

PERFUMERY AND MARKETING

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IN connection with Marketing, it has been said, and truly said, that the fundamental problem today is not producing but selling. This does not mean that the purpose of marketing is to dispose at great expense of superabundant stock accumulated without discernment, or to bring about the production of goods that are unfitted for the market situation.

It must be clearly realized that marketing is not confined to the organisation of sales, even after market research and whatever other means may be employed. True marketing consists in "intellectualising" and "orientating", by justifying them, all the operations from the creation of the product to its consumption by the satisfied customer. This implies that the person responsible for marketing must be capable both of conceiving the product and of understanding why it pleases or does not please, so as to know why and how to alter his conception, if needs be. If all these conditions are satisfied, marketing will play its part, which is to make a product take that share of the market which it deserves and not to introduce it as a mediocre, unwanted product. Marketing is therefore the instrument of permanent adaptation to market structures and needs, i.e. it is the organ of continuous change, starting with its own.

The priority granted to commercial exigencies has resulted from the ease of producing in large quantities and at low prices articles which are likely to be purchased by the masses as a means of mopping up available cash. The aims pursued are not therefore derived from social preoccupations, as is apparently suggested by those who claim to act solely in the customer's interest.

In high-class perfumery, which appeals to a smaller public, but one

By studying to what extent and under what conditions the concept of Marketing might be applied to perfumery, the advantages and excesses associated with such a concept are demonstrated. Marketing tends at times to become a State within a State and its less tenable theories, if disregarded, could be of serious consequence to our profession, or indeed to any other artistic enterprise.

A distinction must of necessity be made, both for now and the future, between "la belle Parfumerie", which involves the marketing of the beautiful, and industrial perfumery, which in its different categories makes an appeal of its own to the masses.

When judgement is involved, the stress is upon *competence*, which must be at the basis of all decisions made in the domain of fine perfumery, for without it the latter would be practically condemned to failure. Such professional competence should be present even and especially when marketing policies are under consideration.

Some reflections follow on the aggressiveness of man, and the paper concludes with suggestions on the training of future directors in the field of fine perfumery.

whose judgement is more reliable, whose taste is more finicky, the optimum commercial yield will be obtained when the trader recognises the primary importance of creation, of a quality creation. In certain domains of industry, business leaders who have received appropriate training may be in a position to interpret the needs of a market, which might thus have expressed them itself, had it been able to do so; and then to study its motivations and finally understand and analyse the causes of success or failure. In the perfumery business, however, everything is quite otherwise, for those responsible for sales, and their directors, are only able to observe or assess success or failure. This is the more true if the perfume has been composed outside the firm. In any case the product, in its very

form, eludes scientific analysis, so that it is not possible in the present circumstances to judge it objectively. All those who are not parties to the actual conception of the product are therefore materially unable to establish a valid and circumstantial correlation between the actual concept and its success or failure. They cannot therefore validly exert an influence on a creation whose live wires they do not possess, any more than they can, without the assistance of the actual creators, effectively influence consumers and introduce them to a new style and new techniques, which must give rise to fresh needs; needs which by the very nature of the products at stake the market cannot express clearly and still less anticipate. The study of non-suspect motivations for this reason becomes very difficult and the test method a source of errors or misunderstandings followed by setbacks, as has occurred only too often.

LIMITS OF MARKET RESEARCH

Modern techniques of motivation, prospecting and sales promotion, as set forth, among others, in the

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excellent work by H. Joannis¹ may with some precautions of which I shall speak later on, be applied to the perfumery market. The principal reservation relates to the choice of the product which cannot in this case and in the present state of our knowledge, be the direct outcome of market research. The latter aids rather in discovering what should no longer be done than in suggesting a positive policy of product creation, which depends on the talent of the actual creators. If they have any, the product will have a chance of pleasing, but if not, there will sooner or later be a failure, in spite of all promotional efforts.

The "need" of a perfume consumer is to be able to have a good perfume. If we make a good perfume, the consumer will be satisfied. If instead of asking the creator to make a good perfume (which is his business if he has talent) we ask him to make a perfume like this or like that because, we assert, such are the needs of the market, the creator will no longer be able to base himself on the normal criteria of creation and he will then only be able to carry out deceptive work, which will infallibly disappoint. We shall only have, at best, an industrial publicity yield based momentarily on our reputation, which will suffer in consequence. The talent of the bewildered creators, who lose faith and confidence in themselves, will suffer no less. This explains, through the imprudence of the promoters, the stifling of talent for the benefit of risky theories.

Where do our interests lie? I admit that we should start from the customer, in order to orientate direction to our publicity and our sales system—but not to choose the perfume for sale.

Starting from the market that we are studying, it is desirable that the choice should be the result of scientific decisions, but in reality the latter are purely empirical. In the matter of experience, I prefer that of men belonging to the perfumery trade or profession, for the choice will then be based on the competence of one or more men in connection with the article or articles for sale. It is understood that this competence is the outcome of years in the trade in conception, manu-

facture and exploitation. If we confess ourselves powerless to detect such competence or to inspire it, still less can we expect to discover the needs of a Sphinx-like public. If such competence has become scarcer and scarcer, who is to be blamed if not those who, by thinking they could dispense with it, have dried up the source?

The choice can sometimes be based on the search for a hiatus between demand and supply. To us, the hiatus is the difference between a very good perfume and any other perfumes existing on the market. Therefore our aim will be: a very good perfume. To say: we must sell what we have made, is an attitude that is certainly outmoded and obviously disastrous when what we have manufactured is poor or out of date, but what is the case when it is good and new? How do we define what is good, what mediocre? This, I repeat, is a matter for competence, which is able to decide what is good, what is useful and what is new by using, as it should be capable of doing at this level, market research and motivational studies.

We disclaim wishing to influence the prospective customer, but everything takes place as if, feeling powerless to inspire the perfume and even to judge it, the easier line is adopted of conditioning the public to a more or less dubious product, which promotional ingenuity will endeavour to make it think a good one.

However clever publicity may be, it will not make a perfume be judged good if the public thinks otherwise, but it can take advantage of those who do not yet know it. This will last only for a time. The error is that of underestimating the public's judgement and resistance. It is a mistake which the conscientious, competent and skilled composer does not commit, because he makes a point of remaining the master of his choices and never makes them without very carefully taking into account what the public's reactions have been and what he knows they will be. Why does he know? Because throughout his career he has never failed to study attentively the relationship between his productions and the reception given to them. And because he was

the only person to be able to do so at that level and draw the conclusions required.

It is possible, as Eugene Kelley thinks, that "the fact of considering his marketing organisation as a system for attaining objectives is able to stimulate fundamental reflections about problems and operations connected with the firm's marketing, and about the present and future work of commercialisation"². However, this also has the effect of enclosing the mind in this system whose prisoner its disciple becomes, and to which he believes he can refer everything. The system obfuscates thought. This may also explain the attitude of youthful and often remarkable staff impregnated with American techniques, who operate easily in the system, obtain the results which it allows, but are more or less shut off from what is outside the system. This becomes very dangerous when, as in the choice of a new perfume, the decision must refer to criteria (aesthetics, taste) which are not, and cannot be included in the system or which the latter hides. The decision then runs the risk of going in the wrong direction. This is so true that Kelley admits that the head of a firm that succeeds owes it to "a mixture of creative imagination, judgement, inspiration and vocation", as well as to "will, capacity and the manner of overcoming the doubt and scepticism of men both in industry and in his firm".³

A deviation to beware of would moreover be to consider "publicity creation" as real creation and only to see an accessory factor in the perfume. I have already noted this mutation in the mind of more than one captain of industry.

This is also due to the fact that the expression "Perfumery Industry" is an unfortunate one and that the distribution of each product in large numbers suggests that we are dealing with an industrial and commercial art. Of course our factories give the impression that we are an industry, whereas the source which feeds it—the conception of perfume—is artistic. The multiplication in millions of copies, by printers and publishers, of a musical score or a manuscript, does not mean that musical and literary compositions are industrial and com-

mercial arts. Or (if importance is attached to seeing things from that angle) all the arts have become commercial since the gramophone record, the pocket edition, the film and reproductions of all kinds, have become the widespread extension of the original that one sees today.

MOTIVES OF THE PERFUME BUYER

The mental attitude to marketing which consists in conceiving the product from the point of view of the needs of the market is justified when these needs are capable of being clearly expressed and when they relate to products that do not belong to the artistic domain. Thus every motorist can easily state what type of vehicle (of what power, capacity, colour, price, and for what use, etc.) he would like to find on the market. Motor vehicle manufacturers can therefore be perfectly informed by market research and supply the market accordingly.

When the article to be sold is a "product of art", the act of purchase obeys motives which must not be confused with those that trigger the purchase of industrial, food or commercial products. To analyse the motives of the perfume purchaser, sensitivity and training are required, comparable with those needed for understanding the behaviour of the purchaser of a drawing, painting or sculpture. I am not saying that this behaviour cannot form the subject of scientific study and analysis, which could certainly enlighten creators and salesmen; I merely say that to conduct this enquiry properly, other men, endowed and trained differently from specialists in industrial marketing are required, as the latter are, for reasons of simplification, inclined to ascribe the motives in question to those familiar to them.

As a rule the consumer is not an artist; he has only one taste: his own. Taste therefore varies appreciably from one consumer to another. But statistics show that there are families having certain tastes, who will rally to the product meeting those tastes. The artist is aware of this and when he conceives his work, at the back of his mind is the thought of satisfying a certain family of consumers, who, experience has told him, appreciate

his manner of work. His study of motivations (valid) consists of the results obtained, confronted by his hopes, his personal contacts and enquiries and by deep meditation on the lessons to be learnt from the cause/effect relationship between a certain working technique and the corresponding commercial yield.

For, with few exceptions, the artist works to sell. Less through love of lucre (he has to live) than because he likes to succeed in what he undertakes and for this he has to emerge from anonymity. The artist does not therefore set his sights on clandestine or confidential, but on commercial production, on which his reputation will be founded. He is, therefore, more than anyone else, aware of sales problems. Not to recognise this would be to overlook an important factor among those which govern a marketing policy.

Thus the artist's mind is engaged in a perpetual shuttle service between his artistic ideal (with its problems) and the reactions of his customers, whose purchase or refusal, better than long speeches, provides him with information about his audience. There is forged between artist and the public a permanent link, which is invisible to third parties and which no market enquiry reveals, accompanied by exchanges of subtleties that cannot be described but with which the artist's personality is enriched. In our profession he is therefore the one who best applies not the letter, but the spirit of marketing.

Being a man like other men, living in society and in close contact with it, the artist finishes, when he has talent, by playing the part of a catalyst. What he feels, what he aspires to after exhausting his processes, his intense need for renewal, why should not the world in which he lives and which has so far followed him, feel this too? This is the very simple explanation of such an innovation appearing to correspond to something that the public expected. It is not the artist who has "guessed" what was going to please, it is the public which has followed the road pointed out by the man whom it has become accustomed to liking, and who leads it on a little further each time. The artist thus provides the public's education, with-

out the latter knowing it. However through its reactions, the public sanctions the artist's deviations and keeps him in his right place.

If it is true that more than 60 per cent of the products available to the housewife in the United States did not exist ten years ago, it is nevertheless true that the Ninth Symphony always fills the hall. And that dates back to 1824.

More modestly, and without claiming such longevity, the fine perfume justifies other reasoning, other treatment, than those applied to the articles used by the housewife.

PERFUMES AND CLASS DISTINCTION

The danger threatening high-class perfumery, and in particular French perfumery, will not come from the shift from natural to synthetic raw materials, for the latter will be finer than the former; nor will it come from the machines, which increase our faculties and means tenfold. The danger which threatens and tends to become reality is that of passing from fine perfumery, founded on the creative spirit of beauty, to industrial perfumery, purveyed to the masses and founded on a certain concept of the marketing spirit.

That industrial perfumery is entitled to exist is undeniable; it must even carry with it a very considerable development of research from which fine perfumery will also benefit. It would be regrettable for those responsible for fine perfumery not to be aware that too narrowly applied a spirit of marketing will in their case cause the withering of fine creativeness, without which they cannot survive.

The instinct of preservation requires here and now a distinction to be drawn between two forms of perfumery, which though they may quite well coexist on the market, provided that their products are not juxtaposed in the same shops, so that they cannot be confused in the mind of the public, must not be prepared on the same premises or in the same climate of creativity. These are:

(a) high-grade perfumery which, without neglecting profit-earning capacity, works with an eye to the beautiful; and (b) popular perfumery

(*la parfumerie de masse*), which only aims at profit. The former calls for free artistic creators moving in favourable surroundings. This does not rule out a very powerful organisation employing the latest techniques. The cleavage is between the quest for the beautiful and the quest for profit, i.e. between two philosophies, two conceptions of life.

Paul Valéry, who was far-seeing, wrote: "Only that is universal which is sufficiently crude to be so." Without taking literally this pessimistic and anti-Kantian judgement, which would be belied by the millions of admirers who have filed past all the world's masterpieces, what Valéry meant can clearly be seen, and it is appreciated that to vulgarize means precisely what it says. Now the marketing concept postulates that the "firm should recognise and consider the customer's strategic position as the determining factor of its survival and expansion"¹. I am personally convinced of this, and it is this that makes me say that the manufacturers of fine perfumes will henceforth be confronted by a choice:

(1) either to retain their brand image, maintain the quality of the perfume and only sponsor great compositions which, while more difficult to make will have a longer career and which, without appealing to the great masses, will nevertheless reach a wide clientele throughout the world; or

(2) opt for very great expansion, taking advantage of their reputation, and becoming organised for mass-acceptable perfumery, which will entail the lowering of cost prices and quality, but also that of the level of their new customers, with the serious consequence of perhaps definitely prostituting the taste of a portion of their old clientele, which has followed them along their new road. This option will entail the choice of less fine compositions, which must be turned out at a faster rate on shorter careers, being subject to the whims of a clientele whose versatility will be provoked, maintained and accentuated by the very climate of marketing.

This second option may lead to very large turnovers, but entails hazards and serious risks in connection with the difficulty of finding frequently, in

a climate of keen international competition, sufficiently valid compositions and risks relating also to sudden shifts in the clientele, furthered by the same climate.

It must be stressed that trends in world business consequent upon the first option (very fine perfumery) are far from negligible, since it is precisely their importance which has enabled our profession to attract businessmen and capital. It should also be noted that the fewer we are to choose the first option, the more our action will be facilitated.

It seems that what is important is for the manufacturers of fine perfumes to understand that it is vital for them to decide one way or another and not cherish illusions by courting two hares at the same time: quality and very high tonnage. In future there will be perfumers and perfumery industrialists, who will operate at different levels. But the former must finally realize that if they do not organize themselves to combat proliferation at their own level of mediocre perfumes, they will contribute through their passivity, by allowing their customer's taste to decline gradually, to the confusion of types and the disappearance of their own commercial standing, i.e. to the extinction of the market for what is beautiful. This would be an aim for which marketing had not provided.

Nevertheless, this is not unavoidable, and only depends on the foresight, vigilance and readiness to act of the perfumers concerned, for the potential market of lovers of the beautiful, constantly developing as a result of the double rise in the standard of living and the cultural level, is far more important than we appear to imagine. It is important for the inspirers of marketing ideas and techniques themselves to become aware of the drawbacks of applying too rigidly or inopportunistically their principles in certain domains, or in certain circumstances and to admit that these principles must bend, become flexible and even give way to others, because the very nature of marketing lies in evolution.

It does not seem, of course that this problem has been properly realized in our profession at the highest level. The sales methods used, the reasoning and the vocabulary, visibly seek

inspiration from industrial marketing but without shifting its spirit to the artistic level. Then things go wrong.

It even happens that the function of the product on sale is denatured. Starting from the premises of industrial marketing and imagining (wrongly as reality proves) that the needs of the market are known, an attempt is made to influence composers so as to make them produce what public taste is believed to want. Most composers, weak, weary or disarmed, do what is asked of them instead of expressing freely their own vision. The promoters then seize on a perfume, give it the treatment stipulated by industrial marketing and quite simply turn it into an industrial product. Thus, little by little, the fine perfume is killed and is replaced by perfumes which are not "commercial", as their promoters naïvely believe, but industrial perfumes prepared by disillusioned composers. These perfumes are therefore more and more third-rate without the promoters, who are quite unskilled in the matter of composition, being even slightly aware of this for, being impelled by intensive publicity these products, like their industrial counterparts when they are poor, may produce an illusion so that in the mind of the public, which is thus taken in, the brand image gets the better of the product image.

We thus witness careers that are of varying degrees of brilliance but which are sure to become shorter and shorter. This will discredit more and more the brand images in question and then the image of French perfumery as a whole.

This is not fiction, but a portrayal of a sad reality which distresses me deeply because I am terribly aware of it. Just as I foretold a few years ago the imminent decline of perfumes, which I then knew were enjoying false glory, I do not think I am now wrong in predicting that two or three recent commercial successes will sooner or later cause anxiety to those who have promoted them—sometimes under prestige labels. Their intrinsic quality does not seem to warrant long success.

The most deceptive fact is that, even when short, careers can be financially remunerative and that the business spirit, which sacrifices the

future to the present, exerting as it does ever more domination over our profession, and superficial calculations altering the soundest views and stifling all manifestations of taste, we run the risk of seeing the multiplication of doubtful industrial productions if no one sounds the alarm. If there remain in this profession a few men of taste who still retain the love of their calling and respect for the products they sell, I address to them the most urgent appeal to come forward, and together we will consider the steps to be taken and the action that is called for.

I cannot forbear stressing once again that technical information and the education of the public, for which I have been campaigning for so many years, would have the initial result of enabling it finally to express its wishes, i.e. to provide marketing with the kind of analysable material which it at present lacks and whose absence explains all its error of judgement in the field of perfumery. The perfume consumer can say: I like, or I do not like. That is all, and it is rather a limited statement on which to structure a motivation study or build up a policy of developing products for sale.

DISSIPATION OF EFFORT

What strikes one in studying American marketing works, which are the accepted authority on the subject, is first of all the dissipation of effort, and the multiplication of services which quite often overlap. After this has been done, individual rivalries have been noted which involve wrong manoeuvres, because orders are followed by counter-orders. This conception is a burden on the structure of firms, a burden consisting of very costly staffs and managers, whose intrigues often sap the organisation, and who are to commerce what technocrats are to technicians. It is an army in which there are too many colonels; marketing ends by absorbing all the departments and tends to become a state within a state (see diagram⁵).

An example of this proliferation of departments and managers is furnished by the "Marketing Improvement Department", which "consists of

the Marketing Improvement manager aided by the manager of the sales service and two co-ordinators. These men endeavour to determine the motivation of consumers, from which they will compile the programmes designed to improve marketing"⁶. But this is the role of marketing itself! The so-called programmes of "marketing improvement" are the actual marketing programme!

The need is furthermore felt for a new expression, "compound marketing", to denote the "combination of human means, other resources and contributions needed for marketing programmes to achieve their aims on the market place".⁷ This is again the normal function of marketing.

Another example among those which pullulate in the same work is that of "micro-marketing" (or marketing in the firm), whose four functions are: "estimation of the potential offered, planning and programming of the marketing effort, organisation and conduct of marketing activities, evaluation and adaptation of the marketing effort".⁸ On reading this, and more, in the development given of these four functions, one feels that all these words which are aligned and mingled in different ways, but which are always the same, cover actions which cannot be very different from one another and that everything is an excuse for increasing the burdens.

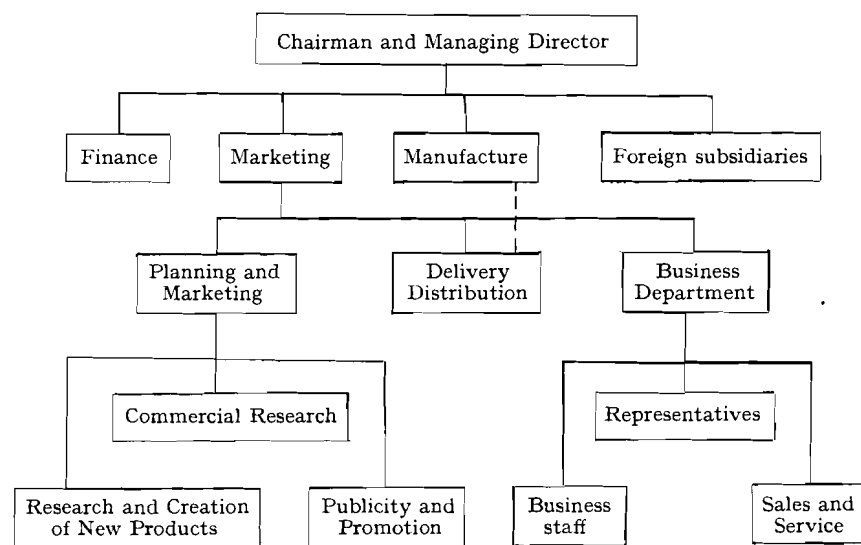
The more persons a boss has under

his command, the more important he thinks he is and he feels he can ask for a higher salary. If this plethora of commercial staffs and departments were to develop and become general, one could expect drawbacks comparable with those brought about by the abuse of bureaucracy. Let us abstain from such aberrations.

When we observe the part which the marketing manager has to play, it is realized that this is precisely the task performed long since by all competent, conscientious and well organised employers having a synthetically functioning mind and able to use foresight. Marketing, as a principle of organisation, is all right, but in the light of its abuses it appears more as a source of lucrative jobs than as a science aimed at the sole satisfaction of the customer.

WHAT OF THE BUYER?

Nevertheless, in studying the organisation of marketing, we discover in it a serious lacuna: it is concerned all the time with sales and never with purchases! Marketing, which has become practically all-absorbing, has completely overlooked the purchasing department, which is very likely considered to be a poor relation of the manufacturing department and is not even shown in the diagrammatic scheme. This is a strange underestimate of the vital importance of the purchase of raw



----- Co-ordination

The marketing concept. Orientation towards the customer

materials and the function of the buyer in every industry and especially in our own.

The buyer's role is decisive for the quality of the materials used, and therefore for the quality of manufacture, and so it is also for ensuring supplies, their regularity, constancy and above all their cost. With an inferior buyer, competitiveness is not possible and sales are jeopardised.

The buyer must possess all the salesman's human qualities, plus competence, extensive knowledge and experience of the products which, unfortunately, are never demanded from salesmen. This is why a good buyer is almost always a very good salesman as well. But in more than forty years in the profession, I have not yet met a single buyer who really had all the required qualities. And this explains to a large extent the uncertain progress of so many of our firms.

As marketing resorts to operational research, to mathematical models or to the simulation of behaviour, it is inferred rather hastily that it is a science. These applications are only possible in precise and limited cases. Their introduction into the articulations of marketing only furnishes elements enabling a judgment to be made, but not the judgment itself. The latter, good marketers admit, depends on the men, their correct interpretation of data, the use they make of it, and on their know-how. To regard—as also happens in French firms—narrowly and blindly the theoretical results as a whole which is self-sufficient, leads to aberrant conclusions and decisions. And all the more dangerous because those who take them, feeling strong in their references, have a clear conscience, being convinced that they are supported by science, and regard their arguments as beyond discussion. In other words, these methods only give very good results if they are applied by men who could do without them. The others make unconsidered use of them, without the indispensable nuances which distinguish experience from theory. A science which has finally to resort to so many empirical data is merely a pseudo-science.

The control which we have seen exercised in firms that make use of

this system of organisation is often apparently very strict, as is usual with complicated mechanisms. But we have realised in use that this control is narrow, meddlesome, more formalistic than profound and therefore sometimes inept. The spirit is confused with the letter; a really good product may be set aside, which does not exactly conform with the control, while preference is given to a travesty of the real thing.

How is it that American firms which go in for this sort of approach succeed just the same? Because of their weight. Because they are very wealthy, they can afford to make mistakes, waste money or power, just as the American State can afford the expense of the Moon and Mars. French firms could not bear the strain and it should not be thought that even in the United States all firms expose themselves with impunity to such a risk.

When that country begins to exhaust its resources (nothing is inexhaustible), mistakes will be otherwise penalised and it will then be compelled really to organise itself well and really exert controls, no longer merely to make money, but in order to survive. Like us.

LEARNING FROM GUERLAIN AND COTY

This is why French firms can derive inspiration from what is sound and rational in marketing organisation, while being wary of the excesses which have just been pointed out, without servilely copying what is being done elsewhere, on a different scale from our own, in a different context, and without compromising what makes up our personality. We shall succeed better by adapting than by copying.

The best of what a mastery of marketing in our profession should allow can only be taught with difficulty, for it is a synthesis of widely differing and sometimes contradictory knowledge (art and science), experience of the profession and human qualities which no theory could supplant—such as taste and the faculty of “putting oneself in the position of others”.

It is because they were perfectly

endowed with these qualities that men like Jacques Guerlain, Ernest Beaux, Daltroff and some others “made” French perfumery. And that is why a *grand patron* like François Coty, who composed inspired perfumes which he was able to make the whole world accept, who gave impetus to packaging by causing a “revolution”, and who created new methods of distribution, was really and literally a marketing man, although he was unable to make use of market research because none such at the time existed.

This is also why sensible managers in the perfumery trade will entrust marketing to a man of far-sighted views, specialising in composition or very familiar with its technique, a clever psychologist able to derive advantage from a market survey and from technical and general information not within the competence of business heads or the usual researchers who are ignorant of perfumery.

This specialist must have had lengthy training for his new duties and have at his disposal all the necessary information. He must gradually familiarise himself with educational publicity techniques which have hitherto been overlooked in our profession.

It is certainly simpler and more rational to train a good composer in the techniques of marketing than to turn a marketing man into a composer. Nor is there any doubt that in our profession, more than in others, this dual competence is more and more indispensable and leads to the concept of the merging of the technical and the commercial. In many trades, this merging may allow the domination of the commercial; in our own, not to recognise the predominance of the technical, and still more of the artistic, reveals a strong suicidal tendency.

French marketeers are also quite aware of the necessary “humanisation” of marketing, since one of them writes: “Systematic recourse to technical processes, measurements, statistics, in no way releases marketing practitioners from paying the highest consideration to human factors which cannot be expressed in figures. These data retain almost always a decisive

importance in activities directed by man towards man.”⁹

The same writer admits that he has witnessed the “spectacle of marketing experts, from the best known American business schools, literally sinking a solid ‘corporation’. All they lacked was a dose of common sense and knowledge of men which no school in the world can give its pupils. The general management in question was unable to pierce through the thickness of the diplomas and sound the minds: it had overlooked the most vital of its responsibilities.”¹⁰

AGGRESSION

One might be tempted to deplore that this “human sense” is unfortunately contradicted by the statement that marketing is defined as “a will for unlimited commercial power” and by “maximal aggressivity”. We now know, however, that the aggressiveness of firms is regarded as a national duty; that the aggressiveness of man himself was, to begin with, an absolutely necessary instinct for his survival and that it remains a positive drive, a fundamental component of human instinctive equipment. But we must also admit, with Anthony Storr, that “since man now possesses weapons whose destructive power is unequalled and that he apparently lacks the inner curbs which prevents most animals from killing those which belong to their own species, it is not impossible that he may one day bring about the total elimination of homo sapiens”.¹¹ Storr considers that “we belong to the cruellest and most pitiless species on earth”.¹² According to the same author “man is a competitive animal, aggressive and territorial. He is also a social animal needing both the support of his fellows and adversaries enabling him to distinguish himself and thus affirm his own identity”.¹³

If sport is one of the best forms of education when practised among dilettantes, without any spirit of competition, on the other hand it exacerbates the aggressive spirit of the competitors and the nationalistic passion of the spectators while perhaps acting, it is true, as a cathartic.

When we consider that “the human faculty of abstraction effaces the content of a problem and enables the

strategist to discuss nuclear threats and counter-threats as if human beings were not in the least involved” and that “the intelligence of man is able to put distance between himself and natural feelings founded on instinct, which makes all kinds of horrors conceivable”¹⁴, we can measure what this may represent in the domain of business and commercial competition when man wishes to impose “unlimited” power on it. If we are able to hold cheaply millions of human lives, what will happen when it is only a question of eliminating one or two competitors in our way?

Anthony Storr goes on to say that “one of the characteristics of modern life which tend to transform aggressiveness into hate, is the size and complexity of civilised institutions . . . The independent craftsman who has a sense of achievement has fewer reasons to be hostile to his comrades than a man in a large organisation who feels he represents nothing.”¹⁵ And yet, on the pretext of competitiveness, the size of firms is constantly being increased.

All these remarks suggest that great precautions are called for in the education we give to our future managers, in presenting aggressiveness to them as a necessary evil, as a vital force and even as a sporting ideal. On the pretext of making them dynamic, of making “men of action” out of them, on the pretext of maximum efficiency, are we not paving the way for unimaginable conflicts? If we do not weigh up very carefully the pros and cons of this training we run the risk of promoting a dangerous ethic and of furthering the advent of a race of wolf-men who will devour one another.

“If society is in danger”, writes Dr. Winnicot, “it is not because of man’s aggressiveness, but because of the repression of the personal aggressiveness of individuals.”¹⁶ Yes, but beware of everything we may believe we are authorised to do in the name of anti-repression!

We shall not emerge from this impasse without courageous lucidity for, as Anthony Storr notes in his conclusion, “we are threatened as a species by our own tendency to destruction and we shall never learn to control it if we do not know each

other better. Throughout history, man has been tormented by the ignorance of his own nature, and he has filled the gap by a Utopian vision of what he would like to be instead of confronting the reality of what he is.”¹⁷

Since it is nevertheless with this particular man that we are required to live, we think with Marcuse that “a new mode of living must be established, which would place the aggressive instincts in the service of life instincts and would educate generations of young people for life and not for death.”¹⁸

What is required, since man is aggressive, is encouragement of the positive aspects of the instinct of aggression: the search for controlled aggressiveness as practised for their protection by groups of baboons, who accept and respect the conventions, a form of conventional competition. Aggression and hostility must not be confused. The aggressor is he who attacks without being provoked; cannot culture transform this aggression into combativity? It seems that it is **along** this road that the training of heads of firms and marketing itself should proceed. Is it really Utopian to expect of man a behaviour more elaborate than or as generous as that of other animals? It is for the present and future teachers of youth to give thought to the matter and provide the reply to this question. And for the men they will have trained.

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- ⁶ *Ibid*, p. 63
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p. 91
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p. 23
- ⁹ Gérard, Pierre. “Les clefs du Marketing.” (Les éditions d’organisation, 1969, p.16.)
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- ¹² *Ibid*, p. 7
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p. 184
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 182
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 185
- ¹⁶ Winnicot. Cover of “L’agressivité nécessaire”. (Laffont, 1969).
- ¹⁷ Storr, As No. 11., p. 196
- ¹⁸ Marcuse, H. Cover of “L’agressivité nécessaire.” (Laffont, 1969).