perceptive, were regularly mentioned by sneaks were taken for the answers and conversation of the study. Purpose of this research is to explore the role of the marketing department in a university, to boost micro marketers in an unethical business environment. Form the data collected from the micro marketers and the staff in the marketing department researchers star the analysis with the help of the Nvivo (Version 09).

Micro marketers especially women marketers expects help from the university. What they felt was business environment in the post war situation is more unethical, they struggle to develop their business, they expect more consultation services for fine-tune their products.

"There have been a lot of redundancies in our manufacturing plant to produce quality products, there are many produce very attractive and at very cheapest price in the market, distributors asking us to have more quality products at the affordable rateit is obviously frustrating because no one wants the local branded products we need help form your department staff to save our life by saving our livelihood business"

They are more afraid about the market opportunities in the Jaffna market, they are lack in education and marketing concepts, therefore they search for a help to recover their business. Micro marketers have many healthy food for diabetics and children, these hand made products are not certified, because they do not know how to be a registered organizations in the context. They expect workshops and training activities which can cover the basic business ideas and quality innovation, market development strategy moves as well as the regular mentoring activities for monitoring activities for advised business.

"I don't think it is perceived as something negative by the customers and the markets, but from our point of view. we think that the general consensus that it is a negative step for us, because we are losing the market. Coupled with the fact that there is often competitive fight in the market due

to lack of proper institutional support, , intermediate events, and value chain we couldn't reach the market quickly , customers enjoy the trial of the competitive offer, our product would be the second and third...we always loss our potential market. Our people working on behalf of the industry are sent to the customers. There are different employees in our industry. People have to communicate properly to make sure that we have still got the control. We prefer to give trial to the customers but it always fails, customers compare the products of the outside marketers, with the local marketers, we offer the same quality products at the cheapest price...but they purchase competitive products at the highest price..."

They are frustrated and always search for help form the marketing department in the University of Jaffna. They ask to have an exhibition which will link the stakeholders, technicians, distributors and the students and staff related to the marketing discipline.

"I am not educated, and lost my husband due to war have five children....., I have started a business to make rice flour, I employed four people for the production of flour I can make enough supply, but I don't have regular distribution for my products, if anybody helps me to

inform my product and get orders I can happily continue my business. I attended a seminar in Jaffna University, and have some link with the staff, myself and many women headed families expect their help to survive in the market. Because some of the marketers in our market are doing wrong way to sell the products to the customers, how can we overcome form their activities?"

Form the data given by the staff of the marketing department, they also ready to help them in an acceptable way, and they have understood their role in the unethical business environment.

Unethical competitors among foreign and domestic products with in Jaffna markets, high level of advertisements are there in Jaffna, they want to compete with them, so marketing department in a university should give more boost to micro marketers' products with in the markets. Through word of mouth, department staff can share the micro marketers product information to others like product types, market place, product availability, uses o hand made products healthy information, especially we can share information about micro marketers product to other department staffs, friends and relatives.

Form the viewpoint of the above staff, she expressed that informing the products and services of the micro marketers are the responsibility and as a role of the department, and another staff expressed that,

"We have to make awareness about the ethical practices among micro marketers. People doing business in micro level don't know what is ethical what is unethical. Sometimes they don't know the consequences of the unethical practices. Marketing department may involve in research activities to identify the potential market opportunities. Research activities, linkages with other universities which involve in micro marketing initiatives. Marketing department can teach the students about ethical and unethical behavior which can influence on the micro marketing activities."

According to the response given by the staff, it was clear they are ready to work for the micro marketers at free of charge, one of the senior staff responded that,

"We should change our attitude and have to work for them for free of chargethey are very poor, In a way its accepted level but each one of them think in their own for their own no collaborative thinking so, they have to be trained in proper way to think moves in well extended /expanded way Free seminars, public speech services by experts /success entrepreneur's consultancy service

showing epithetical manner, maintain good relationship and friendly type actions may be on concession or free of charge"

4. CONCLUSION

From the data analysis researchers identifies that, there are five significant roles of the marketing department are expected by the micro marketers. From the initial, Axial, and the final coding based on the in vivo coded written and spoken by the respondents, researchers identifies five important roles that have to be played by the marketing department in a university.

4.1. Marketing Training

The technology and business training, should be given to the micro marketers includes a marketing module which introduces marketing topics and techniques to micro marketers such as elements of the marketing mix, raising product awareness and customer care. Exercises should include in the modules after each topic is introduced to allow the micro marketers to relate the theory to their own business and circumstances. Micro marketers can utilize this marketing training for identifying markets for their businesses and promotional activities.

4.2. Market Development Support

Market development support provides advice on specific marketing issues that have been identified for a micro business, administrated as a one off activity. Different approaches can be taken for this activity in the different places.

Micro marketers can be given advice on potential new markets, and competitors to form a link among the micro marketers and the marketing department, they can supply their products to staff into the university premises. They can be given advice on marketing techniques, how to get markets and different places to advertise delivered in business cell and one to one environment. Students forum on business advice can be establishes and they can play a role for demonstrating their products.

4.3. Group Networking Sessions via market exhibitions

Group networking events bring together staff, students and the micro marketers in the local area as well as other stakeholders such as financial institutes or product suppliers. There is no financial cost to the micro marketers to attend the event and they are able to network with other people in the sector, exchange ideas and create market links. These events often include an exhibition which is open to the public, where entrepreneurs can promote their business and make sales of their product. It should be conducted in a periodic base, rather than the sales for public, group networking via exhibitions helps the micro marketers to sell inside the university, and can be extended to public. Micro marketers felt they would gain benefit from the group networking sessions with market linkage, financial advice, business ideas, gauge level of business, and learn from others problems, technical support and customer care advices.

4.4. Mentoring

Mentoring is intended to encourage and support micro marketers in putting the marketing theory learnt at the training into practice. Mentors meet regularly with a micro marketers and carry out a diagnostic of their business, including the marketing activities they are doing. From this they identify priority areas where further advice and support is required and work together with the micro marketers to overcome these challenges through several mentoring sessions.

4.5. Securing the marketers from unethical business practices

Securing the marketers from unethical business practices is focused to make awareness about the unethical practices in the marketing environment, and by having proper activities secure the micro level marketers to survive in the market. These role includes the sub roles as, researching the events in marketing, updating the knowledge in the local context, contribute to save the market, and help to recover from unhealthy business behaviors, recommend to have amendments in laws, requesting for establishing standard for healthy business environment , informing consumers via articles in public medias, participating in the social incidents, and play a role as mediator conducting case study in local crisis situations faced by the micro marketers.

To compete in the post war marketing environment, marketers need to develop innovative strategies which are accepted by

the customers, in the conflict affected places. Due to the war many families lost their heads, then women headed families are the one effect of war, they have to earn for their families and spend for them. Therefore they started micro business, but most of them are helpless, this will affect the community and the economic development of the region. Institutions are expected to stimulate the economic and business activities. Marketing department is a one unit of an institution has many roles to play in an unethical business environment. Offering degree is not only the responsibility of the university, but also having link with the society is more important than the current work schedule. This findings are supported with the findings of the past study stated that having a strong support by the institutions is a powerful strength for the business community (Johnson & Robinson, 2001).

There would be an interchange needed where are the helpless community members, need appropriate consultation support form relevant institutions (Ferrini, 2012).

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