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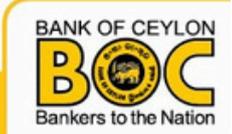


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Message from the **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Dr. Dilhan Sampath Jayatilleke



It gives me great pleasure to extend this message to the 'Sri Lankan Marketer' Magazine. This is a publication which has been ongoing for many years under the purview of Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing. When it comes to Marketing, how many publications do we see in this country that are predominantly focused on the subject matter that spreads the word of Marketing across various sectors. Since there aren't any names that we can recollect at once, I am assured that 'Sri Lankan Marketer' is the apex publication that is specifically focused on Marketing.

In the current context, there is nothing that survives without Marketing, whether it is a Product or a Service. Therefore, as a nation we have to put more focus towards Marketing, and it is a subject that needs to be given due attention. In that light, as the National Body for Marketing in the country, Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing is clearly serving its purpose through this publication.

When you read through this valuable publication, you will realise the equity it carries which goes beyond any other publication that you could lay your hands on. Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing serves a National Cause! Due to that very reason, whatever it is that the institute embarks on should be done with a lot of responsibility. The carefully crafted and meaningful articles that are the need of the hour show the attention to detail required to write about the subject of Marketing.

Compiling such a serious and focused publication is not an easy task by all means. There are a few people to be thanked who had put in their efforts to make this a success. First of all, I would like to thank the President of Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing Prof. Dewasiri N. Jayantha and the Immediate Past President of the institute Mr. Gayan Perera. The Councils of Management of both the years 2024 / 2025 and 2025 / 2026 along with the Executive Committees of the respective years should also be remembered here. Furthermore, I must thank the Co-Editor Ms. Shanika Rathnasiri for all the hard work put in. A special note of thanks to the Membership Division of Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing which is lead by Ms. Parami Wijesundara for driving this entire effort. Words of appreciation must also be extended to the Chief Executive Officer of the institute Mr. Chamil Wickramasinghe for the valuable support provided. All the Authors of the articles published also deserve an immense gratitude from the bottom of my heart. Last of all, certainly not the least; the Sponsors and Well Wishers for their noteworthy contributions, without which this splendid publication would not have seen the light that it glows with now.

Hope you enjoy this piece of art in the same manner that we enjoyed in bringing it to you!

Dr. Dilhan Sampath Jayatilleke
(Senior Vice President – Education & Research)
2025 / 2026

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EMPOWERING A GENERATION



In conversation with
Prof. Dewasiri N. Jayantha

*President – Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM)
Professor of Finance – Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka*

President 2025/ 2026

In the ever-evolving world of marketing, where disruption, innovation, and purpose go hand in hand, few leaders manage to bridge the gap between academia and industry seamlessly. Prof. Dewasiri N. Jayantha—fondly known as a “pracademic” for his blend of real-world insight and academic excellence—is one such trailblazer.

From his beginnings in the corporate world to leading one of Sri Lanka’s foremost professional institutions, Prof. Dewasiri has earned respect as a visionary educator, policy influencer, and mentor to many. His presidency at SLIM comes at a crucial time—one that demands bold leadership, systemic reform, and a fresh vision for the future of marketing in Sri Lanka.

In this exclusive interview, the Sri Lankan Marketer Magazine speaks to Prof. Dewasiri about the challenges he faced stepping into SLIM’s top role, the milestones achieved under his leadership, and the transformative roadmap he envisions for marketing, entrepreneurship, and professional development—both locally and globally.

Q: Looking back at when you first took over as President of SLIM, what were some of the key challenges you faced, and how did you approach them during the early stages of your term?

Prof. Dewasiri: One of the most critical challenges we encountered upon assuming office was addressing the recognition, accreditation, and structural limitations within the SLIM Parliament Act. These challenges had a direct impact on the credibility, scalability, and sustainability of our educational offerings.



Our first step was to register and accredit all of SLIM's programmes with the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), the regulatory body for professional and vocational education in Sri Lanka. This brought national-level validation to our programmes and opened pathways for further development.

We also spearheaded the Triple Accreditation initiative for our Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management. During my tenure as Vice President – Education, we initiated the process with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), UK. Today, we are proud to say that students completing the postgraduate diploma now earn the globally recognised CMI Level 7 Strategic Management and Leadership Practice qualification, along with Foundation Chartered Manager status—without paying an additional fee or facing a further examination.

Furthermore, we made the strategic decision to move forward with the Parliament Act Amendment, a crucial final step that has now been tabled for cabinet approval. This will pave the way for us to confer the Chartered Marketer (SL) status; the gold standard of professional marketing recognition in Sri Lanka.

On the operational front, we tackled inefficiencies by streamlining expenditures, eliminating unnecessary outsourcing (such as transport services), and establishing an in-house transport division.

We invested in new vehicles, upgraded computers, and provided better resources for both staff and students. These steps have significantly improved institutional productivity, staff satisfaction, and learning experiences.

And now, we're going regional. This month, we are signing a landmark MoU with Villa College in the Maldives, covering accreditation of their marketing programs, the delivery of SLIM qualifications, and the establishment of the Maldivian Marketing Association under SLIM's guidance. This initiative is a milestone for SLIM's regional presence, and it sets the stage for our long-term vision to expand South Asia's marketing education ecosystem with Sri Lanka at its helm.



Q: What would you say have been your main focus areas during your presidency, and how do you feel SLIM has evolved under your leadership so far?

Prof. Dewasiri: My presidency has been guided by three strategic pillars: Recognition, Relevance, and Reach.

Under Recognition, we prioritised global accreditation and local regulatory approvals to ensure that SLIM qualifications are respected both within and outside Sri Lanka. With the CMI UK accreditation and TVEC registration, we have repositioned SLIM as a globally aligned and nationally regulated institution.

Relevance meant embedding industry-driven content into our curricula, launching practical knowledge-sharing platforms, and fostering deeper university-industry linkages. We reimagined our educational delivery to align with real-world expectations.

Under Reach, we expanded SLIM's influence through grassroots entrepreneurship programmes, youth engagement initiatives, and regional collaborations. This includes our partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development to implement the national SME strategy framework, along with innovations such as the National SME Database, SME Call Centre, and Skill elevation programmes for SMEs and staff involved in SME development, national SME Development Awards, etc.

In short, we're building an institution that serves today's marketer, inspires tomorrow's leader, and strengthens Sri Lanka's position on the global marketing map.

Q: With your term progressing, what are the key goals or initiatives you are determined to see through before your tenure comes to an end?

Prof. Dewasiri: There are several strategic initiatives I am deeply committed to executing before the conclusion of my term. First, the SLIM Act Amendment remains paramount. Finalising and passing this amendment will empower SLIM to offer degree-level qualifications and award the prestigious Chartered Marketer (SL) status; transforming our institutional mandate and recognition.

Second, we are aggressively advancing digital transformation by implementing a 360-degree ERP solution that powers all SLIM operations. This includes the development of the SLIM Digital School, enhancing academic management and virtual learning. As part of this digital elevation, we have also integrated the Turnitin plagiarism solution into our VLE system, significantly improving academic integrity and quality assurance.

Third, we are upgrading infrastructure with the relaunch of our Southern operations in a new, state-of-the-art facility.

We are working on new computer labs at our SBS Colombo, Matara, and Kandy centres, which will facilitate hybrid education and digital access while providing an in-house digitalised experience for our students.

We are also strengthening our international and regional footprint through collaborations with globally reputed universities to offer joint programmes and enhance academic mobility.

Beyond infrastructure and digitalisation, we are committed to building knowledge ecosystems. We plan to establish the SLIM Centre of Excellence for Marketing Innovation, a hub for applied research, data-driven marketing insights, and policy advocacy that will serve both public and private sectors.

Each of these initiatives are designed to secure SLIM's future as a world-class, forward-thinking, and purpose-led institution.

Q: How has your long-standing involvement with SLIM—from serving on council and executive committee roles to now being president—shaped your professional growth and leadership style?

Prof. Dewasiri: SLIM has been a leadership crucible for me. Each role taught me different aspects of institutional governance, stakeholder management, and the art of visionary execution. As a Council Member, I learned to listen; as Vice President, I learned to lead; as President, I've learned to lift others.



My leadership style has evolved into a balance of strategy and empathy. I believe in empowering people, setting high standards, and ensuring alignment between purpose and performance. SLIM not only shaped my career but also reinforced my conviction that marketing is more than a profession—it is a powerful force for economic and social good.

Q: Can you share a bit about your journey—your background in education, and how your career path in business and marketing has unfolded over the years?

Prof. Dewasiri: I come from the rural village of Ketawala, Urubokka in Matara, where I began my education at a small government school before earning a scholarship to study at Nalanda College, Colombo. My early professional years were spent climbing the ladder in the corporate world—starting from the ground up in customer service and sales roles to eventually leading regional operations in telecom and technology.

During this time, I realised the value of education—not just as a credential, but as a catalyst for transformation. I pursued a Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, MSc in Applied Finance, a First-Class BA (Hons) in Business from a UK university, and eventually, a PhD in Finance from the University of Colombo—all while balancing a full-time career and raising a family of three.

At 37, I made a pivotal decision: to leave behind a well-paid corporate job and enter academia—accepting a fraction of my salary in return for the opportunity to give back. Today, I serve as a Professor of Finance, mentor PhD candidates, advise on national policy, and lead SLIM as its President. My journey is living proof that where you begin doesn't limit where you can go—so long as purpose and perseverance guide your path.

Q: *SLIM continues to position itself at the forefront of marketing education and professional development in Sri Lanka. How do you see its role expanding both locally and internationally in the coming years?*

Prof. Dewasiri: SLIM's vision is clear: "To Lead the Nation's Efforts Towards Economic Prosperity." Our mission reflects that: "To Establish Marketing as the Driving Force Which Enhances Business and National Value." To achieve this, SLIM must evolve into a regional hub for marketing innovation, education, and policy leadership. Locally, we are intensifying our impact by strengthening SME ecosystems, driving youth entrepreneurship, and expanding our provincial reach in the marketing profession.

Crucially, we've also stepped into national advocacy—leading policy development in marketing and entrepreneurship, and working hand-in-hand with ministries and public institutions to shape a future-ready Sri Lanka.

On the international front, we're working towards dual qualifications with globally ranked institutions, building regional networks across South Asia, and positioning SLIM as a knowledge partner in global marketing dialogues.

Our goal is to make Sri Lanka a global destination for marketing thought leadership—and SLIM, the engine that drives it forward.

Q: *What advice would you offer to aspiring marketers and young professionals who hope to one day take on leadership roles like yours within institutions such as SLIM?*

Prof. Dewasiri: Stay curious. Stay grounded. Stay resilient. Don't chase titles; chase impact. Learn from failure. Build networks. Uplift others. The best leaders aren't always the loudest—they're the most consistent.

SLIM is a platform that rewards integrity, initiative, and service. Get involved early, contribute authentically, and never stop learning. Remember, leadership is not a destination; it's a responsibility. Wear it with humility and purpose.

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“Not Just Products: A Servitization Journey to Boost Brands in Sri Lanka”



Introduction

As the world progresses through dynamic changes and incessant challenges, the business environment has also been confronted with numerous difficulties to address. Amidst the challenges, manufacturing firms have opted to incorporate service-based business solutions to elevate their overall firm performance. This transition from the products to integrated product-service systems is recognized as servitization (Baines et al., 2013). Moreover, it is being practiced by firms effectively across the globe. This article, in particular, aims to emphasize the necessity of servitization in Sri Lanka from a marketing perspective. Additionally, it proposes the imperative role of servitization in enhancing a firm's brand value.



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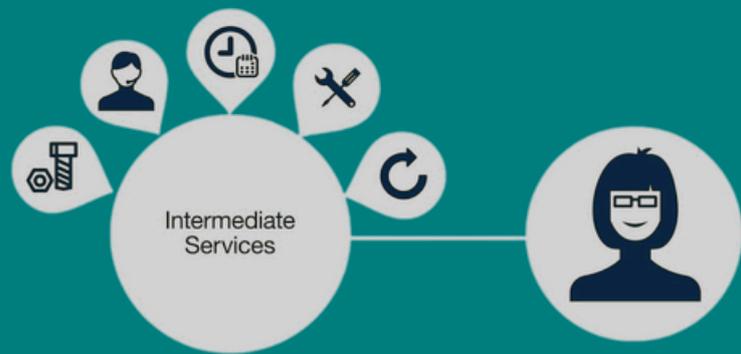
What is servitization?

Servitization was coined initially by Vandermerwe and Rada (1988). This can be best defined as the innovation of an organization's capabilities and processes, enabling it to create greater mutual value through a shift from selling products to selling product-service systems (Baines et al., 2009a). To put it simply, for example, a shoe manufacturer may introduce fitness services through a freemium model, likely on online platforms. A cosmetic product manufacturer may incorporate a beauty care services business model.

The contemporary servitization process without the integration of digital technology is insignificant, and the proliferation of industrial 4.0 technologies has influenced the potent blend between digitalization and servitization (Abou-Foul et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Sjödin et al., 2023). This fragment, known as digital servitization, has opened up a plethora of unprecedented opportunities for businesses (Payne et al., 2021). To dive in primarily in line with the two-fold marketing goals: attract and retain customers. With a vast array of manufacturers operating across the country and experiencing intense digital penetration, Sri Lanka presents a robust business landscape for marketers to implement digital servitization in relevant industries.



Why is servitization pertinent and imperative today?



While leadership teams strive to develop robust marketing-focused business strategies, they often find business model innovation to be a viable avenue to pursue. However, given the sophistication and the considerable time required, the ideas might seem challenging and far from simple. That is where digital servitization stands as a better alternative for manufacturers to navigate the turbulent business environment. It reinvigorates the existing capabilities and resources of the firm, rather than requiring radical changes to the business ecosystem, and offers a subtle business model transformation to win consumers.

One of the main drivers for servitization to be more fitting in the present is the development of technology and its wide availability to both firms and consumers. Compared to shifting into a whole new business model or segment, embracing product-service systems provides a more viable and practical option for manufacturers, especially when considering the mammoth investment already made in the production process.

Marketer's role in servitization

Although servitization emerged in the operations management field, marketers' role in delivering servitized offerings has never subsided. It is the marketer's expertise and sense that navigate consumer requirements through product-service systems, particularly in value co-creation. Moreover, this shift from a transactional product-based business model to a relational service-based model hinges mainly on the co-creation experience delivered to consumers. The evolution of novel digital tools and platforms indeed provides comprehensive capabilities to strengthen value co-creation. Recently, this was further shaped and fine-tuned with the findings of Jang et al. (2021) discovering a deeper understanding of the brand-consumer relationship with servitization experience. Accordingly, deep within the servitization efforts of firms, brand advocacy plays a pivotal role in disseminating the brand's values, culture, and essence.





Servitization incentivized by brand evangelism

Brand evangelism is discerned as “a more active and committed way of spreading positive opinions and trying fervently to convince or persuade others to get engaged with the same brand” (Matzler et al., 2007). Brand evangelism represents a strong, sustainable consumer-brand relationship (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2022), characterized by a high level of word-of-mouth, encompassing purchase intention, positive brand referrals, and negative brand referrals (Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013). Borrowing an example from the international context, Apple Inc. provides an excellent example by demonstrating the state of brand evangelism among its consumers over the decades. The iPhone manufacturer offers a series of servitized products, including Apple Music, Apple TV, and Apple Arcade, which enhance the overall performance of the firm.

Through the lens of a marketer, brand evangelism is a vital performance indicator of the firm’s brand value. It may not be appropriate to assess the servitization impact through sales figures or consumer acquisition rates at an earlier stage, as this could be deceptive. However, evaluating brand evangelism can be practical in determining consumers’ overall preference towards the brand.



Significance and future directions for marketers

Primarily, the study of servitization through brand evangelism reinforces and enhances the sustainability of a firm’s servitization efforts. It is projected that firms will extend their servitization strategies to maintain a persistent connection with customers, which ultimately translates into a more profound form of brand advocacy. Therefore, examining the servitization experience from the brand-consumer perspective is vital to achieving this objective. Accordingly, marketers can devise servitization strategies that enhance the overall brand value of the firm, driving its progress in dynamic environments.

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CAN MARKETERS MANAGE?



The text of a recent CIM podcast entitled Why marketing's boardroom absence is bad for business, makes interesting reading, with a feeling that we have been here before. In January, 2008 "Marketing" magazine published an article entitled "Marketers Lack Influence in the Boardroom", revealing that 73% of CMOs believe their businesses undervalue marketing strategy. This strategic disconnect isn't an anomaly; for the third consecutive year, the survey identifies marketing strategy as the most undervalued function by peers.

A further revelation indicates that less than 30% of marketing professionals possess formal training in the discipline. This significant knowledge deficit has contributed to weakened strategic thinking and decision-making, and consequently diminished marketing's credibility at the boardroom level. To address these problems the CIM have developed the Global Professional Marketing Framework, of necessary skills that define what it takes to be a competent, proficient, and relevant marketer.



Nicholus C Watkis
AE VR MA DIPM CMC FCIM

As defined by The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), marketing is

“the management process that identifies anticipates and satisfies customer requirements profitably”.

Thus marketing is a management process, not another name for advertising or selling.

“Are Marketers suitable managers of marketing?”, is an interesting question. In theory marketers should be responsible for all those activities that “anticipate and satisfy customer demand profitably.” In practice, this is often not the case. While the other main elements of business, such as finance and production are managed by senior managers with overall responsibility for their respective areas, that of marketing, which is the driving force in producing the business revenue, is frequently not managed in that way at all.

Examination of the marketing press would suggest that many marketers have a different perspective of marketing and their responsibilities. One has only to see that the predominance of articles in the marketing press that revolve around customer relationship management (CRM), brand, advertising, product perception and public relations. There are also occasional articles on selling, but rarely on sales management. Very little is published about the management of marketing.

Many marketers seem to have lost the understanding of marketing from the CIM’s definition of a management function, and view marketing on a narrower description, mainly denoting customer relations and different forms of communication and promotion. It would seem that for many, the role of a senior marketing or commercial manager, as being responsible for generating sustainable, profitable revenue, is not something they would recognise.

When it comes to measuring marketing performance especially the return on investment (ROI), many marketers often confine their interest to measurements involved with CRM, advertising, promotion and brands. While measurement of performance in these areas is important for those executives who are the managers in charge of them, they are not indicative of the overall marketing performance.

Individually these separate areas of marketing activity are not responsible for generating revenue. Even the sales organisation is not solely responsible for bringing in the revenue, for while sales may ultimately close the sale, its performance is supported by all the other disciplines of marketing, which collectively assist in making successful sales result.

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it,” applies as much to the marketing function as it does to every other part of business. However, it does not mean that if you can measure it, you can manage it. Measuring marketing performance does not guarantee good management, but is an indicator of management performance.

For too long, many marketers appear to be fixated by branding initiatives, image and other aesthetics. The challenge for marketers is to present marketing performance measurements to the CEO and the management team in financial terms that they understand, like contribution and Return on Investment (ROI). Marketers must be able to quantify and demonstrate the contribution of the marketing function as a whole to the business, both for the immediate and the long term, and not confine themselves to their own particular specialisations. Should they seek to be in senior level appointments, then marketers will have to prove themselves be good leaders, managers and motivators, able to think strategically for the long term development of the business.

Businesses exist to make money, produced as a result of satisfying customer demand.



Producing profitable income requires the effective management of all those resources and the necessary assets involved in producing and delivering a product or service to a customer. But what are these resources and assets? Generally, those resources are defined in financial terms as the money allocated to budgets for the specific activities involved directly or indirectly with producing income.

Tangible assets involved in getting and maintaining income are usually limited to wholly owned and dedicated IT hardware related to the administration of selling, and wholly owned business vehicles dedicated to customer liaison and delivery.

It is generally understood that the majority of marketers only stay in the post for 18 months to 2 years, thus their outlook is essentially limited. Business and marketing plans are normally prepared as a five-year rolling plan with annual reviews. To be effective, such plans need long term management. Frequent changes of management are not compatible with the effective execution of such plans.

The objective of a commercial manager is to deliver a continuity of sustainable profitable revenue. However, if marketing is the main revenue driver of a business, it requires planning and management for the long term, to provide the necessary continuity of sustainable revenue.

If marketers want to have overall charge of all the business getting and retaining functions, they must learn to measure, manage and report on the performance of marketing as a whole, and in a way that is compatible with other areas of the business. In particular, aspiring marketers must demonstrate a long term commitment to the organisation.

In short, marketers must learn to be effective managers of the whole of the marketing function for the longer term, not just specialist areas for the short term, if they want to be regarded as professional managers deserving of a place in the boardroom.

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Steering SLIM Through

Transformation and Triumph

IPP Gayan Perera



As the 47th President of the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM), Gayan Perera assumed leadership during one of the institute's most turbulent chapters. With a background steeped in marketing and leadership, he found himself not only at the helm of a struggling organisation but also entrusted with a mandate to rebuild, restructure, and re-inspire. What unfolded during his tenure was a bold turnaround—an ambitious drive to restore SLIM's financial health, educational credibility, and organisational morale.

Adopting 'Course Correction' Mode

"When I took over SLIM, it was in dire straits," Gayan recalls. "In the financial year 2023, we recorded a loss of 7 million. Staff turnover was high, and our educational performance did not meet the standard. It was a daunting task." The first challenge was financial stability. Despite setting a target of LKR 500 million in revenue, the institute had not even crossed the 400 million mark in previous years. But Gayan and his team didn't see these goals as fantasy. They became the foundation for strategy.

Behind the scenes, deeper issues were at play. SLIM's operational culture had suffered from years of stagnation, with top leadership decisions funnelling down without empowering mid-level management. "The second layer wasn't empowered," he explains. "They were used to following instructions from the top, and not owning the action plans. There was no room for decision-making, no room for contribution."

To address these challenges and drive organisational effectiveness, structural changes were introduced, particularly at the senior levels of the secretariat, which is the engine room for SLIM's day-to-day operations. These changes were implemented not only to bring about procedural clarity and consistency but also to align with the expectations of stakeholders and drive long-term operational excellence.

"The Council plays an honorary role; we're not full-time staff," Gayan notes. "So, empowering the internal team was non-negotiable." A new management committee was formed, drawing from the most senior administrative staff, and began reporting directly to the Council of Management. Furthermore, Council members also stepped in more actively, working alongside staff to rebuild morale, instill accountability, and streamline operational workflows. A comprehensive staff survey in early 2024 provided critical insight. It validated internal concerns and revealed the need for a fresh, transparent leadership approach. As a result, motivation programs, new financial checks, and an overhaul of operational procedures were rolled out. Over the next five to six months, the effects began to show.

By the end of the financial year, SLIM had made a remarkable comeback, recording a 12% top-line growth and a net profit of LKR 30.4 million, marking a 400% improvement in bottom-line performance. Importantly, the organisation had begun to retain its staff and earn their trust again, signaling a fundamental cultural shift.

Reviving Education and Rebuilding Brand Relevance

Under his leadership, SLIM did more than recover financially; it raised the bar on its educational offerings. A landmark initiative was the transformation of the Kandy Business School into the ‘dream campus’, an ultra-modern learning hub situated prominently in the heart of the city. “Earlier, our facility in Kandy was tucked away, hardly visible. Now, we’re in a prime location, easily accessible and symbolically central to our national presence,” he states. The campus, beyond being a physical transformation, represented a renewed commitment to educational excellence.

Reforms continued with the Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management program. The curriculum was modernised, placing greater emphasis on practical assignments while reducing the weightage of traditional examinations. Lecturers were asked to contribute directly to question banks, ensuring assessments aligned with classroom teaching. These changes addressed a longstanding issue: the gap between what students were taught and how they were evaluated. “Now, the evaluation truly reflects learning,” Gayan notes.

“It’s a better experience for both students and faculty. It’s not just about students anymore,” Gayan emphasizes. “We’re upskilling current marketers too—professionals already in the field who now need new competencies to stay competitive.” To ensure international compatibility, SLIM secured dual accreditation for its Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) in the UK. “That’s a big deal for anyone looking to migrate or gain global recognition,” he says.

**Energising Events and Reinvigorating Community**

One of the most visible turnarounds occurred in SLIM’s signature national events. “We elevated the standards of all five national events,” Gayan says proudly. From improved logistics to better programming, each event was not only an educational or networking experience but also a profitable venture. These events contributed significantly to the institute’s surplus for the year.

Member engagement was revitalised as well. Monthly experience sharing forums, curated networking activities such as wine-tasting events, and CEO breakfast sessions became standard features. “It wasn’t just about formal knowledge; it was about creating spaces for interaction, collaboration, and inspiration,” Gayan adds.

Gayan’s strategic vision for SLIM always extended beyond Sri Lanka. Recognising shifts in global marketing, from AI to content creation, he ensured SLIM remained at the forefront of this evolution. The younger generation doesn’t want to stick to traditional employment,” he notes. “They’re building digital marketing agencies, e-commerce platforms, and YouTube channels. We have to adapt.” SLIM began developing short-term training modules in areas like digital marketing, AI applications, influencer branding, and content creation. This wasn’t just about following trends; it was about meeting the aspirations of Gen Z, many of whom now explore hybrid or freelance careers, ranging from Instagram-based microbusinesses to YouTube content ventures.

The institute also deepened its collaboration with the Asia Marketing Federation (AMF), which comprises 18 countries. Through this, SLIM members were able to participate in regional competitions and knowledge-sharing platforms, broadening their global exposure.

SLIM also became more socially conscious under Gayan's tenure. The launch of the ABLE Charter aimed at enhancing employability for individuals who were "differently abled", in collaboration with the national HR body, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM) Sri Lanka.

Collaborations with institutions like the Industrial Development Board (IDB) resulted in specialised programs for development officers and SME entrepreneurs across Sri Lanka.

Elevating the SLIM Brand

For Gayan, branding wasn't just an external focus. It started from within. One symbolic project was the revamp of the SLIM anthem, a song that had remained untouched for over 12 years. "It's not just a tune—it reflects the vision and energy of our new generation," he says. Today, the revamped SLIM anthem is played at all institutional events, from educational forums to award ceremonies, reinforcing a renewed sense of unity and pride.

This rebranding effort aimed to ensure SLIM remained relevant in the minds of young professionals. "A brand has to evolve just like its audience," Gayan says. "Our anthem now reflects that evolution.

" Looking back, Gayan acknowledges how transformative this experience was; not just for SLIM, but for himself as well. "This role sharpened my leadership skills. Working with people, mentoring, and building systems; it gave me a deeper understanding of how to lead in adversity." From restructuring operations to instilling a new sense of accountability and culture, Gayan's time at SLIM was a practical lesson in change management. He credits the successful turnaround to a team effort, with staff, council members, department heads, and stakeholders all aligning around a common goal.

As a final thought, Gayan Perera offers advice to aspiring professionals: "There are no shortcuts in life. You have to immerse yourself in the task, experience the marketplace, get your hands dirty." He stresses the importance of staying dynamic in an ever-changing environment. "Comfort zones kill progress! Marketers must keep moving, adapting, and learning.



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Introduction

The role of leadership in nurturing successful brands has been extensively studied and documented. Great brands do not emerge in a vacuum; they are often the result of visionary leadership that guides, shapes, and sustains the brand's identity and growth over time. This article examines the pivotal role that leaders play in establishing and maintaining exceptional brands, drawing on scholarly citations and references.



The Importance of VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Visionary leaders are essential in creating and maintaining strong brands. They provide a clear vision and strategic direction, which are crucial for brand development.

According to Collins and Porras (1996), visionary companies display a consistent core ideology and an unrelenting drive for progress, both of which are instilled by their leaders. These leaders envision the future of their brand and mobilize their organization towards achieving that vision.

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Strategic Brand Management



Strategic brand management is another area where leadership plays a pivotal role. Keller (2013) emphasizes that strong brands are built through effective brand management strategies that leaders must develop and implement. These strategies include brand positioning, brand equity management, and consistent brand communication. Leaders ensure that these strategies align with the overall business goals and adapt to changing market dynamics.

Cultivating Organisational Culture



A positive organisational culture nurtured by effective leaders is integral to brand success. Schein (2010) posits that leaders shape the culture of an organization, which in turn influences brand perception. Leaders who cultivate a culture of excellence, innovation, and customer-centricity foster a strong brand that resonates with consumers. This culture permeates every aspect of the organisation, from product development to customer service.

Brand Equity and Customer Loyalty



Brand equity, defined as the value a brand adds to a product, is significantly influenced by leadership. Aaker (1996) notes that strong brand equity is built through the consistent delivery of brand promises and the maintenance of high standards of quality and reliability. Leaders are responsible for ensuring that these standards are met and that the brand maintains its trustworthiness in the eyes of consumers. This trust leads to customer loyalty, which is a hallmark of great brands.

Innovation and Adaptation



Innovation is a critical component of brand longevity, and leaders are at the forefront of fostering innovation. Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) argue that leaders who encourage a culture of innovation help their brands to adapt and thrive in competitive markets. These leaders invest in research and development, encourage creative thinking, and are not afraid to take calculated risks. As a result, their brands remain relevant and appealing to consumers over time.



Ethical Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility



Ethical leadership and a commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) also contribute to brand strength. According to Freeman, Harrison, and Wicks (2007), consumers are increasingly valuing brands that demonstrate ethical behavior and social responsibility. Leaders who prioritize ethical practices and CSR initiatives enhance their brand's reputation and build stronger connections with their stakeholders.

Case Studies of Great Leaders and Brands



Several case studies highlight the impact of great leaders on brand success. Steve Jobs at Apple, for instance, is renowned for his visionary leadership and relentless pursuit of innovation, which propelled Apple to become one of the most valuable brands in the world (Isaacson, 2011). Similarly, Howard Schultz's leadership at Starbucks transformed the company into a global brand by focusing on the customer experience and implementing ethical sourcing practices (Schultz & Gordon, 2011).

How do Marketers learn to become great leaders?



Are you tired of traditional lectures and lengthy case studies that leave you feeling disengaged and uninspired when it comes to learning about leadership? Do you yearn for a more captivating and effective way to understand the intricate world of leadership? Look no further! Read stories of leaders and analyse their leadership style, and find out how you could adopt and adjust to develop your style of leadership that empowers you to create great brands. In my book titled "Leadership Unveiled: Simplifying Complex Leadership Concepts with Inspiring Stories" (Maxwell, 2023), you will find a treasure trove of short, imaginative stories that vividly illustrate various leadership styles.

These narratives captivate your attention and make leadership concepts come to life. A wealth of knowledge on leadership is documented in leadership concepts developed by scholars. However, for a practicing marketer to learn leadership, they need to apply theories in the real world and work with people who have made a difference through their leadership. The illustrated leadership stories bridge the gap between theory and practice, making complex theories easier to understand.





Conclusion

In conclusion, great brands are indeed nurtured by great leaders. Visionary leadership, strategic brand management, a strong organizational culture, brand equity, innovation, ethical practices, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are all critical components that leaders must cultivate to build and sustain successful brands. The scholarly citations and references provided in this article underscore the pivotal role of leadership in nurturing great brands. It is suggested that learning leadership styles of others is one easy method of developing one's leadership style.

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WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE

Higher Education Marketing Strategies for Sri Lankan Universities?

**An Insightful Discussion with a Prominent Business
School Leader in the United Kingdom**



Professor Sankar Sivarajah

*Head of Business School, Professor of Technology
Management and Circular Economy at Kingston
University London and Former Dean of the
Business School at the University of Bradford, UK*



Interview was conducted by:

Dr. Nirma Sadamali Jayawardena,
Assistant Professor in Marketing at the University
of Bradford, United Kingdom

This article is based on a conversation with Professor Sankar Sivarajah, the former Dean of the School of Management and Professor of Technology Management and Circular Economy at the University of Bradford, United Kingdom. He is currently the Head of the Business School and a Professor of Technology Management and Circular Economy at Kingston University, London. He has also been interviewed and featured by Forbes, where he discusses how Business Schools can deliver social value and commit to socio-economic development. This interview focuses on possible marketing strategies for Sri Lankan universities.

Nirma: Can you briefly introduce yourself, your title, your job position, and your experience?

Sankar: My name is Sankar Sivarajah, and I am currently the Head of Kingston Business School at Kingston University London. Previously, I served as Dean of the School of Management at the University of Bradford from 2019 to 2023. Before becoming Dean, I established and led a new academic department at Bradford, focusing on Business Analytics, the Circular Economy, and Entrepreneurship, which began in 2017.

I started my academic career as a Post-Doctoral Researcher at Brunel University London in 2014. Most of my experience stems from UK University leadership and management roles, as well as exposure to external positions, including serving as a governing council member of the Chartered Association of Business Schools in the UK.

Nirma: Can you share your experience in the higher education marketing domain?

Sankar: Sure. My experience primarily stems from my roles as Head of Department and Dean of the School, where I have worked with international academic and industry partners. It mainly involves marketing our courses, promoting the University's strengths in research, accreditation, and rankings, as well as highlighting our faculty members. I bring these experiences to both our internal marketing team and external marketing agencies. So, that's some of my experience with higher education marketing.

Nirma: How can Sri Lankan private universities attract students? What is your opinion about Sri Lankan private universities in particular?

Sankar: I think the same principles apply to any institution, private or public. For private institutions, the key focus should be on distinctiveness. What makes them unique? Why should students choose a private or local university? For example, the type of faculty they attract, their unique offerings, and the overall experience they provide.

It's crucial to highlight why that particular private institution stands out. This distinctiveness, or value proposition, is essential

Nirma: What are the biggest challenges, in your opinion, for Sri Lankan private or public universities when it comes to attracting students?

Sankar: The current stigma surrounding leaving the country to gain international experience, as well as the competition for international reputation in higher education, are significant challenges. These are driven by Sri Lanka's high cost of living and not just quality alone. The overall experience, including economic impacts, plays a significant role. Students seek affordable ways to gain international experience, which can lead to career opportunities. The instability of the economy and competing with the image of a global higher education experience are the biggest challenges. Fundamental factors, such as the product, people, and pricing, also matter. Private institutions may charge higher prices, but they need to offer value that justifies them.

Nirma: For example, a student just after their Advanced Levels might think, "Okay, I will go to a private university in Sri Lanka and spend some money on my degree instead of going abroad and spending more." What is your perspective on that?

Sankar: It's about what experience they can offer that might be internationalised. They might have partnerships with institutions in the UK, Europe, the US, Canada, or Australia to provide international experiences at home. It's a key reason why students choose to study abroad. Providing good career opportunities and global exposure through remote working opportunities with global brands can mitigate the challenges of brain drain.

Nirma: How can digital marketing methods or tools increase student enrolments for Sri Lankan universities?

Sankar: Digital marketing is critical. Connecting with students through digital media they're already using is crucial. As a marketing institution, you must stay current with these media technologies. Utilise a pull strategy by being present on the platforms your target audience uses, such as TikTok. Social media campaigns, digital campaigns, TV campaigns, and other media channels should be leveraged to maximise reach and impact. It's essential to target digital channels that work for the Sri Lankan audience. Creative content, such as short films on YouTube or similar emerging platforms, can also attract learners.

Nirma: So, you mean short films?

Sankar: Yes, short creatives. TikTok-style videos or similar content can be used on various channels. The content needs to be attractive and personalised to the audience. It should tell an authentic story and connect emotionally with the audience. This could be about education being a life-changing experience, successful business people, or celebrities as role models.

Nirma: How do you suggest Sri Lankan universities leverage Alumni networks to enhance their reputation and attract new students?

Sankar: Leveraging alum networks is critical, and showcasing successful alums, such as local entrepreneurs or medical doctors, as role models is essential. Sharing their success stories and how their education transformed their lives is critical. Alums can also contribute financially or through expertise, serving as brand ambassadors, industry speakers, or advisory board members.

External links for further information:

[What are the possible Higher Education Marketing Strategies for Sri Lankan Universities?](#)

[An Insightful Discussion with a Prominent Business School Leader in the United Kingdom](#)

Nirma: Is there a way to highlight a university's academic achievements and unique programs in marketing materials to attract students?

Sankar: Yes, 100%. Academic achievements are key. Highlighting research and social impacts, such as significant studies on addressing local health issues like diabetes, which is also a global concern, and linking this to the courses offered can be very attractive. Connections with industry and practical applications also matter. Promoting these achievements and connections can attract students.

Nirma: How do you stay on top of the latest developments when it comes to higher education marketing trends and innovations?

Sankar: It's a constant learning process. Attending educational conferences and networking is essential for learning about what competitors are doing. Staying up to date is crucial for external exposure. Formal learning processes, such as CPD courses, also help keep knowledge and skills up-to-date.

Nirma: The last question is: Can you suggest a creative marketing campaign for a Sri Lankan university to increase the number of local students?

Sankar: It needs to be an authentic campaign with an emotional link. For example, addressing the current economic challenges and brain drain by showcasing that students don't need to leave the country to get a similar experience. Highlighting the benefits of staying close to family and giving back to the community while still gaining a global expertise through partnerships and faculty exchanges can create a strong emotional tie. Emphasising the opportunity to rebuild an economy and contribute to socio-economic development can drive a powerful campaign.

Nirma: Thank you so much for your time and effort on this very insightful discussion.



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Introduction

In today's fiercely competitive business landscape, where products and services are increasingly commoditized, customer experience (CX) has emerged as a powerful differentiator. It is time to reimagine how customers experience your brand and cultivate a customer-first culture. Delivering an exceptional CX is essential for gaining a competitive edge and driving sustainable growth. This article examines the importance of developing strategic customer experience initiatives to gain a competitive edge and offers practical strategies for businesses seeking to excel in this crucial area.

Why Customer Experience Matters

Customer experience (CX) is paramount for achieving long-term success. Exceptional CX serves as a powerful differentiator in a crowded market. Businesses that prioritize CX can gain a significant competitive edge and drive sustainable growth. For instance, Amazon's focus on personalized recommendations and seamless shopping experiences has led to high customer retention rates.

One of the most compelling reasons CX matters is its positive impact on customer loyalty. Loyal customers advocate for your brand through word-of-mouth referrals, generating new business without additional marketing costs. This organic growth is crucial for expanding market share and building a strong, reputable brand.

Delivering exceptional and well-crafted customer experiences fosters loyalty and encourages repeat business by increasing customer satisfaction. Customers who have positive experiences are more likely to return, thus increasing customer retention and lifetime value. This repeat business forms the foundation of sustainable growth, ensuring the company's long-term success and financial stability. Prioritizing CX is not just a strategy for growth; it's a commitment to valuing and understanding your customers, ultimately leading to a stronger, more resilient brand.

What is Customer Experience?

As De Keyser et al. stated in 2020, Customer Experience (CX) refers to a customer's subjective, multidimensional response to interactions with a brand across various touchpoints in their journey. These responses encompass a range of mental reactions, including emotional, cognitive, and sensory responses. The subjective nature of CX means that each customer's experience is personal and unique, and the positivity of these responses can reflect across different CX dimensions, such as satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy.

Understanding the Evolution of Customer Experience

The concept of the experience economy, introduced by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in 1998, revolutionized how businesses understand customer desires. They asserted that offering quality goods and services was no longer sufficient; customers craved experiences. This shift in consumer behaviour prompted companies to adapt, recognising the importance of delivering memorable experiences.

In today's digital age, customer expectations have continued to evolve. They now demand personalised, seamless interactions with brands. Dissatisfactions arise from issues such as a lack of personalisation, inconsistent service across channels, long wait times, complex processes, a lack of transparency, and poor issue resolution. To thrive in this competitive landscape, businesses must address these challenges and meet ever-changing customer expectations.

Customer experience extends beyond transactions; it involves every interaction a customer has with a brand, from initial contact to post-purchase support. In this era of digital transformation and heightened expectations, delivering seamless and memorable experiences is essential. Customers no longer settle for products or services alone—they seek personalised interactions, omnichannel experiences, and genuine emotional connections with the brands they engage with. Businesses that understand and embrace these principles will be better positioned to differentiate themselves and foster customer loyalty in today's experience-driven economy.

Key Elements of a Successful Customer Experience Strategy

A comprehensive CX strategy comprises several key elements aimed at delivering consistent and exceptional experiences throughout the customer journey:

1. Customer Journey Mapping: Understanding the various touchpoints and interactions customers have with the brand is crucial for identifying pain points and opportunities for improvement. By mapping the customer journey, businesses can gain insights into the customer's perspective and design tailored experiences that meet their needs and expectations at every stage of the process.

2. Personalisation: Tailoring experiences to individual customer preferences and behaviours can significantly enhance engagement and loyalty. Leveraging data analytics and AI-driven technologies, businesses can deliver personalised recommendations, offers, and communications that resonate with customers on a personal level.

3. Omnichannel Integration: Ensuring a seamless and cohesive experience across all channels and touchpoints, whether online or offline, is essential for meeting customer expectations in today's interconnected world. By integrating channels and breaking down silos, businesses can provide a consistent brand experience across multiple touchpoints, enhancing convenience and accessibility for customers.

4. Emotional Engagement: Creating genuine emotional connections with customers can foster brand loyalty and advocacy. Businesses that evoke positive emotions through their interactions and messaging are more likely to earn long-term customer loyalty and advocacy.

Data-Driven Insights and Analytics

Data analytics plays a crucial role in understanding customer behaviour, preferences, and sentiment. By harnessing data-driven insights, businesses can gain a deeper understanding of their customers' needs and preferences, enabling them to tailor experiences accordingly. Moreover, data analytics can help identify trends, patterns, and opportunities for optimisation, driving continuous improvement in CX initiatives.

Building a Customer-Centric Culture

Fostering a customer-centric culture is crucial for consistently delivering exceptional customer experiences. This involves instilling a mindset of putting the customer first throughout the organisation, from frontline employees to senior leadership. By prioritising customer satisfaction and empowerment, businesses can cultivate a culture that values and prioritises CX excellence.

Developing a Clear Vision for Customer Experience

A clear vision is at the heart of every effective customer experience strategy. This vision entails having clear goals. When setting goals for a customer experience strategy, remember that each goal needs to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. With this framework, you can define exactly what is missing in your customer experience strategy and develop steps to address it.



Creating Buyer Personas and Mapping Customer Journeys

Creating buyer personas and mapping customer journeys are essential components of any customer experience strategy. Buyer personas, crafted through market research and data analysis, represent distinct demographics and guide interactions with your target audience. Understanding your customer base demographics enables you to anticipate their needs and tailor solutions accordingly. Mapping the customer journey involves plotting every engagement point to identify potential pain points and enhance the overall experience. By combining buyer personas and customer journey mapping, businesses can gain a deeper understanding of their customers and deliver more personalised and effective experiences.

The Four Pillars of Customer Experience Strategy

A comprehensive customer experience strategy comes together when the following bases are covered:

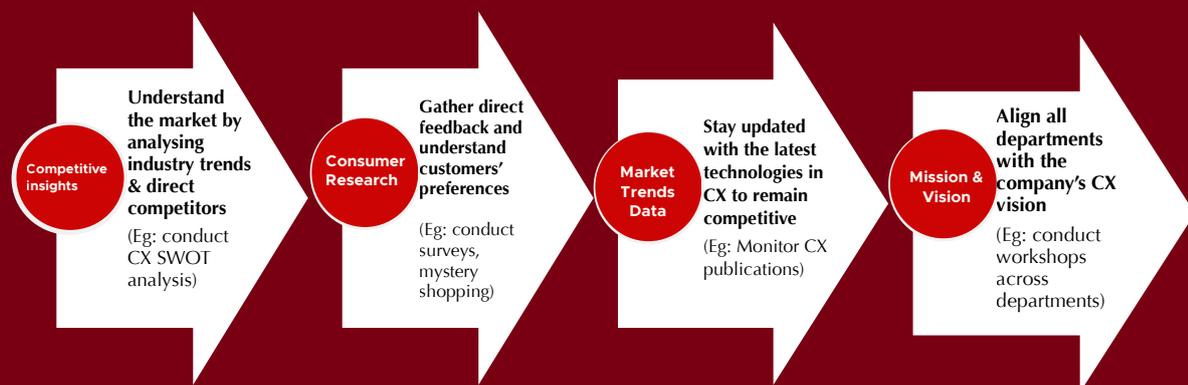
1.Competitive Insight: *To deliver a unique customer experience, your company needs to stand out from the competition. Analyse industry leaders and your closest competitors’ customer experience strategies. Compare your NPS and CSAT against those of your competition to see how you match up. Performing competitive analysis allows you to learn from your rivals’ successes while steering clear of their mistakes.*

2.Consumer Research: *Creating buyer personas is just one part of your consumer research. Engage with real customers through surveys and feedback forms. Digital technology makes gathering inputs from large sample groups of customers as simple as sending out emails.*

3.Market Trend Data: *Stay updated on new customer experience trends. For instance, many companies are integrating artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots into their customer support network. Platforms like Lumoa have integrated GPT features to help users with text analytics and feedback summaries.*

4.Mission & Vision: *Reliability and consistency are qualities all customers look for. Knowing your company upholds a certain standard of customer experience encourages repeat business. To promote a cohesive customer experience across your organization, each department must share the same mission and vision. Communicating this mission and vision to every stakeholder ensures your customer experience strategy stays on track at every stage.*

Figure 1: Pillars of Customer Experience Strategy



Source: Adapted from Lumoa (2024)

Measuring the effectiveness of CX initiatives is critical for gauging success and identifying areas for improvement. Key performance indicators (KPIs) such as customer satisfaction scores, Net Promoter Score (NPS), and Customer Effort Score (CES) provide valuable insights into customer perceptions and sentiment. Regular monitoring and measurement allow businesses to track progress, identify trends, and adjust strategies accordingly.



Conclusion

Crafting strategic customer experience initiatives is crucial for businesses to thrive in today's competitive marketplace. By prioritising CX excellence and implementing the outlined strategies, companies can attract and retain customers, foster brand loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth. As customer expectations evolve, businesses that deliver exceptional experiences will emerge as leaders.

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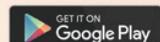
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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, Sri Lankan companies and entrepreneurs find themselves at a critical juncture, seeking new avenues for growth beyond their domestic market. The recent economic crisis has served as a wake-up call, prompting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to re-evaluate their strategies and explore opportunities in international markets. This shift in mindset reflects a fundamental recognition of the need for diversification and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

Before the onset of the crisis, many SMEs in Sri Lanka were content with their success in the local market. The prospect of venturing into international markets seemed distant and perhaps unnecessary. However, the subsequent economic turmoil laid bare the vulnerabilities of relying solely on the domestic market. SMEs were forced to confront the harsh reality that sustainable growth requires expanding their reach beyond national borders.

As Sri Lankan companies embark on this journey of international expansion, they encounter a myriad of challenges and opportunities. One of the fundamental questions they grapple with is how best to position their brands in global markets. Traditionally, the emphasis has been on promoting their brands abroad, often by benchmarking against established international players. While this approach may seem intuitive, it overlooks the significant hurdles posed by cultural differences, language barriers, and divergent consumer behaviours.



Embracing Export Business Over Immediate Brand Promotion

A more prudent strategy for Sri Lankan SMEs is to refrain from immediate brand promotion in international markets and instead focus on export business. By supplying products to recognised brands in target countries through private labelling, SMEs can sidestep many of the complexities associated with building brand recognition from scratch. Private labelling offers several advantages, including access to the B2B market, rigorous product qualification processes, and valuable insights into target market dynamics.

When charting their international expansion strategy, SMEs must carefully weigh the various entry options available to them. While franchising, joint ventures, and wholly-owned subsidiaries offer potential advantages, exporting remains the preferred choice for many SMEs due to its lower investment risk. However, success in export markets hinges on identifying competitive markets where the product can thrive. This involves meticulous segmentation based on factors such as product application, geographical advantages, political climate, and economic indicators.



Once target markets are identified, proactive business development efforts are essential to establish a foothold. This entails leveraging a mix of traditional and digital channels, including email promotions, trade show participation, and social media marketing. Additionally, tapping into existing networks can expedite the process of generating sales leads and forging strategic partnerships.



Understanding the Market and Competition

Despite the immense potential of international markets, Sri Lankan exporters face several challenges that threaten to undermine their competitiveness. Chief among these challenges is the country's relatively small market size and higher production costs compared to global competitors. Price competitiveness emerges as a key concern, compelling SMEs to rethink their approach to market positioning.

The solution lies in repositioning Sri Lankan products as high-quality, value-for-money offerings that cater to the middle segment of the market pyramid. Sri Lanka's reputation as a boutique manufacturing destination, renowned for its superior product quality, can be leveraged to carve out a distinct niche in the global market. By focusing on quality rather than engaging in price wars with larger-scale producers, SMEs can differentiate themselves and command premium prices.

Effective branding is crucial for achieving long-term growth and sustainability in global markets. While a handful of Sri Lankan brands have gained international recognition, there is a pressing need for more brands to make their mark on the world stage. Starting with the export business and supplying products to leading brands in target countries lays the groundwork for brand building. Through continuous improvement in product quality, processes, and packaging, SMEs can strengthen their competitive position and expand their global presence.





Case Studies and Success Stories

To draw inspiration and practical insights, Sri Lankan SMEs can look to the success stories of prominent local brands, such as Dilmah, Spa Ceylon, MAS, and GRI Tires. These companies have successfully navigated international markets through innovation, quality, and effective branding strategies. For instance:

Dilmah: Renowned for its high-quality tea, Dilmah has established itself as a global brand by emphasising the authenticity and purity of its products, thus carving a niche in the premium tea market.

Spa Ceylon: This luxury Ayurveda brand has gained international recognition by offering unique wellness and beauty products that highlight Sri Lanka's rich heritage and natural resources.

MAS: As a leading apparel manufacturer, MAS has established a reputation for quality, ethical production, and innovation, making it a preferred partner for top global fashion brands.

GRI Tires: Specialising in agricultural and industrial tires, GRI Tires has expanded its global footprint by focusing on advanced technology and superior product performance, thereby meeting the diverse needs of international markets.

These success stories illustrate that while competing with global giants can be challenging, there are ample opportunities for Sri Lankan brands to carve out their niche and achieve international recognition. The key lies in identifying unique value propositions and leveraging them effectively in target markets.



Strategic Recommendations for Sri Lankan SMES

1. Market Research and Segmentation: Conduct thorough market research to understand the dynamics of target markets. Segment these markets based on factors such as consumer preferences, economic conditions, and competitive landscape.

2. Quality Focus: Emphasise the quality of products. Position Sri Lankan products as high-quality alternatives in the market. This can help differentiate the company from competitors who may rely on lower prices.

3. Private Labelling: Utilise private labelling to gain entry into international markets. This approach allows SMEs to partner with established brands, thereby reducing the risks associated with direct brand promotion.

4. Networking and Partnerships: Leverage existing networks and form strategic partnerships to facilitate market entry and expansion. Participating in trade shows, industry events, and online forums can help in building valuable connections.

5. Digital Marketing: Invest in digital marketing strategies to reach a global audience. Use social media, email marketing, and SEO to promote products and generate leads.

6. Continuous Improvement: Emphasise ongoing improvement in product quality, packaging, and processes. This helps maintain a competitive edge and build a strong brand reputation.

7. Government Support and Incentives: Seek support from government initiatives that promote international trade and exports. Utilize available resources, incentives, and grants to aid in the global expansion efforts.



Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

1. Cultural Differences: Understanding and adapting to cultural differences in target markets is crucial. SMEs should invest in cultural training and employ local representatives to bridge the cultural gap.

2. Regulatory Hurdles: Navigating regulatory requirements in foreign markets can be a significant challenge. SMEs should seek assistance from trade organisations and legal experts to ensure compliance.

3. Logistics and Supply Chain: Efficient logistics and supply chain management are vital for success in international markets. Partnering with reliable logistics providers and adopting technology solutions can streamline operations.

4.Currency Fluctuations: Currency volatility can impact profitability. SMEs should consider hedging strategies and price adjustments to mitigate risks associated with currency fluctuations.

5.Competition: Intense competition from established global players is a significant challenge. SMEs should focus on niche markets and unique value propositions to stand out.

6.Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers: Taxes imposed on imported goods can significantly increase the cost of Sri Lankan products, making them less competitive in international markets. Non-tariff barriers, such as stringent regulatory standards, import quotas, and customs procedures, further complicate market entry.

To mitigate these challenges, SMEs should conduct thorough research on the regulatory landscape of target markets and seek assistance from trade organisations. Additionally, forming strategic partnerships with local distributors and leveraging free trade agreements can help overcome these barriers and ensure smoother market access.



Conclusion

Sri Lanka's pursuit of economic prosperity hinges on the success of its SMEs in the global market. By adopting a strategic approach focused on export business and brand positioning, SMEs can not only enhance their profitability but also contribute to the country's economic growth. The dream of seeing a Sri Lankan brand among the top global players is not just a distant aspiration but a tangible goal that promises immense success and prosperity.

In navigating the complexities of global markets, Sri Lankan SMEs must remain agile, innovative, and resilient. By leveraging their strengths, embracing quality, and strategically positioning themselves, they can overcome challenges and seize the vast opportunities that lie ahead. The journey to global recognition is demanding, but with the right strategies, Sri Lankan SMEs can achieve remarkable success on the world stage.



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Introduction

In the business world, establishing a strong and recognisable brand is crucial for achieving long-term success. Marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and creating a lasting impact on consumers. The concept of brand equity emphasises the importance of a positive brand image, and effective marketing strategies play a crucial role in crafting a brand's identity, fostering consumer loyalty, and differentiating it from competitors. To thrive in a competitive marketplace, businesses must understand the interplay between marketing efforts and brand equity, which involves strategic planning, consistent communication, and a keen understanding of consumer behaviour.

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SENIOR LECTURER*

Why is Marketing Important When Building Brand Equity?

Brand equity refers to the value of a company's brand name and the associations that customers have with that brand. It represents the intangible assets of a company that can contribute to its success and long-term growth. Brand equity represents the value and reputation that a brand carries in the market, enabling it to establish a loyal customer base, command premium prices, and achieve a competitive advantage. Effective marketing strategies help create awareness and a positive perception of the brand, differentiate it from competitors, and ultimately drive sales and profitability. By leveraging various marketing channels, including advertising, promotion, public relations, and digital platforms, companies can effectively communicate their unique value proposition, build trust with consumers, and establish a strong brand identity, ultimately leading to long-term success and sustainable growth.

Ways in Which Marketing Can Help a Company Build Brand Equity

Brand Awareness

In today's consumer-driven world, brand awareness is crucial for business success and overall marketing goals. With extensive research and peer opinions playing a significant role in purchase decisions, establishing brand awareness is vital. Marketing activities, including advertising, social media campaigns, public relations, and event sponsorships, help create brand awareness among the target audience. Increased awareness leads to greater recognition and recall, which are key elements in building brand equity. The more familiar consumers are with a brand, the more likely they are to choose it over others.

Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is a vital aspect of building brand equity, and marketing plays a central role in shaping and communicating that position. Marketing helps in creating a distinct and favorable brand image in the minds of consumers. Through strategic positioning, a company can communicate its unique value proposition and differentiate itself from competitors. It also develops and implements positioning strategies that align with the brand's objectives. Whether it is focusing on product quality, innovation, customer service, or other attributes, marketing helps execute strategies that reinforce the desired brand position.



WHY IS
MARKETING
IMPORTANT
WHEN
BUILDING
BRAND
EQUITY?



Product Quality and Innovation

Marketing plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of product quality and innovation, two key factors that significantly contribute to building brand equity. Through marketing, a company can convey the quality and value of its products or services. Positive associations created through marketing efforts contribute to a favourable perception of the brand's offerings. When consumers associate a brand with high-quality products or innovative solutions, it has a positive impact on brand perception and, consequently, brand equity.

Differentiation From Competitors

This is a key element in building brand equity. Marketing enables a company to showcase its unique features and qualities, thereby differentiating itself from competitors. Marketing helps determine a company from competitors by strategically positioning the brand, understanding and targeting specific customer segments, creating a unique brand identity, emphasizing the unique selling proposition, delivering valuable content, establishing emotional connections, and providing an exceptional customer experience. By highlighting what sets the brand apart, marketing helps create a distinct identity that resonates with consumers.



Consumer Trust and Loyalty

Marketing plays a crucial role in building and maintaining consumer trust and loyalty, which ultimately contributes to the development of brand equity. Effective marketing communication fosters strong relationships with customers, ultimately leading to increased brand loyalty. It involves conveying the brand's core values, purpose, and promises to customers, consistently meeting their expectations, and engaging with them through personalised communication. Marketing efforts, such as transparent communication, customer testimonials, and positive customer experiences, play a crucial role in fostering trust and loyalty, which are essential components of brand equity.

Emotional Connection

Building an emotional connection with consumers is a powerful way to enhance brand equity. Effective marketing often appeals to emotions, creating a strong connection between the brand and consumers, fostering brand loyalty, and influencing positive brand associations. When consumers form a strong emotional bond with a brand, they are more likely to advocate for it and have a positive perception of its value. Emotional ties can lead to positive word-of-mouth, which contributes significantly to brand equity.

Monitoring and Adaptation to Market Changes

Monitoring and adaptation to market changes are essential aspects of building and maintaining brand equity. Marketing plays a pivotal role in this process by providing insights, staying informed about market dynamics, and adapting strategies to align with evolving trends. This information enables a brand to remain relevant in a dynamic market by adapting to shifting consumer preferences and market trends.

Staying current and responsive to the evolving landscape is essential for maintaining and growing brand equity.



Communication and Messaging

Communication and messaging are fundamental components of building brand equity. Marketing helps identify and shape a company's brand identity, encompassing its values, vision, mission, and unique selling propositions. A company can convey these messages through various channels, such as advertising, social media, and content creation. Effective marketing strategies play a vital role in determining how a brand communicates with its audience and how its messages are perceived. A unified brand message helps establish a strong brand identity and reinforces key brand attributes.

Social Responsibility and Sustainability

Social responsibility and sustainability have become increasingly important considerations for consumers, and integrating these values into a company's marketing strategy can positively impact brand equity.

Social responsibility and sustainability have become increasingly important considerations for consumers, and integrating these values into a company's marketing strategy can positively impact brand equity. Companies that engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices often build positive brand equity. By sharing information about initiatives such as carbon footprint reduction, fair trade practices, or community involvement, marketing can enhance brand reputation and credibility, strengthening brand equity among consumers. By aligning the brand with these values, marketers can differentiate the company, attract conscious consumers, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Engaging Consumers in CSR

Marketing can involve consumers in social responsibility and sustainability activities through campaigns or initiatives. Marketing campaigns can encourage consumers to participate in charitable activities or choose products that support specific causes. They can enable individuals to participate in recycling programs, volunteer for community projects, or provide feedback on sustainability strategies. By doing this, marketers can foster consumer loyalty and advocacy, positively impacting brand equity.

Customer Satisfaction and Brand Advocacy

These are crucial elements in building and sustaining brand equity. Marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping the customer experience, fostering customer satisfaction, and encouraging customers to become brand advocates. By consistently delivering high-quality products and services and providing excellent customer service, marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to become brand advocates, promoting the brand to others and thereby contributing to its overall brand equity.

Conclusion

The power of marketing in building brand equity is undeniable. By strategically positioning products or services, creating compelling messaging, and utilising various marketing channels, companies can effectively shape consumers' perceptions and foster a stronger emotional connection with the brand. Marketing enables businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors, foster customer loyalty, and ultimately enhance brand value. As technology continues to evolve, companies must adapt their marketing strategies to capitalise on digital platforms and data-driven insights, thereby creating a lasting impact. By understanding the importance of marketing in brand building and continuously adapting to changing consumer preferences and market dynamics, companies can leverage these efforts to establish substantial brand equity that can fuel long-term success.



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Are Women

LED MICRO, SMALL, MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (WMSMEs) IN SRI LANKA USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS THEIR TRANSFORMATIVE DIGITAL TOOL?

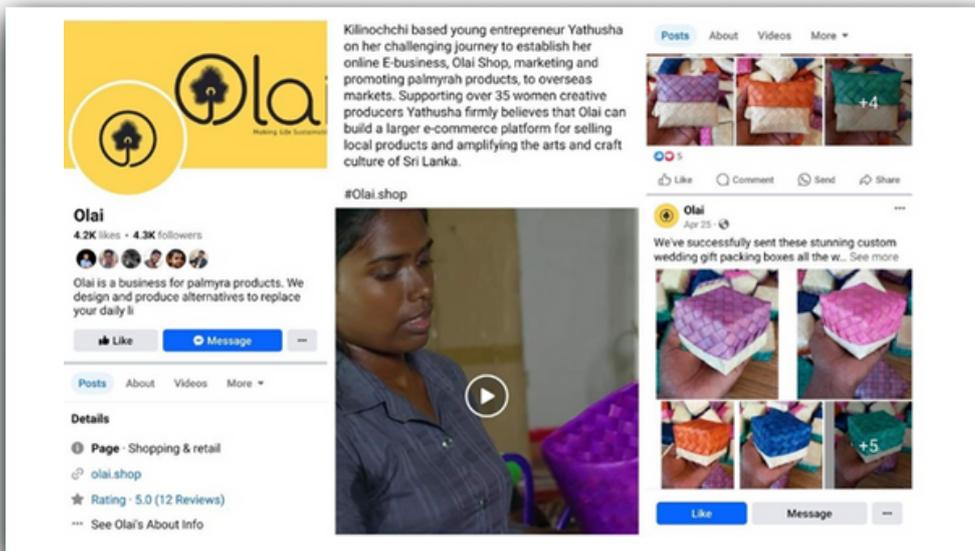
In the vibrant economic landscape of Sri Lanka, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role. Among these, women-led MSMEs are emerging as significant contributors to the country's economy. Despite their potential, WMSMEs often face unique challenges, including limited access to modern marketing practices. However, Digital Marketing (DM), particularly through social media, is proving to be a game-changer. By bridging the gap between men-led and women-led enterprises, social media provides WMSMEs with innovative tools to overcome barriers, reach wider audiences, and achieve sustainable growth.

Social media has revolutionised business operations globally, and WMSMEs in Sri Lanka are tapping into this digital transformation. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram offer unprecedented access to both local and international markets. These platforms help WMSMEs overcome traditional obstacles such as geographic isolation and limited marketing resources, providing cost-effective and efficient means to market their products and services. This article delves into how WMSMEs in Sri Lanka are leveraging social media, highlighting specific examples that showcase their transformative potential.



Dr. (Mrs.) S. Dilogini

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REACHING WIDER AUDIENCES WITH MINIMAL INVESTMENT

One of the most significant advantages of social media for WMSMEs is its ability to reach a broad audience with minimal investment. For instance, a small handicraft business in a rural community can create a Facebook page to display its products. By posting photos and engaging stories about their craft, they can attract followers not only locally but also from across the country and internationally. This exposure can lead to increased sales and brand recognition.

Consider the Olai Shop from Kilinochchi, a WMSME specializing in palmyra products that celebrate Sri Lankan arts and crafts. By using Facebook to share their story and showcase their products, they have attracted customers from six different countries. This success highlights how social media can open new avenues for WMSMEs to reach customers who appreciate authentic, handmade products.

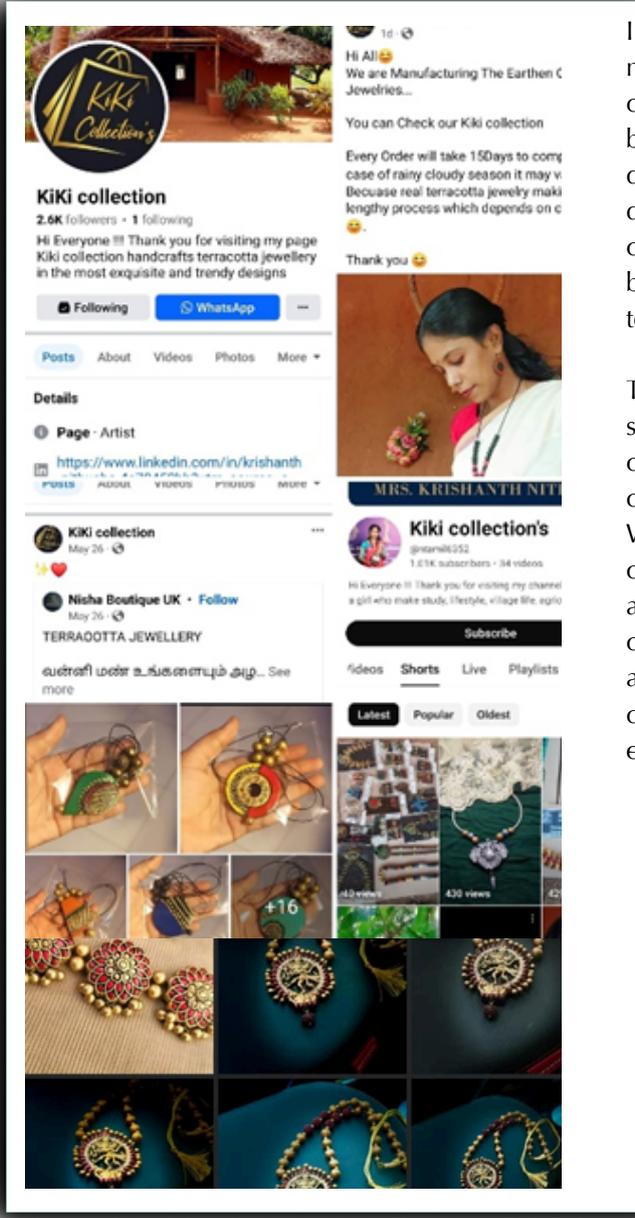
**VISUAL STORYTELLING WITH YOUTUBE**

YouTube, with its visual-centric platform, is ideal for WMSMEs aiming to explain and promote their products through videos. A compelling video can enhance customer understanding and interest, which is particularly beneficial for businesses that rely on visual appeal. The KiKi Collection, a WMSME from Mullaitivu that specializes in terracotta jewelry, utilizes YouTube effectively. Her videos showcase the intricate process of crafting their jewelry, attracting international buyers who value terracotta and artisanal products. Through YouTube, she can visually communicate the uniqueness and cultural significance of her products, thereby boosting her market presence.





PERSONALISED CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT WITH WHATSAPP



In Sri Lanka, WhatsApp is widely used for maintaining personalised communication with customers. For a WMSME selling, WhatsApp can be an invaluable tool for taking orders, confirming deliveries, and providing customer support. This direct communication not only enhances customer satisfaction but also encourages repeat business due to the convenience and personal touch it offers.

The Kiki Collection also leverages WhatsApp to send product notifications, take orders, and confirm delivery times, ensuring a seamless customer experience. This integration of WhatsApp with their Facebook page creates a cohesive and user-friendly customer journey, allowing for direct engagement and real-time communication. Features like automatic replies and product listings further enhance their customer service, making their operations more efficient and customer-centric.



Building Strong Customer Relationships Through Social Media

Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, play a crucial role in fostering strong customer relationships. By directly interacting with customers, businesses can cultivate trust and loyalty, ultimately leading to enhanced customer satisfaction.

Creamy Creation & Creamy Cafe in Jaffna uses Facebook ads to attract customers interested in premium coffee experiences. Direct communication through social media enables them to build relationships and establish trust, ultimately resulting in a loyal customer base. By engaging with customers, answering queries, and fulfilling custom requests, Creamy Creation adapts to market demands, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness.



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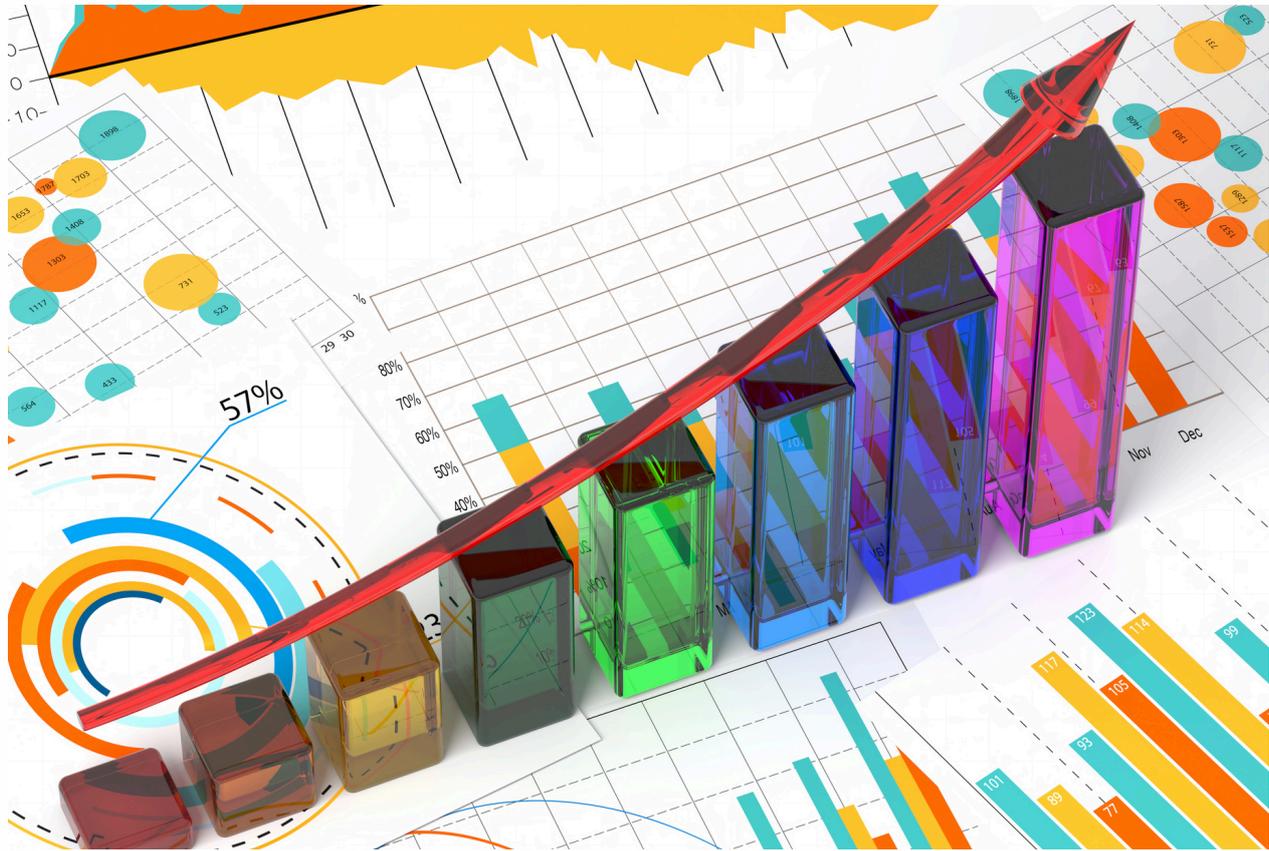
Integrated Social Media Presence

For beauty, cosmetic, and personal care WMSMEs, having both Instagram and Facebook can provide a comprehensive social media presence. Instagram is perfect for showcasing high-quality images and videos of beauty treatments, while Facebook's advertising tools can target specific demographics more effectively.

Dream Style Beauty Parlour in Jaffna, for instance, shares stories about their work and customers' experiences, creating online communities around their brand. These communities provide feedback, spread word-of-mouth referrals, and increase customer loyalty, all of which are essential for business growth.

Data-Driven Marketing Strategies

Social media platforms offer valuable insights through analytics tools. These tools enable WMSMEs to monitor post-performance, understand customer preferences, and tailor marketing strategies accordingly. By analysing engagement metrics, businesses can determine what content resonates most with their audience and adjust their strategy to maximise impact. For example, by analysing Instagram and Facebook data, a WMSME can refine its posting strategy to ensure marketing efforts are both efficient and effective. This data-driven approach leads to better business outcomes, allowing WMSMEs to achieve significant growth.





Conclusion

Social Media as a Catalyst for Growth

Social media is undeniably a powerful tool for WMSMEs in Sri Lanka, helping them overcome traditional barriers and access new markets. By leveraging platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram, WMSMEs can showcase their products to a global audience, engage directly with customers, and build strong, loyal communities.

The success stories of Olai Shop, KiKi Collection, Creamy Creation & Creamy Cafe, and Dream Style Beauty Parlour illustrate the transformative potential of social media for WMSMEs. By strategically using these platforms, WMSMEs can significantly increase their visibility, customer base, and revenue streams. This contributes to the sustainable development and empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, fostering economic growth and cultural preservation.

However, challenges such as limited resources, digital skills gaps, and connectivity issues in certain areas still exist. Addressing these challenges through training programs, support networks, and enhanced infrastructure will further empower women entrepreneurs to leverage the potential of social media for business growth fully. By continuing to embrace digital tools, WMSMEs can ensure their businesses not only survive but also thrive in the ever-evolving digital market.

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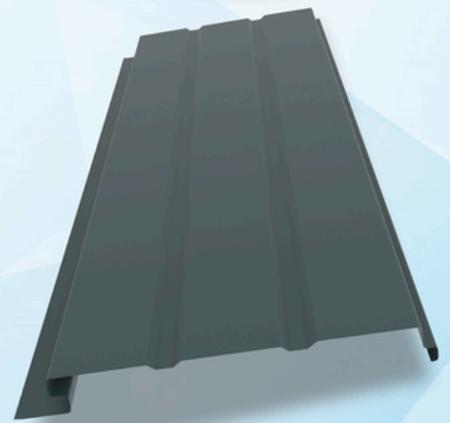
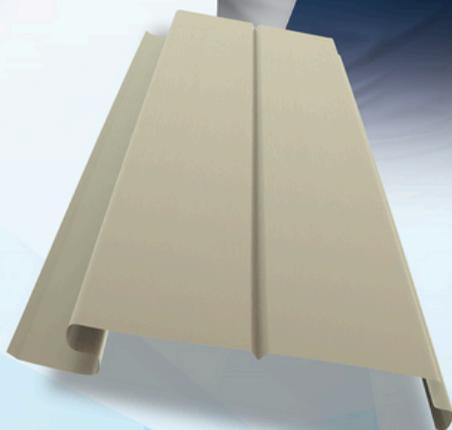
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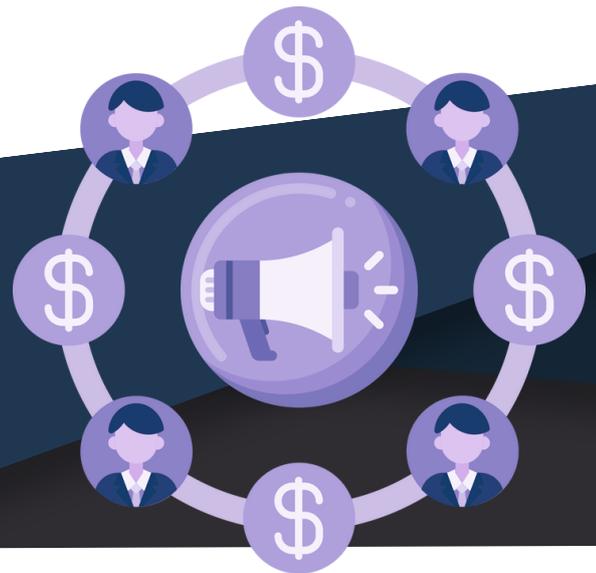
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Important modern factors that Sri Lankan Marketers

have to consider to implement marketing strategies in a dynamic business environment



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As Sri Lankans, we are currently in a period where accurate decision-making is of utmost importance, and this applies equally to Sri Lankan marketers. A few years ago, marketing strategies primarily focused on analyzing common internal and external environmental factors to adjust integrated marketing plans accordingly. However, the landscape has drastically changed since the 2019 Easter attack, a situation further intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020. This turbulent environment persisted through 2021 and 2022. Additionally, inefficiencies, lack of long-term planning, and corruption culminated in Sri Lanka being declared bankrupt in 2022.

In this context, success depends on how businesses interpret the environment, make sound decisions, and transform threats into opportunities during these turbulent times. Therefore, Sri Lankan marketers must consider several modern factors within this dynamic environment to effectively implement integrated marketing strategies. While marketing has always required anticipating change, today it demands continuous adaptation to rapidly evolving and diverse models.

Let us now examine some of the key modern factors that Sri Lankan marketers need to consider and explore.



Interconnection of the supply chain with marketing

This is an ideal time for marketers in Sri Lanka to focus on the supply chain. While Supply Chain Management and Marketing have traditionally been discussed separately in business forums, these two concepts are closely interconnected—like twin brothers.

Currently, it is evident that business experts in Sri Lanka are highlighting the challenges farmers face in selling and distributing fruits and vegetables across different regions. According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the government purchased more than 900,000 kilograms of vegetables in 2020 to address such issues. During certain seasons, farmers often struggle to sell their produce, especially when there is an oversupply of items like pumpkins. Therefore, it can be argued that Sri Lanka needs to develop suitable value-added products supported by effective marketing strategies.

However, a significant issue remains: maintaining an updated food balance sheet for Sri Lanka. It is alarming that approximately 550,000 metric tons of vegetables and fruits are wasted annually due to post-harvest damage, resulting in a national loss of over Rs. 67 billion, according to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. This highlights the urgent need to better align the supply chain with the national marketing plan.

Continuous change requires adaptation

Continuous changes in tax rates, prices, and other key economic indicators are observed daily in the Sri Lankan economy. Therefore, it is essential for marketers to remain vigilant around the clock. For example, if the government announces an anticipated increase in gas prices for the following week, a bakery business must adapt its pricing strategy accordingly. This may also require adjustments to the distribution and promotional strategies, and in some cases, even segmentation and positioning strategies—always with a focus on ensuring the long-term sustainability of the business.

Indigenous marketing

When examining the evolution of marketing in Sri Lanka, it becomes evident that around three decades ago, marketing was considered a “luxury product,” primarily utilized by the branded segment of customers. It was largely inaccessible to the general public. As a result, there is now a pressing need to make marketing knowledge more widely available, incorporating best practices that are suited to the Sri Lankan context. It is essential to study the country’s best indigenous practices and adopt marketing strategies that align with local culture and values—developing what could be called our own Sri Lankan marketing methods. A notable example of this is the way Sunquick has been positioned not just as a beverage, but as a gift. This approach draws on local cultural insights, such as the traditional belief that a crow (a “kaputa”) calling from a plant in front of the home signifies the arrival of guests—a belief known in Sinhala as “Kaputu Sastraya.” This cultural nuance was creatively transformed into a marketing concept known as “Thegi Dena Sastraya” (the art of gifting), illustrating how deep local understanding can be leveraged to craft meaningful and effective marketing campaigns.



Understanding the political situation of the country

Unlike in the past, it is crucial to stay informed about new political developments both within the country and abroad. Sri Lankan marketers must be politically sensitive when forming opinions about the future. As Aristotle argued, a person is a “political animal,” and it is necessary to go beyond that “political animal” description and observe how certain political decisions may have an impact on the business and its target marketing, segmentation, and client profile. In the current period in Sri Lanka, if a person is a good marketer but “politically blind and not sensitive,” then they may face numerous challenges in the long run.

Concept of Anthropology in Marketing

In the current business landscape and the post-pandemic environment, it is crucial to recognise that what business professionals believe consumers want can be entirely different from what consumers actually need. This gap should be understood from an anthropological perspective. Marketers should have different lenses to read customers. If a business views a customer only through the lens of a marketer, the business can satisfy the customer. Hence, companies must read the customer by using the lens of an anthropologist to delight the customers. Delighting the customer is a more advanced concept than simply satisfying customers, because delighting is about delivering benefits to customers that exceed their expectations from the business or the product.

To achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, marketers must focus on delighting customers more effectively than their competitors. In Sri Lanka, a new challenge has emerged: the need for marketers to evolve from traditional roles into modern “Anthro-Marketers”—professionals who integrate anthropological insights into marketing strategies. Organizations can play a key role by training their marketing staff to apply anthropological principles in their marketing efforts.

It is often observed that marketing education and communication are predominantly delivered in English, which is commendable. However, it is also important to provide and disseminate marketing knowledge in Sri Lanka’s native languages—Sinhala and Tamil—particularly for local entrepreneurs. Global research has shown that learning in one’s native language significantly enhances creativity and imagination. Therefore, initiatives should be undertaken to teach and train marketing practices in Sinhala and Tamil.

There is a pressing need for scholars and experts in the marketing field to collaborate and explore the concept of “Indigenous Marketing” in Sri Lanka. Such efforts would help marketers understand and apply culturally rooted best practices, ultimately leading to more effective and locally relevant marketing strategies.





Online consumer segment

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, selling products like women's skirts online in Sri Lanka was challenging. However, this situation has changed significantly, and today, online business appears to be a practical and viable option for almost any product in the country. That said, marketers must be creative in how they present and position their products to the target audience. Additionally, it is essential for them to be well-equipped with digital marketing tools to remain competitive in the evolving marketplace.

Business Know How

In Sri Lanka, there is growing discussion around the importance of soft skills. These are typically defined as including competencies such as communication, language proficiency, and ICT skills. However, to remain competitive in today's market, possessing business know-how—or business sense—is equally essential. Marketers, in particular, must demonstrate strong imaginative power, emotional intelligence, and creativity. They need to develop the ability to sense and interpret the business environment effectively. In this critical period, Sri Lankan marketers must cultivate business acumen to make informed and strategic decisions.

Conclusion

Marketing is fundamentally about providing solutions to customers and creating value. In light of Sri Lanka's current turbulent situation, it is essential for Sri Lankan marketers to broaden their thinking and adapt their strategies accordingly. The factors mentioned above not only pose challenges but also present valuable opportunities for positive outcomes in the months and years ahead. Moreover, it is crucial to focus on Sri Lanka's unique context and extend support to those in need during this critical period. All professionals must unite in the effort to build a better future for the next generation. By embracing these modern dynamics and transforming them into actionable opportunities, we can implement more effective and sustainable marketing strategies that contribute to national progress.

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*The Rise of Sustainable
Marketing Among*
**SRI LANKAN
CORPORATE BRANDS**



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In recent years, the global movement towards sustainability has gained significant traction, and Sri Lanka is no exception. The island nation is seeing an increasing number of corporate brands embracing green initiatives and sustainable marketing practices. These efforts not only reflect a commitment to environmental stewardship but also resonate with a growing segment of eco-conscious consumers. This article examines how Sri Lankan corporate brands are adopting green practices, with a focus on a local Boutique Hotel as a prime example of sustainable luxury.

The Shift Towards Sustainability in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, with its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, is uniquely positioned to lead by example in sustainable development. The country has been grappling with the impacts of climate change, deforestation, and pollution, prompting both the public and private sectors to take action. Corporate brands are increasingly recognizing the importance of sustainability, not just as a moral imperative but as a strategic business advantage.

Sustainable Marketing: A Growing Trend

Sustainable marketing involves promoting products and services in a way that not only highlights their benefits to consumers but also emphasizes their positive impact on the environment and society. For Sri Lankan brands, this approach includes adopting eco-friendly practices, reducing carbon footprints, supporting local communities, and being transparent about sustainability efforts.

Leading the Way: Ravana Garden Boutique Hotel

Located in the scenic coastal town of Nonagama, Ravana Garden Boutique Hotel epitomizes the fusion of luxury and sustainability. This eco-resort has become a benchmark for sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka, showcasing how high-end hospitality can harmonize with environmental conservation.



Eco-Friendly Infrastructure



Ravana Garden's commitment to sustainability begins with its infrastructure. The hotel is constructed using locally sourced, sustainable materials that blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings. Solar panels provide renewable energy, while rainwater harvesting systems ensure efficient water use. The resort's design maximizes natural light and ventilation, reducing the need for artificial lighting and air conditioning.

Waste Management and Recycling

Effective waste management is a cornerstone of Ravana Garden's operations. The hotel employs a comprehensive recycling program, segregating waste into organic, recyclable, and non-recyclable categories. Organic waste is composted on-site and used to enrich the hotel's organic gardens, where vegetables and herbs are grown for the kitchen. This closed-loop system minimizes waste and supports sustainable agriculture.

Supporting Local Communities

Ravana Garden is deeply committed to supporting local communities. The hotel sources produce, seafood, and other supplies from nearby farmers and fishermen, ensuring a fair income for local families. Additionally, the hotel employs local staff and invests in their training and development, fostering economic growth and social enhancement in the region.

Conservation and Biodiversity

The hotel's location in the Rekawa Turtle Sanctuary area underscores its dedication to conservation. Ravana Garden actively participates in local conservation efforts, such as beach clean-ups and turtle protection programs. Guests are encouraged to engage in these activities, raising awareness and fostering a deeper connection with nature.

Guest Experience and Education

Ravana Garden offers a unique guest experience that emphasizes sustainability and environmental responsibility. Eco-tours, nature walks, and cultural excursions educate visitors about local ecology and traditions. The hotel's restaurant serves organic, locally sourced cuisine, reducing food miles and promoting healthy eating. By integrating sustainability into every aspect of the guest experience, Ravana Garden cultivates a culture of environmental consciousness among its visitors.

Other Notable Green Initiatives in Sri Lanka

Other Sri Lankan corporate brands are also making significant strides in sustainable marketing and green practices.

**Dilmah Tea**

Dilmah Tea, one of Sri Lanka’s most renowned brands, has long been a pioneer in sustainable agriculture. The company’s “tea with a purpose” philosophy emphasises ethical farming practices, environmental conservation, and community support. Dilmah’s tea estates are biodiversity hotspots, home to numerous species of flora and fauna. The company also invests in reforestation projects and watershed management, ensuring the sustainability of their tea plantations.

Dilmah’s MJF Charitable Foundation exemplifies the brand’s commitment to social responsibility. The foundation supports various community development initiatives, including education, healthcare, and livelihood programs for marginalised groups. By integrating sustainability into its core values, Dilmah remains a leader in ethical business practices.



MAS Holdings

MAS Holdings, a major player in the global apparel industry, has embraced sustainability as a key component of its corporate strategy. The company’s “Sustainability 2025” vision outlines ambitious goals for reducing environmental impact, including achieving zero landfill waste, promoting water conservation, and achieving carbon neutrality.

MAS Holdings has implemented numerous green initiatives across its manufacturing facilities. These include the use of renewable energy sources, advanced water recycling systems, and sustainable raw materials. The company’s innovative “eco-innovation” approach drives continuous improvement in sustainability performance, setting new standards for the industry.



Jetwing Hotels

Jetwing Hotels, a leading hospitality chain in Sri Lanka, has integrated sustainability into its operations and guest experiences. The company’s “Jetwing Eternal Earth Programme” focuses on environmental conservation, energy efficiency, and community engagement.

practices, such as solar power, biogas production, and wastewater treatment. The chain's flagship property, Jetwing Vil Uyana, is built within an artificial wetland, providing a habitat for wildlife and promoting biodiversity. Jetwing's commitment to sustainability extends to its social initiatives, supporting local artisans, educational programs, and healthcare projects.



Hela Clothing

Hela Clothing, an apparel manufacturer, has made significant efforts to incorporate sustainability into its production processes. The company's focus on circular fashion involves designing products for longevity, using recycled materials, and promoting recycling and upcycling initiatives.

Hela Clothing's factories are equipped with state-of-the-art technology to reduce energy consumption and minimise waste. The company also prioritises fair labour practices and community development, ensuring a positive impact on both the environment and society.

The Future of Sustainable Marketing in Sri Lanka

The increasing adoption of sustainable practices by Sri Lankan corporate brands is a promising trend that reflects a broader global shift towards responsible business. As more companies recognise the value of sustainability, we can expect to see continued innovation and collaboration in this area.

Consumer Demand for Sustainability

One of the primary drivers behind this shift is the increasing demand from consumers for sustainable products and services.

Today's consumers are more informed and conscientious about their purchasing decisions, favouring brands that demonstrate a commitment to environmental and social responsibility. This trend is particularly strong among younger generations, who prioritise sustainability and ethical practices

Regulatory and Policy Support

Government policies and regulations also play a crucial role in promoting sustainability. In Sri Lanka, initiatives such as the "Sri Lanka Sustainable Development Act" provide a framework for integrating sustainability into national development strategies. Corporate brands that align with these policies are better positioned to contribute to the country's sustainability goals.



Technological Advancements

Advancements in technology are enabling more efficient and sustainable business practices. Innovations in renewable energy, waste management, and supply chain transparency are helping companies reduce their environmental footprint. Additionally, digital marketing tools and data analytics enable brands to communicate their sustainability efforts and engage with eco-conscious consumers effectively.

Conclusion

Sri Lankan corporate brands are making significant strides in adopting sustainable marketing practices and green initiatives. From the luxurious, eco-friendly experience offered by Ravana Garden Boutique Hotel to the ethical business models of Dilmah Tea and MAS Holdings, these brands are setting an example for others to follow. As consumer demand for sustainability continues to grow and as technological and regulatory support strengthens,

the future looks bright for sustainable marketing in Sri Lanka. By embracing green practices, Sri Lankan brands are not only contributing to environmental conservation but also helping to build a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

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