



MarkAdZ

THE MARKETING CLUB OF IIM V



VAKTAVYA

GUEST LECTURE REPORT



**“BEHIND THE BUZZ:
TRUE STORIES OF MARKETING HITS
AND MISSES”**

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OVERVIEW

The Marketing Club of IIM Visakhapatnam (MarkAdz) hosted a riveting guest lecture on the **13th of September 2024**, delivered by **Mr. Vikas Gupta**, Founder of **9.9 Group**. The session was titled "**Behind the Buzz: True Stories of Marketing Hits and Misses**" and offered deep insights into the real-world challenges and successes that marketers face. As an experienced entrepreneur and marketing professional, Mr. Vikas shared valuable lessons derived from his hands-on experiences in the industry.

ABOUT VAKTAVYA

Vaktavya is a series of leadership talk hosted by the business cluster of IIM Visakhapatnam. It is a series featuring industry leaders and domain experts who share their insights and perspectives on the latest trends and developments in business.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mr. Vikas Gupta is a respected marketing maverick with a rich experience of about 38 years in global marketing and leadership roles. His name is associated with some of the most reputed brands like **Unilever, P&G, Yum!** He served as Senior VP and CMO **Coca-Cola**, and now the founder and leading member of 9.9 group, a content driven media company.

It was an honour for IIM Visakhapatnam and MarkAdz along with the Business Cluster to host Mr. Vikas. From the different campaigns to some eye-opening marketing insights, the session was filled with fun, energy and interactions.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SESSION

The guest lecture was a case-based approach where Mr. Vikas walked us through a wide range of real-life cases on which he has worked during his professional journey. Before going to the case studies, he intrigued us with one question – “What is the most marketed product”. It’s surprising to know that the answer to this is “**Religion**”. It has all elements of marketing like Marketing mix, brand ambassadors, packaging etc. With this we moved on to discuss cases.

CASE HIGHLIGHTS

Ariel

- Ariel was imported from Japan and introduced to the Indian market in a more concentrated form, packaged in a smaller box compared to popular local detergents like Surf Excel.
- The price point of Ariel was notably higher than other Indian detergent powders. Due to its concentration, one Ariel box equaled three Rin bars.
- To understand the Indian consumer better, the company conducted market research, observing the traditional three-step washing process that many Indian households follow.
- They then invited women to experience Ariel firsthand in a laboratory setting, where they could test its effectiveness.
- Although these women were impressed by Ariel's superior performance, they hesitated to purchase it, fearing that the simplified washing process might make them appear lazy and less dedicated to their families.
- In response, the company repositioned Ariel's marketing strategy, focusing on the dynamic between Mother-In-Law and Daughter-In-Law, a narrative that resonated strongly with consumers and proved successful.

Learnings:

- **Focus on consumer needs**
- **Needs are both functional and emotional**

Thumbs Up

- Thumbs Up strategically positioned itself as a bold, strong cola, aligning its brand with the concept of strength.
- The brand specifically targeted teenagers, tapping into their desire to emulate adults and project an image of strength.
- As a result, many teenage boys and men began shifting away from Pepsi, perceiving it as a sweeter, more childlike beverage.
- This led to the creation of the memorable tagline, "Grow up, taste the thunder," emphasizing maturity and intensity.
- This positioning effectively turned Pepsi's perceived strength—its sweetness—into a disadvantage in the market.

Learnings:

- **Leverage accepted consumer beliefs**
- **Convert competitor's strength into their weakness**

Price vs Value

- Coca-Cola launched a captivating advertisement set against a rural Indian backdrop.
- The campaign centred around the Rs. 5 price point for Coke, with a strong emphasis on the number 5. The ad, featuring Aamir Khan, was expertly crafted, but it faced a setback due to high local sugar prices at the time. Since bottlers were facing a loss, Coke had to sell the product for Rs. 6—one rupee higher than advertised.

- As a result, consumers were unwilling to pay the additional cost, forcing Coca-Cola to wait for the ad's impact to fade.

Learnings:

- **Market your product, not the price**
- **Price should not be the sole unique selling point of your product**

Hertz vs Avis

- Hertz was the market leader among car rental companies, with Avis holding the second position.
- Avis cleverly capitalized on its runner-up status by embracing and marketing itself as the best in second place.
- The company launched impactful taglines such as “**Avis is the only number 2, we try harder,**” “**Avis cannot afford not to be nice,**” and “**Avis can't afford to make you wait,**” which resonated with consumers.
- Over the course of three years, this campaign proved highly successful, allowing Avis to surpass Hertz by gaining an additional 10 share points.

Learnings:

- **Accept and Leverage your situation**
- **Invest in effective messaging and branding**

Losing to Win

- When Coca-Cola entered the Kazakhstan market, it faced competition from a local favorite, Khvas.
- Khvas, a drink made from dry, fermented bread, was known for its unpleasant taste and odor.
- Despite its unappealing flavor, the people had a strong emotional connection to Khvas, stemming from its association with the Soviet era.
- As Coca-Cola had no presence during that time, consumers were reluctant to switch to a new beverage.
- The key takeaway from this case is that "competition is not always linear," as emotional ties can often outweigh product quality.

Learnings:

- **Real problem could be different from what is perceived**
- **Choose your battles wisely**

Challenge Status Quo

- P&G identified that sanitary pads were poorly marketed, with women feeling uncomfortable even asking for them at stores, where they were often discreetly wrapped in newspapers.
- Challenging this conventional approach, P&G began purchasing display spaces in retail stores and pharmacies to give the products more visibility.
- They also took the initiative to educate shopkeepers about how the product works, even providing demonstrations.
- To better understand the needs and challenges of their target audience, they conducted outreach programs at women's colleges.
- As a result of these efforts, Whisper became the leading brand in the market, surpassing competitors like Carefree and Stayfree.

Learnings:

- **Question the given**
- **Educate and Engage**

Buying Roles

- In a food court setting, where leading competitors like Domino's, McDonald's, and KFC are located side by side, KFC observed fewer customers compared to the other two.
- The primary reason was KFC's strong association with non-vegetarian food, causing groups with vegetarian members to opt for outlets that offered more visible vegetarian options so they could dine together.
- KFC had placed its vegetarian menu far from the entrance, which contributed to the issue. To address this, they simply relocated the veg menu closer to the entrance.
- This small change led to a significant increase in customer footfall, resulting in long queues at KFC.

Learnings:

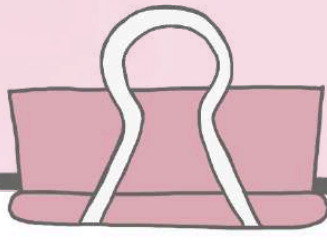
- **Strategic Placement Matters**
- **All customer needs must be considered**

These were some of the many influential marketing strategies that were shared by Mr. Vikas Gupta during his talk.

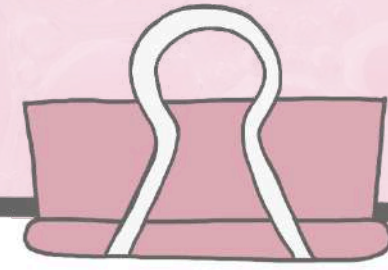
CONCLUSION

Mr. Vikas Gupta's session was a treasure trove of insights and practical knowledge. His candid sharing of real-world experiences, both triumphs and setbacks, provided students at IIM Visakhapatnam with a comprehensive understanding of marketing. The session equipped students with the tools and mindset necessary to excel in the dynamic field of marketing.

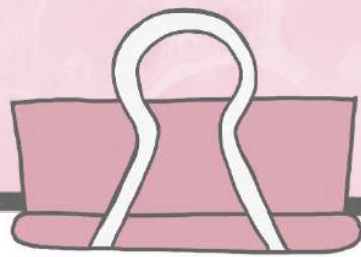
STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



“Loved the session today! thanks for organising it.
Great job Mark Adz!!”



“The session was incredibly insightful and packed with engaging case studies that offered practical learning about marketing. Each discussion left us with valuable takeaways and fresh perspectives that I can't wait to apply!”



“Fell in love with marketing and learnt so many insights on the other side of marketing that we never would have thought of!!”



“Although I come from an entirely different background, I understood the concepts in great depth”

GALLERY

