

**Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists**

MARKETING THE GOSPEL IN THE INDIAN BAZAAR

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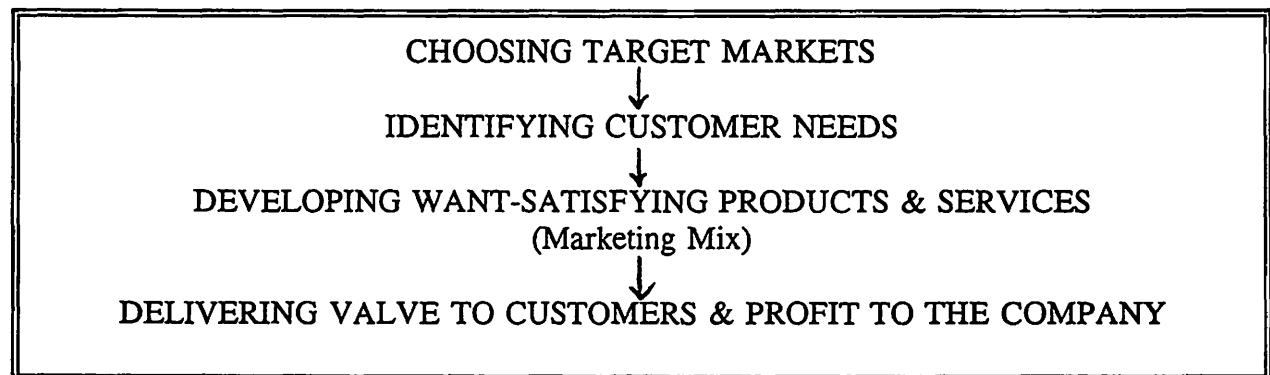
INTRODUCTION

Marketing the gospel in the Indian Bazaar is an attempt to communicate modern and relevant marketing techniques that can be used for evangelism in the Indian Context. We are living in an age where all human endeavors are consumer driven and marketing oriented. People are surprised to find how broadly applicable marketing is. According to Philip Kotler the internationally recognized marketing Guru, "Marketing is relevant not only to manufacturing companies, wholesalers, and retailers, but to every organization. " Lawyers, Accountants, Physicians, Management Consultants and clergymen are increasingly using marketing ideas to expand their practices. Colleges, hospitals, museums, performing arts groups and even churches are turning to marketing in the face of low or declining demand for their services. No politician can get the required votes, no resort area can get the needed tourists and no churches can harvest souls in desired numbers without developing and carrying out marketing plans. I would firmly state that evangelistic efforts would certainly lack the much required punch if it does not have a definite marketing plan.

Definition of Marketing

Marketing consists of a set of principles for choosing target markets, identifying customer needs, developing want satisfying products and services, and delivering value to customers and profit to the company - Philip Kotler. From the given definition we can arrive at a four step process of marketing any product. The four steps are given below.

Table 1
PRODUCT MARKETING PROCESS

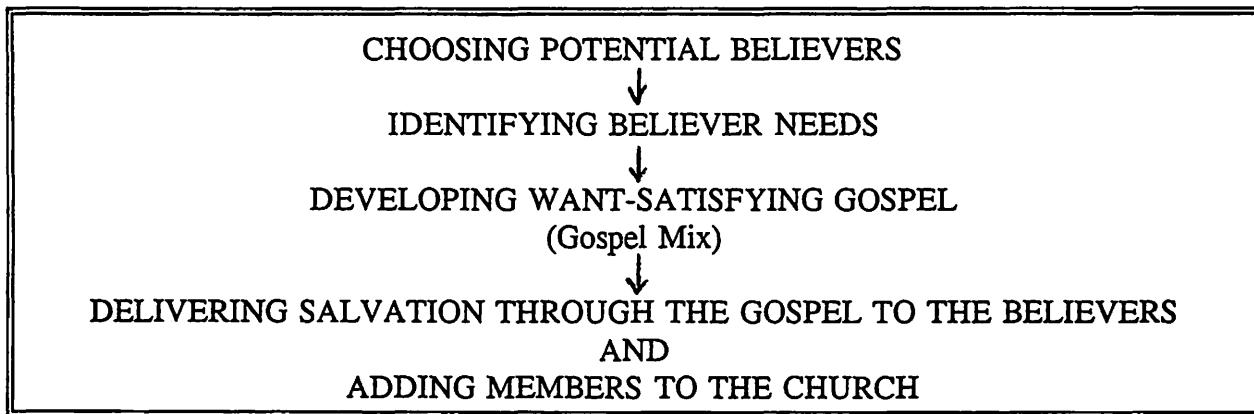


Defining Gospel Marketing

A definition of evangelism from a marketing perspective would read something like this. Evangelism in marketing terms involves choosing the Potential believers (target market), identifying believers' (customer) needs, developing a want-satisfying gospel (Product) and sharing (delivering) salvation (value) to believers (customers) and harvesting members (profit) for the church (company).

Table 2

MARKETING THE GOSPEL



Justification of the Nomenclature Used

Having defined the Gospel marketing concept it becomes imperative for me to justify the use of marketing nomenclature to describe evangelistic efforts.

Firstly, I'm fully cognizant of the fact that the gospel is the testimony of Jesus Christ and can not be equated to a mere product. Further I also realize that evangelism has two major dimensions, the divine and the human. The divine dimension being far more weightier than the Human.

Table 3

DIMENSIONS OF EVANGELISM

Nature	Human	Divine	Nature
Quality	Imperfect	Perfect	Quality
Impact	Feeble	Powerful	Impact
Influence	Localized	Pervasive	Influence
Time	Finite	Infinite	Time

The scope of Gospel Marketing is limited to the human dimension of evangelism. This is so, because we recognize that the Divine dimension which is the major player in all evangelistic efforts is beyond our realm of investigation and control. I am also cognizant of the fact that the human dimension is an instrument of divine agency. The human dimension is man's response to the gospel commission.

Secondly, Jesus used similar imagery and metaphors to describe evangelistic efforts when He invited fishermen to become His disciples he said, 'come, I will make you fishers of men'. If Jesus were to invite businessmen to be his disciples he might have said, 'come, I will make you marketers of Gospel.' Therefore in the world of business the metaphor will change from 'fishers of men' to 'marketers of Gospel'.

THE BAZAAR ENVIRONMENT - DYNAMICS OF THE CONTEXT

As Christians who believe in the Gospel commission we must understand that the universality of the Gospel does not undermine the realities of the context. What I am saying is this, the Gospel is universal but it's application and appeal is contextual.

Just as a farmer has faith in the latent vitality of the seed we as Christians believe in the universal relevance of the Gospel. Further, just as the farmer studies the season, weather and atmospheric realities before he plants the seed we need to understand the dynamics of the context in which the Gospel will germinate and bear fruit.

Tables 4 presents the basic environmental forces operating in the Indian Bazaar. It also lists the impact of these forces on the people and describes the needs generated by the impact. A need is a state of felt deprivation of some generic satisfaction arising out of the human condition. Needs are deficiencies that an individual experiences at a particular point in time. The deficiencies may be physiological (eg., a need for food), psychological (eg., a need for self-esteem), sociological (eg., a need for social interaction), or spiritual (eg., a need for hope in eternal life). Needs are drives that initiate and sustain human behavior in general and the gospel accepting behavior in particular. The table 4 indicates the forces at the macro level which form the basic structure of the Indian World View.

BASIC FORCES IN OPERATION

Table 4

Forces	Impact	Need
Pluralism in all spheres	Communal strife	Harmony
Poverty	Disparity Depravation Oppression	Emancipation Fulfillment Liberation
Illiteracy	Ignorance Lack of Awareness	Education Awareness

Continued Table 4

Forces	Impact	Need
Immobility	Stagnation Complacency	Interaction Dynamism
Over Population	Break down of Values Struggle for Survival	Building Values Subsistence
Caste System	Fatalism Karma	Equality and Acceptance
Ritualistic Spirituality	Meaninglessness of Spirituality	Meaningfulness of Spirituality

Table 5 presents the market specific forces that influences people. Consumer needs and disposition that these forces create are also mentioned in the table.

MARKET SPECIFIC FORCES

Table 5

Forces	Impact	Need
Cost Sensitivity	Strong Socio Cultural bonds	Social Cultural Security
Consistency	Identity with Brand Loyalty	Identity Irrespective of Brand Switching
Vastness Leading to Chaos	Lack of Systematized Value Decisions	Systematized Value Decision Context
Fear of Change	Cultivating Barriers to Anything New	Overcoming Fear
Consumer Inertia	Slow Growth Tradition Bound	A New World View
Nonstandardized Product	Distrust	Comprehensive Warrantee
No Consumer Oriented Marketing	Cessation of Relationship After Sales	Consistence After-Sales Service
Scarcity	High Price	Affordable Product

Table 5 indicates the forces that affect the conversion decision pattern of an individual. Table 4 and 5 indicate forces operative in the macro and micro environment of the Indian Bazaar scenario.

The potential believer due to forces beyond his control always experiences its impact which leads to needs yet to be met. This implies that the gospel must be so designed and packaged so as to take into consideration all the needs of the consumer the potential believer. These marketing principles have to be incorporated in offering the gospel in the Indian Bazaar. These forces define the gospel acceptance (buying) behavior of the people. These forces operating in the Indian Bazaar make it complex, unique and ambiguous. These forces define the 'Needs' of the people. They define the wants, demands, aspirations, struggles, drives, motives and compulsions of people.

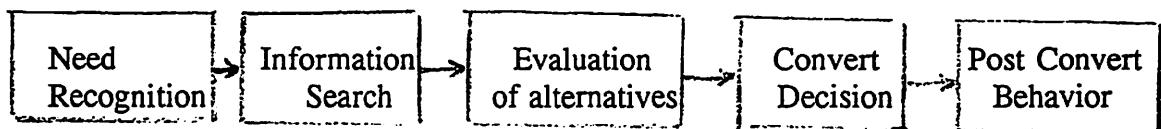
UNDERSTANDING GOSPEL ACCEPTANCE/CONVERSION PROCESS FROM A MARKETING POINT OF VIEW

The unfulfilled needs and unanswered questions will result in the search of the sacred and the divine. Of course, God has already revealed himself through his testimonies and has made the first move to restore the broken relationship through the redemptive plan. Man too makes a feeble attempt to reach out to God. Man is on the look out for a conversion experience that will fulfill his spiritual needs and answer his unanswered questions.

We need to understand the different stages a potential believer goes through in becoming a convert. The figure given below shows the five stages a potential believer may go through in becoming a convert. The model emphasizes that the gospel acceptance process starts long before the actual conversion decision and has consequences long after the conversion.

Table 6

CONVERSION PROCESS



Need recognition: Need when reaches a threshold level becomes a drive which is a powerful motivating force. Need for Gospel could arise from the following:

- Desire for the divine and the sacred
- Crises and personal problems
- Induced need from friends, teachers, pastors, evangelists, parents, media etc.
- State of confusion, disturbance, disillusionment
- Uncertainties of life and death, present and future

Information search: Once the need is recognized and felt by the individual he is in a state of tension which causes him to search for information about different religious faiths, cults, spiritual activities and denominations that may help him to reduce the tension that he is experiencing. The following information sources may be considered.

- Personal sources - family, friends, acquaintances
- Experiential sources - personal experiences, events etc.
- Public sources - mass media, TV, news papers etc.
- Evangelistic sources - pastor, evangelist, preacher etc.
- Academic sources-teachers, lectures, seminars etc.
- Published sources-books, magazines, publications etc.

Evaluation of alternatives: After having gathered information about different religions and faiths a potential believer will want to evaluate them to make a judgement and a decision regarding the philosophical validity and spiritual value of each. The following bases may be used for evaluating the different brands of religion.

Bases for evaluating different brands of Religion

- Ability to answer life's basic question
- Lifestyle promoted
- Coherence in what is taught and what is practiced
- How much will I have to give up? The cost aspect
- Nature of Doctrines in concordance or in conflict with the present beliefs
- Perceived returns from having accepted the faith
- Perceived spiritual returns
- Brand image of the Religion or denomination
- Unique selling proposition USP of the religious group

Convert Decision: After having evaluated the different brands of religions and faiths that are available for consideration a potential believer will decide which brand of religion he must accept and affiliate himself to. In his final decision he may be influenced by the following.

- Attitude of others towards the brand of religion that is being considered by the potential believer
- Unanticipated situational factors

Post Convert Behavior: After having accepted a particular brand of faith the new convert will evaluate whether his decision was right or not. The new convert will face disturbances, uncertainties and anxieties which in marketing terms is called consumer dissonance. The new convert will try to bring down the level of dissonance by looking for information and experience that will justify his decision. It is the duty of the church to provide information and the much needed experience that will help the convert to make such a justification.

The post conversion behavior of a new believer may be as follows

A. Satisfied behavior which will result in

- Faith reinforced
- Positive witness
- Testimony
- Interest in spiritual matters

B. Dissatisfied behavior which will result in

- Leaving the church
- Back sliding
- Negative witness
- Disinterest in spiritual matters

In understanding how potential consumers make purchase decisions we need to understand the nature of the product we are marketing. The product could be a high involvement purchase or a low involvement purchase.

Table 7
Types of Purchases

HIGH INVOLVEMENT

Example:

Life Insurance Schemes

Characteristics:

- Expensive
- Infrequently Purchased
- High Risk
- Much Information Required
- Complex Buying Behavior

LOW INVOLVEMENT

Examples:

Toilet soaps

Characteristics:

- Inexpensive
- Frequently Purchased
- Low Risk
- Less Information Required
- Routine Buying Behavior

The gospel is a high involvement product in the Indian Bazaar because it embodies the characteristics of a high involvement product. Therefore, the conversion decisions is a result of a highly complex buying behavior. The Gospel must be marketed with great care and intelligence because conversion decisions are highly complex.

THE GOSPEL ADOPTION PROCESS

We define Gospel Adoption as the mental, emotional, behavioral and spiritual process of transformation which an individual goes through from first hearing of the gospel to the final conversion.

Table 8 **Stages in the Gospel Adoption Process**

AWARENESS
The person becomes aware of the Gospel but lacks necessary information about it
INTEREST
The person is stimulated to seek information about the Gospel
EVALUATION
The person considers whether it would make sense to try the Gospel
TRIAL
The person tries the Gospel in a small scale to verify its real value
ADOPTION
The person decides to make full and regular use of the Gospel

CHOOSING POTENTIAL BELIEVERS BY USING MARKET SEGMENTATION TECHNIQUES

We must recognize that it is not always possible to appeal to the entire population at the same time with the same Gospel package. Therefore there are 3 options available to us.

Option 1 - Mass Marketing- One product for all buyers. Here you hope to appeal the entire population of India in all its diversities by a single 'Gospel Package.'

Option 2 - Product differentiated Marketing - Two or more products for different market segments. In this option you identify distinct groups of potential believers in India who are homogeneous in some ways and develop different 'Gospel Packages' aimed at these distinct groups of potential believers.

This option operates on the assumption that different potential believers have different 'Gospel Needs'. The Gospel may be so packaged so as to suit the needs of different groups of people in all of India.

Option 3 - Target Marketing - One product for a single segment of the market, 'ignoring' the rest of the market at least for the time being. Here the Gospel is so designed and packaged so as to appeal to a distinct group of potential believers who are homogeneous in some ways. Here you do not give the Gospel a Universal Appeal rather you give it a Segment Specific Appeal or a Group Specific Appeal.

In option 1 and 2 you serve the entire population. However, in option 3 you direct and focus your efforts to one segment of the population which in your opinion is the most attractive and presents the best opportunity.

In my opinion option 3 (Target Marketing) is the best approach to market the Gospel in the Indian bazaar. This is because

a) The Indian population of 900 million is too massive for Mass Marketing. You will require a tremendous infra-structure and colossal resources to adopt this approach.

b) Mass Marketing option would require a very basic Product (Gospel) with practically no unique selling proposition USP so as to have a mass appeal. Therefore, there can be no focus marketing which will ultimately lead to a situation where the product has no distinct identity.

c) Option 2 Product differentiated Marketing would require the development of a range of differentiated "Gospel Packages" aimed at different target groups. This could lead to split or Plural identity of Gospel which can be confusing and misleading.

d) Target Marketing uses direct concentration and narrow focusing of efforts to an identified group of potential believers described as the target. This acts as a force multiplier. Evangelism and religious recruitment can become very effective when this approach is used. The North American Division of Seventh Day Adventists use Geocoding which is a new technique for identifying the best Market Target. This strategy was identified by the Church in the North American Division Marketing Program, Vol.1: Profiling Adventist Members and Baptisms, Published in mimeograph form, 1986.

Segmenting the Indian Bazaar for Marketing Religion

Segmentation is the act of dividing the potential believers into distinct homogeneous groups who might require separate Gospel Packages or Gospel Mixes. The Great Indian Bazaar of 900 million potential believers can be best segmented by using the following bases.

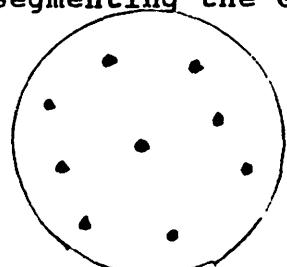
Bases for Segmentation:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| a) Religion | e) Residence Locality |
| b) Caste | f) Age |
| c) Income | g) Language |
| d) Education | h) State |

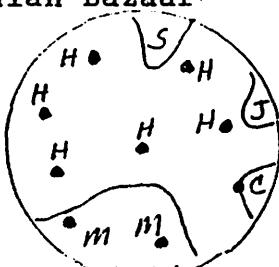
A diagrammatic representation of the segmented Indian Bazaar is given in table 9.

TABLE 9

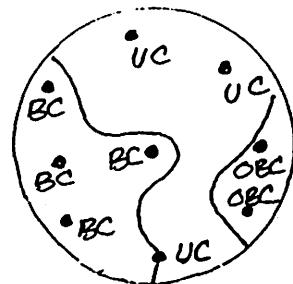
Segmenting the Great Indian Bazaar



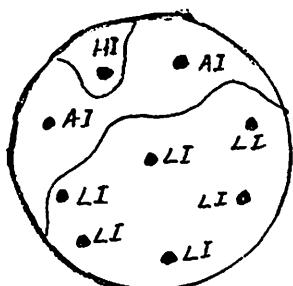
The Great Indian Bazaar of potential believers 900 million (each dot representing 100 m)
Unsegmented Bazaar



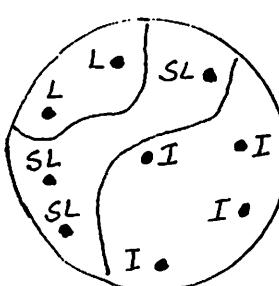
Segmentation on the basis of Religion
H-Hindu
M-Muslim
C-Christian



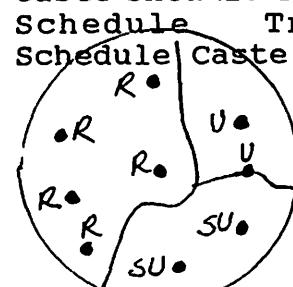
Segmentation on the basis of caste
UC-Upper Caste
OBC-Other Backward Caste
BC ST SC-Backward Caste Schedule Tribe Schedule Caste



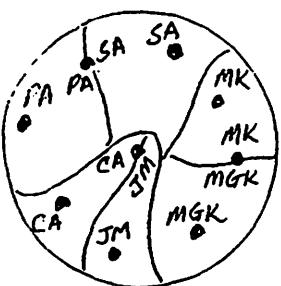
Segmentation on the basis of Income
HI-High Income
AI-Average Income
LI-Low Income



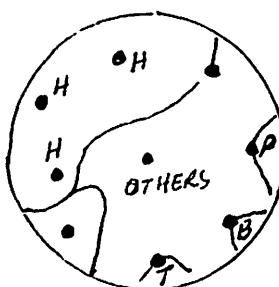
Segmentation on the basis of Literacy
L-Literate
SL-Semi Literate
I-Illiterate



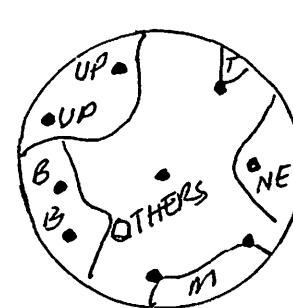
Segmentation on the basis of Residence Locality
U-Urban
SU- Sub Urban
R-Rural



Segmentation on the basis of Age
PA-Primary Age
SA-Secondary Age
CA-College Age
JM-Just Married
MK-Married with Kids
MGK- Married with grown up kids



Segmentation on the basis of Language
H-Hindi
T-Tamil
P-Panjabi
B-Bengali
NE-North Eastern Languages (Mizo, Khasi, Naga etc.)



Segmentation on the basis of State
UP-Uttar Pradesh
B-Bihar
NE-North Eastern State
M-Maharashtra
T-Tamilnadu
A-Andhra Pradesh

SELECTING TARGET MARKETS.

In selecting the target markets to enter we need to consider the following:

- (a) Size of the segment
- (b) Opportunities in the segment.
- (c) The churches ability to serve the specific needs of the targeted segment.
- (d) Threats and opposition that may arise
- (e) Anticipated response of the target groups
- (f) Baptism potential
- (g) Infrastructure and resource requirements to serve the target segment

Example of a Target Market

Table 10

Target Definition:

Religion	Caste	Locality	Age	Language	State
Hindu	Backward	Rural	Secondary Age	Hindi	Uttarpradesh

Target Market Analysis

The defined target market can be analyzed objectively by determining its attractiveness in terms of soul wining by using a model given below.

Table 11

CRITERIA		VALUE	RATING		
	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	FAIR	POOR
SEGMENT SIZE					
OPPORTUNITY					
ABILITY TO SERVE					
ANTICIPATED RESPONSE					
INFRASTRUCTURE & RESOURCES					

For value rating assigned 5 points for excellent, 4 for good, 3 for average, 2 for fair, 1 for poor. You can compute the average score for a given target market for the purpose of comparison with other target markets.

PROFILING THE POTENTIAL BELIEVERS

Having a profile of your target group is very useful. It tells who you are dealing with. What their needs and wants are ? What issues shape their World View ? And what approach will appeal to them the most?

Table 12

PROFILING FEATURES	FACTOR DESCRIPTION
AGE	
OCCUPATION	
EDUCATION	
STATE	
CASTE	
SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND	
LIFE STYLE	
ATTITUDES	
BELIEFS	
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION	
SEX	

IDENTIFYING BELIEVER NEEDS

Having profile the potential believers we can identify the specific needs of the target group. This is possible after a careful and diligent qualitative study by a team of dedicated researchers. The performa given below can help us tabulate the specific needs of a defined target group.

Table 13

NEED AREAS	NEED DESCRIPTION	STRENGTH OF NEED
SPIRITUAL		
SOCIAL		
ECONOMICAL		
INTELLECTUAL		
PSYCHOLOGICAL		

The strength of each need can be subjectively assessed. This helps in designing the dominant appeal (whether emotional or rational) for the gospel package. Based on these needs the gospel package will be designed and tailored.

DEVELOPING WANT-SATISFYING GOSPEL

Once we have identified the needs of the potential believers we go ahead to develop a want satisfying gospel. A want is something specific that has the ability to satisfy a given need.

EXAMPLE:

Table 14

State of felt deprivation	Need	Want
Hunger	Food	Maggi Noodles
Cold	Warmth	Imported Black Leather Jacket
Distance	Conveyance	Maruti 800 White AC
Lack of meaning in life	Religion	SDA

Needs are generic in nature. They may be physiological, psychological sociological or intellectual. These needs are not created but are a basic part of human makeup. Wants on the other hand are something specific which satisfies a given need. Customers are very particular about their wants. They want specific satisfiers of need. For example, when a person is hungry he needs food but may want only maggi noodles to satisfy his hunger. If he gets a plate of rice and dal his need may be satisfied but not his want. He in a way is still hungry.

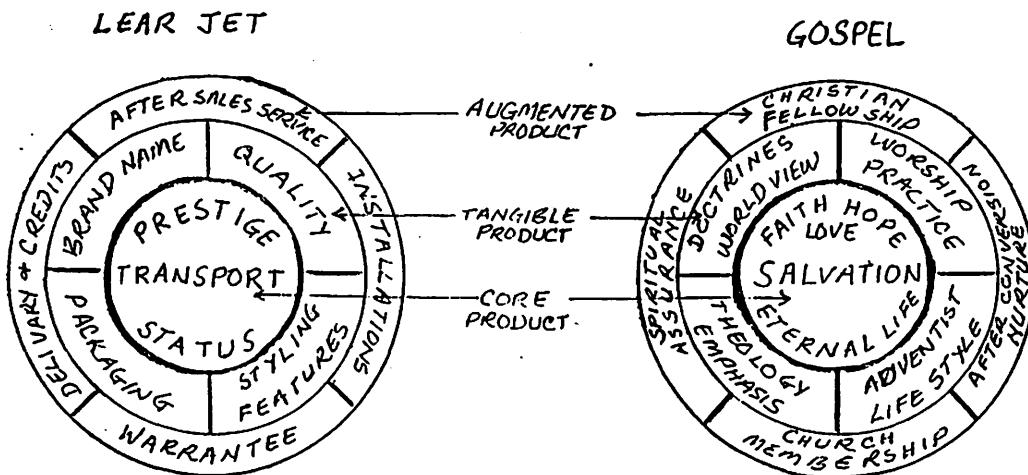
Therefore, it is necessary for us marketers of religion to realize that it is not enough for potential believers to need religion they must want the brand of faith we SDA's have to offer and share.

GOSPEL PACKAGE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The greatest challenge before the church is to design a gospel package that will appeal to the target segment and address to their specific needs. Great care must be taken in designing the gospel package. Great expertise are required to undertake this crucial and important function. To begin with we must understand the different aspects of a gospel package. The gospel is made of the following essential features and spheres.

Table 15

Gospel Package Structure



Non Negotiable Core: This is the most fundamental level of the product. When a business tycoon buys a leer Jet he buys more than a plane he buys luxury travel and status. When a women buys lipstick she buys more than lip color, she buys attention. Like wise when a person accepts the gospel he buys more than a religion he buys hope. The core of gospel, the ultimate value which it offers is salvation, hope and ever lasting life. This is the non negotiable core. The gospel to be the gospel must offer this core value.

Controllable Variable: This is also known as the tangible product. This is the part of the gospel which embodies the non negotiable core of the gospel. It is that part of the gospel that the potential converts can readily see, feel, experience and evaluate. The tangible product features are described as controllable because they can be manipulated and variable because they can change. The changes and manipulations, however, must be such that the core value which the gospel offers is not affected. It is important to note that these changes and manipulations can only be made within certain parameters that are defined by the divine. Infringement of these parameters may lead to the dilution of the core benefit that the gospel offers. This perhaps is the most sensitive area in the gospel package development process.

Augmented Product: The additional benefits that the gospel offers and the services which are at the periphery of the product structure are known as augmented product features.

Gospel Mix: It is a set of controllable variables of the gospel that the church puts together to serve a target believers. The elements of the gospel mix are as follows.

- a) World View
- b) Doctrines
- c) Worship Practices
- d) Life Styles
- e) Theological Emphasis

The church puts these elements in a definite package which can be offered to the potential believers for religious recruitment and conversion. The church can vary these elements of the gospel mix within certain parameters and can arrive at different gospel mix packages. In fact the basic idea is to tailor-make gospel mix packages that will appeal to an identified target of potential believers. This idea of tailor-made gospel mix packages operates on the assumption that different groups of potential believers may have different gospel needs.

DELIVERING SALVATION TO THE BELIEVERS AND MEMBERSHIP TO THE CHURCH

Once the gospel package is designed it must ge delivered to the believers. Various channels of distribution can be used to take the gospel where it can be easily availed of and readily consumed.

Existing Channels of Distribution. The church uses its global organizational network to distribute the gospel. Institutions and organizations like schools, colleges, churches, hospitals, health food businesses, publishing houses, ADRA and IMEWS, EG White estates, geo science institutes and Biblical research institutes are channels of gospel distribution. Seminars and

workshop are also agencies of distribution. Our institutions are doing well in many areas, however, my lament is that we haven't produced enough of vernacular literature and have yet to publish a best seller.

Promotion and Public Relations. Along with the distribution the church must also undertake a well designed promotion campaign. The promotion must be so design that it appears balanced and credible. One sided arguments, 'competitor bashing' and 'mud slinging' are often viewed as propaganda and as lacking in credibility. Promotion can be used in the following forms.

- a) Advertising which is a non personal mean of communication by an identified sponsor.
- b) Personal selling which uses personal contacts
- c) Testimonial which are personal experiences expressed in a public forum.
- d) Publicity which involves 'planting news' items in various medias

I will not advocate the uses of sale promotion techniques which involves the use of inducement, incentive and gifts to allure the potential believers. Promotional techniques that may be very effective in the Indian Bazaar are identified are as follows.

- a) Testimonials by prominent people like film stars, politicians, patriarchs, cricketers etc.
- b) Street plays are a proven means of gospel promotion
- c) Short Video films will have a great impact because of its wide acceptance
- d) Personal contacts and social networking is by far the most effective means of gospel promotion
- e) Outdoor media such as billboards and messages painted on buses and vehicles are powerful agencies in India.

Although the Gospel is Free Christianity is Accepted at a Cost. Finally, the potential believer before making a conversion decision will always consider the cost. More so in the Indian Bazaar were consumers are overly concerned about the price. A potential believer in the Indian Bazaar will consider the following costs in making the final conversion decision. The

Costs Incurred in Accepting Christianity.

- a) You stand to loose your caste
- b) Privileges given by religious and personal laws may be lost
- c) You stand to loose the 'reservation' privileges
- d) Careers which involves working on sabbath have to be sacrificed
- e) Family ties are broken in cases of ostracism
- f) You stand to loose your identity which is so firmly grounded in the culture, heritage and ethos of the land
- g) Compulsions to find a job in the denomination which may be less paying and frustrating
- i) May call for changes in life styles that have become fixed in a persons individuality.

CONCLUSION

What matters is what a person stands to gain and not what he stands to loose. As marketers of the gospel we must anchor our marketing strategy on this one very thing. The gospel is the Good News about christ and about salvation. The acceptance of the gospel will result in the believer receiving faith, hope, love and ultimately salvation. Marketing the gospel in the Indian Bazaar helps in achieving this goal by using modern techniques of marketing.

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