

WHERE DID YOU BUY IT? I WANT ONE OF THOSE MYSELF

To watch how the world moves, adapt yourself and create value: That is the key to marketing. *Advances in Science* spoke to Lina María Echeverri, of the Universidad del Rosario, and Óscar Espinel, of the Banco Popular, both experts in the field, in order to understand what lies behind a marketing strategy and what myths surround it.

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The trends in the world are the dominant force, hence it is important to learn how to “read” them. At the current time, marketing sells experiences in which the client is unique. In a few words, that is the message for those interested in the subject.

Lina María Echeverri is the co-author of the book *Principios de Marketing* [Principles of Marketing] and director of Marketing and Communications at the Universidad del Rosario, while Óscar Espinel is a professor of Marketing Plans and manager of Segments and Markets at the Colombian bank *Banco Popular*.

Echeverri and Espinel agree on certain basics: Marketing must satisfy the needs of the client, people buy what others buy, a recommendation is crucial when it comes to making a decision and companies must have experts on the market who are able to create the strategic thinking which is needed to reach people: The core of it all, in the end, a point stressed by these professors of the Graduate School of Business at the School of Management and Business of the Universidad del Rosario.

***Advances in Science* (AS): What is marketing and what does it do?**

Óscar Espinel (OE): Marketing is best understood as a process, as a sequential matter where you must have an in-depth knowledge of the needs, desires and fears of consumers and on the basis of that profound knowledge, propose alternatives for the exchange of value. People sometimes think that marketing is the final stage of the process but that is a mistake. Marketing is not only the communication you do to persuade others to make a decision. Marketing implies adding value.







In the opinion of Óscar Espinel, "marketing is best understood as a process, as a sequential matter where you must have an in-depth knowledge of the needs, desires and fears of consumers."

Lina María Echeverri (LME): Marketing is used to go beyond the expectations of the client. It was traditionally said that it was meant to satisfy their needs and desires, but that is obsolete. And, also, we are not going to achieve it because in the face of so many options, the clients are not absolutely clear about what they want. Therefore, what you have to do is understand those needs to go beyond what they are looking for.

AS: How do you make that possible?

LME: The history of humanity and societies shows you the changes which are occurring and the relevant guidelines. Before, companies were the ones which determined the demand, now the demand is what determines the supply. You have to be aligned with the trends. The impact of technology forms trends, along with the organizational models, the way in which you relate to people and how brands relate to clients. There are international referents which show us the direction in which the world is going. And what does marketing do with that? It exploits it. For example, the empowerment of women is a trend. Marketing did not create it, societies showed that women were seeking gender equality, so marketing joins in the trend and your campaigns talk to women, you connect with them.

OE: The trends shape the world and today we have mega-trends, like the revolution of the client, who is much better informed, thanks to another mega-trend, which is the digital revolution. As a consequence, if you are a company, you have to show you are different. But that also entails threats: One is that other companies imitate you. But that is not a bad thing. The other is that what you created

WHAT SHOULD A MARKETING PLAN HAVE?

The diagnostic phase

- Analysis of the situation: The context in which the company is immersed is evaluated.
- Market research: To determine the needs and expectations of the clients.
- The marketing and financial objectives, taking into account the expected results in terms of sales, positioning and profitability.



The strategic phase

- Segmentation strategy, focusing and positioning: Make a plan about who you want to reach and how you will do it in order to make yourself visible to those publics.
- Offer of value: It includes the portfolio of products and services. It should also mention the functional and emotional benefits offered to the buyer.
- Marketing strategies: They correspond to the strategies for price, distribution and communication.



Budget phase

- Sales budget: Prediction of expected sales.
- Marketing budget: Calculated on a month by month basis during one year. It includes a plan for a follow-up of the implementation of the project.





"The empowerment of women is a trend. Marketing did not create it, societies showed that women were seeking gender equality, so marketing joined in the trend and their campaigns speak to women and connect with them," explains Lina Echeverri, director of Marketing and Communications.

The person in charge of marketing has a double responsibility: He or she must be a good strategist and a good executor, because understanding the environment is no good if you don't act on it. You have to understand the wave, not because it might knock you down but to get to the bottom of it, go out the other side and move forward.

quickly goes out of date. For that reason, the person in charge of marketing has a double responsibility: He or she must be a good strategist and a good executor, because understanding the environment is no good if you don't act on it. You have to understand the wave, not because it might knock you down but to get to the bottom of it, go out the other side and move forward.

AS: One of those mega-trends is entrepreneurship. In terms of marketing, what can entrepreneurs do to become successful?

OE: Three critical factors are responsible for failure. The first is informality. 74% of Colombian companies are family ones and that is not bad. There are very striking examples of family-owned companies like *Corona* or the *Grupo Aval*. The problem is believing that the business can be carried out without rigor or discipline. You need to have a structure and a method. Not having them leads to the second mistake, which occurs with financing. In marketing you have to be an ethnographer and a psychologist to understand your clients, but you also have to know about numbers, at least insofar as it has to do with a business: How much does it cost me?, at what price do I sell it?, how much is left to me?, what is my profit margin? And the third mistake is not knowing how to sell and failing to measure the whole of that process. The sales process has to be disciplined: You must sound out the possibilities, decide on a market volume, understand what conversion is.

LME: I would add another phenomenon to all that and it is expecting an immediate success. In entrepreneurship you cannot expect to have profits during the first four years, but people imagine that you will have them in three months and that is a big distraction for a marketing strategy. A big mistake of entrepreneurs is thinking that their product will sell itself and forgetting that you need a marketing expert to provide you with the tools for strategic thinking, a person who helps you to read and interpret the environment, and knows how to act in a sea of competitors.

AS: People are now talking about intensity of rivalry. What is it?

LME: Michael Porter, director of the Harvard Business School's Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, says that

we are short-sighted when it comes to understanding the competition because we only think about a direct competition. But nowadays competition is everything. In higher education, my competition is no longer universities or institutes: Coursera (online courses) and YouTube are also the competition. Intensity of competition entails looking at the spectrum of options which might replace me and creating value to distinguish myself from others. My product is education, but the value which I offer is to positively change people's lives.

AS: Now that the clients are well informed and have a lot of alternatives, what strategy do you recommend for captivating them?

OE: Nowadays people buy what other people buy and consume what other people consume. In addition, a large part of the decisions we make are of an emotional nature. However, we are also motivated by functionality and the need for self-expression, the vindication of a message. So, once again, the important thing is to know how to read what motivates each person.

LME: The publics are no longer influenced by traditional advertising: They do not believe in the sellers or the products. Today, they believe in recommendations, so you should direct your efforts to making sure that other clients speak well of your brand. But the core of it all is no longer in the brand, but the person. That is why marketing today does not sell goods and services so much as experiences. And now a mass appeal is irrelevant, people want to feel special. Today, every client is unique. ■