

Marketers: Professional mackers - part 2

 By [Sanele Mgaga](#)

19 Jun 2014

I've often been accused of writing for myself and not paying attention to the people who will be reading what I say, or rather, writing exactly the way I talk, writing as if I'm having an informal conversation with a friend or colleague, but then again, that is what I'm doing, isn't it?

So, as I usually start, this is one topic that has been in my mind since university, in fact since high school really. I never understood why other people were cooler than others, why certain brands appealed more than others, why I wanted those Nike Air Max and not other sneakers, why did those brands appealed to me more than other brands did? Over the years, while studying and of course, practising marketing, I got some sense of understanding, or rather, my mind sort of fell onto this answer...it's these bloody marketers! Well it's us bloody marketers!

It's funny to me how much marketers and designers nowadays, take their trades for granted. What's even surprising is how little we are willing to fight accountants when we're in the boardroom.

We roll over and play dead whenever accountants start talking budgets, ROI, etc, yet marketers and designers influence and change our daily lives, they influence the purchase decisions we make day in and day out. That's how strong marketers influence our daily lives. You not sure what I'm talking about? Well let me try my best to simplify it for you...

What people need

There's a saying that I've been hearing so much over the years whenever I try to be 'innovative', and it goes a little something like this: "You can't reinvent the wheel, but you can always redesign it to suit your agenda." Well, that's all there is to it. Looking at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (I love Maslow's hierarchy), people are concerned about the five stages, from physiological needs and all the way up to self-actualisation, yet within all those stages, the needs don't really change.

Take the first stage, the physiological needs, which are basically the basic human needs for food, etc... How do they change for a person who has reached their self-actualisation stage (let's say a Kenny Kunene), compared to a person who is still in the physiological stage (Let's say, me)?

The need for food is still there in whatever stage you're in, but the preference and taste differs based on what you can afford. Fish is fish is fish. People will tell you how snoek from one shop differs from snoek from another, but at the end of the day, snoek is snoek. They both come from the same place, the sea. What has changed then? Well, through proper segmentation exercises, marketers have packaged this one brand of restaurant in such a way that it appeals to the 'higher class' market and as such have used media which talk specifically to that market.

They have realised that if they focus their marketing efforts on a certain market, focus their marketing efforts on that one market, then even though they'd have a smaller pool to choose from, by selecting the right pricing strategy (I think it's skimming pricing strategy), then the extensive pricing will compensate for the loss of quantity. This way they position this brand as being 'exclusive' and not mass-market, which then generates interest from their intended market, who ultimately end up buying. Funny thing though is that once the upper-class market 'like' and buy into a brand, so do the lower markets.

The preference of that brand spills over to the lower markets as these consumers want to be a 'part of' ... they aspire to 'fit' in. This increases the ROI that accountants so dreadfully want, and (now going back to my original topic at hand) ends up making people choose this brand over another.

Creating a status

This positioning method/strategy has now changed the way people view a basic commodity such as food, say fish - and differentiated one snoek from another snoek. This has changed the way people view food and has thus changed the way they make their purchase decisions as well as the factors that influence them.

Fish is no longer just another product that we need, but has now been turned into a status symbol, a way people try to fit in, or rather show that they fit in, that is marketing and that is how we change the world day in and day out. That shirt you're wearing, that Apple Mac you're working on, get it?

If things were as different as we would like to believe they are, then I'm pretty sure 'post-purchase dissonance' would not fit in the buyer-purchase process. Marketers can make the smallest thing into something big, we can take a rock and tell you how sacred it is, how different it is from the rock next to it and tell you why you NEED that rock and not the other one, yet we constantly doubt ourselves.

Inventors invent great and wonderful devices, but what makes them move off the shelf?

Think of this case study: Why did Apple just buy Beats for \$3 billion? How different are Apple products from Skull candy or Sony, or Phillips headphones?

The only questions are: How different is the quality, and... does a higher price always mean better quality? Well from my view: "Beauty is in the eye of the beerholder"...literally, figuratively and otherwise.

See 'Marketers: Professional mackers - part 1 [here](#)

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