

Innovation a driver of growth

Innovation is synonymous with risk taking and organizations that create revolutionary products, services and technologies take on the greatest risk because they create new markets. The creation of new products, services and markets is the reason marketing departments exist. It is no stretch of the imagination to see where one impacts the other.

Innovations can be either evolutionary in nature, that is, they are brought about incrementally, or they can be deemed to be revolutionary, in that they are completely new and out of the box. In today's world of rapidly changing tastes, shorter product life cycles are the new normal, as the need for almost instant gratification results in constant shifts in the market. Staying ahead of the game by repositioning, retooling or creating an entirely new product line requires an abundance of innovative thinking and the resources to implement accordingly.

Innovation is defined as the process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value for which customers will pay. One of the widely accepted standards of marketing is Kotler's definition which states it is the process of getting the right goods and services to the right people at the right places at the right time at the right price with the right communications and promotion.

But just what determines "right" and how are similar goods and services distinguished from each other? More importantly, how does each brand continue to preserve and carve an even greater niche out of an ever increasingly crowded market space?

The world is filled with imitators who manage to do well for themselves. However, the real rewards are reserved for those who stay ahead of the game and are always re-inventing.

Certain industries by their very nature dictate that all of the players who chose to be involved must be rolling out new technologies or adaptations every few months. Telecommunications providers, software developers and car manufacturers speak for themselves.

There are other sectors which while not being headline news on an almost daily basis, are bringing new and exciting products to market, some of which are addressing critical issues. The Economist has recognized the two enterprises listed

below for their innovative ideas that have been successfully marketed across the world:

Envirofit is one example of a social enterprise designing, producing, and selling efficient, durable and affordable cooking stoves that create environmental, health, and social impacts for homes and institutions in developing nations. It has developed a compact stove that reduces indoor pollution by cutting smoke, toxic emissions, biomass consumption and cooking time compared with traditional designs. Envirofit has sold more than 650,000 stoves in more than 40 countries.

Embrace and its partner organization, Embrace Innovations work to improve maternal and child health to the world's most vulnerable populations. It has developed a low-cost incubator to reduce neonatal deaths in the developing world. More than 20,000 babies in a dozen countries have benefited from its design, which is similar to a sleeping bag.

While using innovation to address pressing economic and social issues has birthed the age of the social entrepreneur, long established enterprises continue to remain relevant by constantly finding new ways to remain connected to their customer base, even as they expand their reach and attract new customers. The Dutch beer giant Heineken has proven itself to be adept at constantly growing and improving with each of its imported brew branding innovations.

To celebrate its 140th anniversary in 2013, the company collaborated with French companies Lowdi and Ed Banger to create the Heineken x Lowdi x Ed Banger speaker box. This beer box houses a bottle of Heineken that was designed by the team at Ed Banger, and features a built-in speaker system designed by Lowdi that is able to produce serious sound in a small case. This has been considered to be a significant achievement in collaboration history. Heineken has helped to connect the two French based companies to create an interesting way to sell not only beer, but an entire entertainment system.

Becoming a diversified economy can only be achieved when companies begin to think of the benefits that can be derived from adopting innovative strategies throughout the entire marketing process.

