

John 3:16 – Does your Marketing Slogan elicit the right/desired response?

May all the people whom this verse or statement will elicit a different response other than that of an evangelical nature stand up, or better yet discontinue reading this text. This is perhaps the most popular and well known verses in the Christian Bible. When I say known, I mean in its entirety, that is, its location, the author, its inference and even relevance and application. For Christians, staunch ones rather, it is one of the first verses that draws them inadvertently marking the foundation and beginning of a journey or 'walk' that will require them to espouse the Christian Faith for the rest of their life on earth – which they will soon discover it is indeed 'vain'.

I certainly may not agree with some of the Christian preachers' and messengers' ways of propelling this great message, but I sure can and will have cup of coffee with them on this one - about using this particular verse as a foundation. Its simplicity and explanatory depiction of what is considered and indeed is the greatest sacrifice ever known certainly opens up their eyes and even more importantly their hearts to know and accept the 'truth' which sets mankind free.

Ok, now.....

Nevertheless, what I really want to talk about is the organization's marketing slogan. That catchy statement or quote at the end of most ad campaigns. I remember sometime back when I attended a confidence and esteem building seminar (I needed it folks) and at the very end, the moderator challenged us to write a personal commercial and a slogan that we believed could best sell ourselves . This, according him would be the most accurate indication of our confidence levels and self awareness as it will inadvertently compel us to look at our strengths, unique talents and our intrinsic beliefs and stands. Now, I will not let you in on mine today but I'll tell you the title; **John 3:16!** I knew it would elicit the correct response and sell me easily.

What is a Marketing Slogan?

It is an advertising statement that describes what your brand is all about. Some slogans have an attitude like Nike's "Just do it" or a statement of what they are trying to accomplish like Nokia's "connecting people". Marketing Slogans have silently taken centre stage in today's branding strategies. They have come to set the organization apart in the market by accentuating the organization's uniqueness, beliefs, stand and purpose. They are based on a deliberate strategy to reach out to the customer's hearts and not their wallets. They can hardly be separated from the organizations' names. These slogans depict the organization's mission, their way of doing things, their market niche, uniqueness in the market, what they stand for among other intents. While some of these slogans are market-initiated, that is, they seem to come from the market directly, a good number, and probably the majority emanate from deliberate and concerted efforts of the various marketing teams. The customers 'create' them. Sample these slogans; "Power is nothing without control"(Pirelli) "like nothing else"(General Motors, Hummer) Love rocks!" (from Jewelry manufacturer/distributor, Zales).

These passionate statements carry immense persuasion potential when it comes to customers yet to do business with you. Its almost like the existing customers talking passionately about and at the same time

exuding extreme loyalty to your products and services. They may not necessarily care about your organization. A slogan is a very important element for a brand because it makes it that much easier to increase consumers' retention rate and desire.

What is your Slogan type?

Marketing slogans can be effectively split into two broad categories. First, are those categories that are aimed at promoting the organization as a whole. We shall refer to them as 'Company Slogans'. These are employed by mainly, but not limited to service companies and those that engage in multiple and even unrelated commodities which will comprise different well known brands. Concerted efforts are applied in promoting the firm as a whole and what it engages in a more broad and generalized fashion. Such organizations would obviously have some sort of 'umbrella' marketing strategies for their products ranges and services. They tend to throw everything into the basket; their strategies, operations, budgets and campaigns. This is thin ice if you ask me for it would take one swing to knock them out of the market – entirely!

Surprisingly, you are more likely to see these sorts of slogans more often than not in this region. The reasons could be (and could anyone who knows other reasons please share them?) that our business models tend to be more or less the same. It is in this region that we witness transfer of leadership from one industry to another with a lot of ease and even 'success'. We are so attuned to aping and destroying the creative forces available in today's entrepreneurs' minds. Everyone wants to work with history, or what they have seen work. Such thought processes will never compel us to push boundaries and limits and to challenge market conditions – the turbulent ones that is. If indeed there is one clear distinct feature about successful and sustainable marketing strategies, it is innovation or creativity. I certainly concur that the last part in the above articulation of the first category of Slogans is somewhat, macabre for business leaders and should probably be such. However, some firms, with proactive and smart strategies have managed to succeed in producing some well received slogans in the market. This certainly underscores a very important business tenet that, 'all weather is local', a lot of what you are facing in a particular market has a lot to do with the way YOU think, the strategies YOU develop, the way YOU execute, and YOUR influence in that market. A bitter pill to swallow I know.

The other broad category of slogans cover the specific brand or product that an organization deals with. They are developed to promote specific products. Infact, this group caters for the bulk of the slogans in recent times. Lets face it, most of the catchy and successful slogans we've all come across are brand oriented

An effective slogan

An effective slogan or its development nevertheless will, if not entirely, largely depend on such an Innovative marketing environment. Woe unto you if you are dealing with an informed market or a niche spanning the knowledge worker age. The branding which will include the slogan could just provide a strong basis for dismissal of your products or services! No organization is immune to this fact. Believe it. And while you are it, you might want to remember that this is the 21st century where mass markets are fragmenting and the economics of scale have turned to the economics of choice. Thus, development and adoption of an apt marketing strategy – and slogan(s)- is imperative and crucial here.

Here are a few tips to help develop an effective slogan:

- Make your slogan concise and precise. It should be able to express much with only a few words. Remember that the human memory is limited so you must do your best to convey your message as short as possible for optimal recall rate (less equals more in this situation). Slogans taking up a whole sentence to convey your brand are less effective than a slogan with just 3 words.
- Avoid jargons and complex statements which could easily create an impression of a hard to deal with organization or even worse, you do not know what you are doing!
- Make the statements short and relevant to the market. A slogan that is catchy and accurately captures the targeted market's ideals and appeal is a sure winner. You do not want to appear vague and out of line.
- On the other hand, the slogan must serve a dual purpose, that is, it must be congruent with or aligned to your branding and marketing strategy while at the same time appeal to the market. "Like nothing else!" comes out clearly to delineate both the Firm's strategy (General Motors' Hummer) of capturing the Luxury niche of the automobile market, while effectively appealing to that market which looks for uniqueness and prestige (anyone who doesn't concur? The Hummer, are you kidding me?).
- Let your market 'develop' the slogan for you. If you listen keenly to your customers and go all out to know them, they will present you with the basis, foundation or the very fabric crucial for your branding strategy. You stand a better chance of being accurate, relevant and eliciting the right kind of response to your brand.
- Lastly, focus on the customers or the market and not yourself. Some companies are so engrossed in egocentric campaigns that could work on the reverse. Blatant statements that hardly convey anything don't elicit the right response – almost always. Avoid such conventional statements like, "we are the best", and so on.

Finally.....

There's a lot of confusing slogans out there so being concise and precise is crucial for an effective slogan for branding. Uniqueness and Creativity are the key words here.

While it could be arduous and perhaps even impossible to accurately determine or measure the overall impact of the marketing slogans on the overall branding/marketing strategy, an unfit slogan(s) could be disastrous in as far as luring the potential customers - the damage on the brand notwithstanding. I understand – and concur - that most of the fundamentals we have looked at as far the marketing slogans are concerned tend to be more applicable in a commercial sense. However, I' am equally convinced that they can also be employed by the 'Not-for-Money' (non-profit-making) firms that intend to brand.

Lastly, only proactive organizations are going to get it right and ultimately survive. I know companies are looking to cut down their costs because of the global economic recession. The marketing departments top the lists of most such organizations seeking to cut costs because in times like this, executives think

that the first thing to do is to cut on marketing to save on Money. But this is not the time to keep quiet folks. Jay Conrad Levinson, the guerilla marketing expert puts it this way; "that's kind of like ditching your wrist watch to save time!" A down economy is ideally not the time to be low profile, that is when your customers are not buying and they don't hear about you and your products, they will as sure as the sunrise, forget about you!!

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