

Round Table on Marketing and Sustainability – Emerging Opportunities for Profitable Growth

The high economic growth rate in the last decade has created opportunities and increased incomes for the middle and upper classes. While it created a new segment of consuming class, with more choice than ever in buying products and services, at the same time there is a growing concern about the sustainability of this growth. The absence of equitable opportunities and growing disparities in incomes, living conditions and access to even basic necessities like potable water, hygiene, sanitation, education, health, etc. have serious implications for the well being of civilised society. Many of these products and services, traditionally the responsibility of the government and voluntary organisations, have not been efficiently delivered. The poor are often viewed as receivers of aid and hence remain on the fringes of marketing concerns of most firms. Most marketers do not focus on them, as they are believed to be less profitable. However, initiatives including e-Choupal by ITC and the Shakti programme of HLL, have highlighted the immense potential of this currently under-served market. These success stories have shown that the poor can be served equitably and profitably by improving their income generation potential. This in turn creates a market, which requires a new way of thinking about the business – by designing low cost, creative delivery mechanisms and organisation structures.

The purpose of this round table is to identify opportunities for creating sustainable growth by creatively applying marketing to profitably serve the poor. Areas of interest will include (but will not be limited to) –

- Business potential including size and growth of the market for the poor
- Mapping opportunities for income generation for the poor and profits for the firm
- Product design and development targetted at the poor
- Collaborative business models for sharing infrastructure costs while improving access to multiple products and services
- Low cost delivery mechanisms leveraging information and communication technologies
- Pricing of products and services for the poor
- Promotion issues including media, message and effectiveness
- Case studies of initiatives to market to the poor (successes as well as failures)

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