

Book Review

The Curious Marketer: Expeditions in Branding and Consumer Behaviour : Harish Bhat, Penguin Random House India, 2017, 272 pages, INR 599.

In this very topical book, Bhat takes the reader through the Indian consumer's world with a delightful collection of short anecdotes. Consumers and their choices play a vital role in the growth of economy. Hence, the decision process of the consumer assumes great significance for the marketer. Curiosity is one of the greatest virtues, a marketer possess. Curiosity generates new ideas, provide insights to human behaviour and helps marketers to be innovative in their offerings and thus delight the consumers. This vital trait of a marketer 'broadens the perspective and sharpens the intellect'.

The book 'Curious marketer' is divided into six sections. The first section 'Places' introduce places which can be the source of new ideas. An example is Ujjain, one of the venues of Kumbh Mela, where millions of Indians congregate. This is an excellent marketing opportunity to take a close look at Bharat and the customs and traditions which motivate the Indian consumer. Museums, national parks etc. are some of the other suggested sources for getting marketing insights. The second section talks about looking at old products with new eyes. One of the interesting ideas is the monsoon companion, the humble umbrella, which can double as a promotional tool. The Kerala banana chips is one product that could do with national branding. The third section talks about great leaders and the lessons that can be learnt from them - Xerxes Desai, Muhammed Ali and Zubin Mehta are some of the leaders from whom the modern marketer can get valuable insights. The creative genius of Shakespeare is an inspiration for marketers to build memorable narratives for their brands and advertisements. The fourth section talks of marketing opportunities in the multitude of traditional Indian festivals like Diwali, Baisakhi, Onam and new Age festivals like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day etc. Most of these religious events and celebrations trigger immediate consumption of various products which a smart marketer could leverage. The fifth section gives some interesting stories about products and services and their promotion, packaging and innovative pricing strategies like the surge pricing of the taxi aggregator services, dynamic pricing in the airline industry, playing hard to get strategy of One Plus One mobile phones, iconic packaging like that of Kinder Joy etc. "Baby Advertising" is another strategy

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where marketers like Nestle, Evian have capitalized on the wide appeal of babies. The concluding section is a collection of the author's musings on the mind of the modern consumer and brands. The book ends with possible ways for a product to be 'cool'- the quality that differentiates a brand from rest of the herd.

Throughout, Bhat's overriding message is to 'to be "curious" as curiosity can lead to new ideas, either immediately or sometime in the future Bhat's reflections on more than fifty products, places, people, brands and publicity campaigns delivers refreshing perspectives to the modern marketer in the digital world. The book is a gentle reminder that observing the consumer is the most effective way to know what motivates the Indian consumer.

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