

How Did Maggi Build The Habit Of Eating 'Noodles' Among Indians? -The Success Story



If “Xerox” is for Photocopiers, “Colgate” is for Toothpaste, then “Maggi” is for Noodles. — Economic Times, 2003

When Maggi was banned for a short time, there was more “sadness” than “Anger”. Looking at the messages of consumers, it appeared that Consumers were owning the brand than the ‘brand’ owning the consumers. How could a foreign brand establish such a cult following? How could Maggi establish such a strong Emotional Connect? How could a product like this break the traditional behaviour of consumers in 1980s? Any product trying to interrupt a traditional behaviour would face a massive resistance as users are naturally frightened by change. The users would always prefer to maintain the ‘Status Quo’.

“Maggi is the leader because it is constantly improving its understanding of the consumer to give them excellent and tasty products that provide nutrition, health, and wellness.” — *Martial Rolland, chairman, Nestlé India Ltd., in 2006.*

The ENTRY

In the year 1882, in Switzerland, Julius Maggi launched Maggi Products mainly to serve working women, who were left with little time to cook food due to ‘Industrial Revolution’. Almost, 100 years later, in 1982, Maggi Noodles were launched in India, targeting the same segment of working women. Their positioning was a “Convenience Product” and an alternative for Meals and Dinner.

The easy way to enter a consumer’s mind is “Being First”. Maggi created

a new category called “Instant Noodles” in consumers mind and had a first mover advantage in India.

CHALLENGES

Nestle believed that Maggi had a high “Utility(Taste)” factor, which would help in penetrating the market. Unfortunately, Nestle faced with difficulty in selling after the initial phase. They were unable to enter the minds of Indian Consumers as Rice and Roti have occupied a strong position.

Maggi was not competing against any competitor products, but against consumer’s traditional behaviours.

Nestle understood that spending huge money on advertisements would not change the consumer’s mind. They decided to do detailed research to understand Indian consumers.

IDENTIFY A BEHAVIOUR WITH LEAST RESISTANCE

During observational research, Nestle found out that people were not comfortable to substitute Maggi for Lunch or Dinner, as they preferred rice, roti and traditional foods for these routines. There is huge resistance to change this behaviour.

Jager Wender says, “It is not the frequency of behaviour that determines the strength of a habit, but the degree to which the behaviour has been automated and is being performed without cognitive elaboration”.

Nestle saw that the behaviour is more automated for lunch and dinner, hence the habit is too strong to break. So, the company started looking for occasions, where habits would be weak as this process of change might be relatively easy to initiate.

Nestle identified “Evening Snacks” where User Behaviour is not strong towards any particular solution and at the same time, there were options for evening snacks, but those options had prominent problems.

They also observed that when children came home in the evening after school, they were generally hungry and women had to cook something fast and give them. (Evening Snacks). The mothers were facing a problem here and it was a major pain point.

When Nestle looked at “Snacks” category, the pain points became

obvious

- “Ready to Eat” bought out items like biscuits, Packed chips etc... -Consumers generally prefer to make it in at home than buy “Ready to Eat”
- Homemade snacks were consuming a lot of time, which was not practical to do every day, particularly tough for working women.
- Snacks from outside vendors were considered unhealthy

RE-POSITIONING from a User’s Perspective

Nestle after User research and Market research, figured out that “Maggi” has to be promoted as “*in-between*” meals product and an alternative to “*Evening Snacks*”

Nestle also identified that Children liked the taste of Maggi Noodles. So, Nestle changed the target segment from Working Women to “ Children”. They were the ones who were ready to accept tasty food(*Their behaviours are not strong yet like adults*), compared to older people who were still reluctant and attached to their habits.

“Maggi has managed to enter Indian homes to change the traditional food habits of Indian children on their promise of convenience. This brand has understood the psychology of Indian mothers and positioned itself for mother-child indulgence.” Business Week, a prominent business magazine, in 2006.

BUILDING CUES

CUE is needed to actuate a behaviour, and the Cues are of 2 types — External and Internal.

- Maggi's advertisements of "Mom, I'm Hungry and Mom says "Bas 2 minute" on TV acted as a huge external trigger
- "2 minutes cooking" added a huge convenience factor, functioned as an internal trigger
- Nestle had leveraged its existing distribution channels and made Maggi noodles available in all nearby stores, thereby increasing the external visual cues.
- Nestle distributed free trial packs in schools further to trigger the children
- Utility Factor— Delicious Taste, which acted as an Internal Trigger to make people Crave more.
- Emotional Connect— Children, their hunger and happiness in meeting their needs.
- Maggi sponsored "Hum Log" a popular television show in Doordarshan

ABILITY

People are generally resistant to learn or train new things if they are comfortable with their existing behaviour. To make users change or adopt a new behaviour, it is very important to make the product as simple as possible.

Simplicity means that a user needs less effort, time, money, cognitive effort to do the activities to achieve the goal and at the same time, those activities need no or less training and they are familiar with those activities.

- Maggi's 2-minute cooking tagline shows that working women can save TIME and EFFORT
- Maggi's TV "2 min Video" ads showed how to cook noodles— Consumers saw that there are only 2–3 steps in cooking, and those steps are very *simple, familiar and easy* to implement. It doesn't demand any *special skills*— another driving factor.

- Familiarity— India is known as the land of masala and curries. Nestle launched the masala Flavours (a taste consumers are familiar with), which was instrumental in making the brand a success.

Easy to Use and Easy to Learn are important elements in making an user to use your product/service

- Consumers could see that there is *no Cognitive visual load* in using the product since it doesn't involve remembering anything, process etc...
- Consumers also realised that Maggi noodles will use fewer *resources* and also it uses

readily available resources.

- Trying out any new thing, some of us generally have a “*Fear of Failure*”. TV ads removed the fear completely, as it appeared very simple.
- Maggi launched small packets and made sure that the packets are affordable so that consumers will try. Remember, Maggi was not sold at a cheaper price in the 1980s compared to other products, but then they came out with smaller packets, and the cost of those packets were affordable for many potential consumers. When the cost is high, there will be resistance to try out a new product.
- Easily availability of products due to strong distribution channels of Nestle

REWARD

What is a Reward? Why is it important? How does it feel when a person receives a reward? A reward is a reason, why people will repeat your behaviour. A pleasant experience is a reward. When he or she experiences intense feelings of pleasure, the reward circuitry is activated in the brain – with dopamine(neurotransmitters) carrying the message.

Due to Dopamine release, Our brains like us to repeat things that we enjoy – like eating a good meal. That’s why a little child often shouts “again!” when you do something to make her laugh.

- When you review user messages of Maggi, one factor stands out – “DELICIOUS TASTE” – More than eating, it is Craving to Eat is a major pleasure. This craving is a reward and acts as an Internal Trigger too.
- Nestle gave gifts when consumers returned empty packets – An extrinsic reward. The gifts included Utensils, toys focusing on the target segment. Gifts are based on the number of packets you return – Before you know about the reward programme, you have already earned one empty packet cover, if you have bought one or got it free.
- When you come home tired, there is a pleasure to feed your child quickly – A psychological, intrinsic reward.
- Faster, you reach your goal(sense of accomplishment) is also a reward – ‘2 minutes of cooking’ tagline
- Nobody is going to change his or her behaviour for short term gains – If the product is going to affect health in the long run, people may not adopt the product. Nestle was careful not to use “Ready to EAT” words in its promotion. Their tagline was “Fast to cook, Good to Eat”
- Consumers also seek out rewards which their peers have achieved, a social obligation, acceptance – Nestle targeted children of Upper Middle class and Upper Class where Social Proof is high, where the idea can spread faster.

RE-INVENTION

Your product would stand a chance for rapid market penetration if you could let the user modify/innovate/customize the product to meet their slightly variable needs, thereby improving its overall compatibility and quality. If there is scope for re-invention, product's usage would increase and cater to a variety of needs of customers, as India itself a diversified country.

Example—The housewife could be creative and add her own variation to the recipe by adding different vegetables to the noodles.

CONCLUSION

For Maggi's success, there are other factors too like Consistency in taste, Brand Value etc... which is not covered in this article. References— Books by Nir Eyal, BJ Fogg, Stephen Wendel and Everett Rogers.

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[21 KEYS to SUCCESS in BUSINESS -A Guide for Every ASPIRING ENTREPRENEUR by Shah Mohammed M.](#)

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