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A BHR Interview with Marc Mazodier, Professor, ESSEC Business School

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About the Author



Marc Mazodier is Professor of Marketing and Head of the Department at ESSEC Business School in Cergy, France. He teaches Marketing Management, Brand Management, and Marketing Research courses in the master's in management, Executive, MBA, and Ph.D. programs.

He also holds the ESSEC Beauty Chair sponsored by the Estée Lauder Companies, International Flavors & Fragrances, Marionnaud, and CY Initiative of Excellence. His academic research focuses on brand management and marketing communication efficacy. His work has been published in collective volumes and leading academic journals such as the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, and the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.

In addition to his academic work, Marc has consulted companies from various sectors. He is an Affiliate Researcher at the SAMS Institute (Sales & Marketing Strategy Institute). Marc has delivered numerous marketing research seminars in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. He received his Ph.D. at the Aix-Marseille Graduate School of Management.

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Bonjour, Marc. How would you define a successful marketing initiative, particularly for a lifestyle or experienced-focused brand or service (such as hospitality or any industry that services people)?

I still find the Apple marketing philosophy from the 80s relevant. Marketing is first about understanding consumer needs, then satisfying these needs thanks to a suitable offer, and making target consumers aware of the offer's benefits. For instance, Club Med All Inclusive Ski Holidays is a good marketing initiative. Wealthy parents look for a comfortable, kid-friendly place to spend their ski holidays. They want something convenient. Therefore, they are willing to pay a high price for an all-inclusive and luxury offer that includes an attractive kids' club. To the best of my knowledge, Club Med was the first to offer this kind of service and is still perceived to be the best to offer this service worldwide.

What are some of the essential elements of a successful marketing effort, that you feel are often overlooked, ignored, or not effectively executed?

I think the two ends of the marketing process are sometimes poorly executed. First, market research is often not well done. I still see poor surveys, experiments (A/B testing) or unreliable social listening. Managers should better understand the threats to market research validity, such as inappropriate samples, endogeneity, social desirability, demand artifacts, missing data, inappropriate experimental design or inaccurate reporting. There is nothing worse in business than making decisions based on misleading information.

At the end of the marketing process, I noticed the role of salespeople is undervalued. I have lived in many countries and have traveled extensively. I was very surprised to meet poorly trained salespeople who did not know the brand well and did not deliver the service promised by the brand. The importance of people is well-established in hospitality. However, recruitment and turnover are major challenges for hospitality companies in Europe nowadays.

Are there any European brands or companies you've observed as strong marketers? Can you share examples?

I could mention all the European luxury brands, but they would tell you they “do not do marketing.” L'Oreal is obviously a strong marketer. They spot trends constantly and activate them effectively. L'Oreal uses an AI-powered tool to detect new trends and inspire innovation.

I'd also like to mention [Gilles Henry](#) 1, He is not the typical marketer, but he understands the needs of consumers very well. He created the Yoyo trolley for kids, which changed the lives of millions of parents (including me). It was lighter, smaller, and more convenient than other trolleys. He also created the [Bastille bicycle](#), the first true foldable bicycle. In my opinion, strong marketing is when innovation meets consumers' needs.



"Bastille is the first full-size, high-end bicycle that folds in seconds and that can be brought anywhere," according to creator Gilles Henry.

Are there any "innovations" in marketing that companies should capitalize on? Do they already? or why don't they?

Artificial Intelligence. I prefer the term, "machine learning," the elephant in the room. Few companies leverage the potential of AI in marketing. Furthermore, most companies rely on external suppliers like Artefact or Accenture to help them. I think companies should hire more people who understand AI (how it works, its limitations, and its capabilities) even if they work with consulting companies to develop new projects. AI can help forecast trends and identify opportunities, generate ideas to develop new offers based on these opportunities, and create ads, posts and messages that are timely and relevant to reach the right consumer with the right message at the right time. AI is also useful for chatbots, ticketing, and customizing customer experience in a shop, restaurant or hotel, and many other marketing activities. Companies should capitalize on AI; some have already started, but they need to invest more in AI experts internally. And I've observed that it is challenging for many companies for different reasons. The first one is the lack of talent, which becomes expensive.

Is there anything you'd like to add as we think about "innovative marketing?" To ensure a product or service sets itself apart from others in a very noisy and crowded world of information distribution and social channels?

Customization, relevance, simplicity, and creativity are key. Never forget that consumers do not pay attention to commercial messages. Average consumer exposures are less than one second to online and outdoor ads, less than two seconds for print ads, and the average viewer only pays attention to 7.7% of TV commercials. In

other words, viewers gaze at 30-second commercials for only 2.3 seconds on average. Therefore, marketers must either achieve their communication goals in very short exposure durations or persuade consumers to pay more attention to ads. To achieve the first goal, marketers must focus on simplicity, clarity, and consistency. It is doable to positively impact brand awareness, salience, and familiarity in less than one second, but target consumers must be able to recognize the brand and the offer. To achieve the second goal, consumers will watch longer ads if they are customized, relevant, and creative.

References

1 Gilles, H. (2023, December 4). On a roulé avec le bastille, vélo pliant français à grandes roues. Transition Velo. Retrieved 2024, from <https://www.transitionvelo.com/velos/velos-pliants/on-a-roule-avec-le-bastille-velo-pliant-francais-a-grandes-roues/>

- Gilles Henry is a specialist in folding innovation and a low-tech entrepreneur, based in Paris. He is the creator and co-designer of the YOYO stroller, which has become a worldwide bestseller and revolutionized the baby industry with its unique design and magic folding. The YOYO was launched in 2012 by the French brand BABYZEN (now acquired by STOKKE). Building on the success of YOYO, and after 9 years of R&D, Gilles is currently launching BASTILLE, a brand of very innovative full-size city bicycles.