

# The Role of Marketing in Economic Development

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## **Abstract**

In developing countries, the “more glamorous” fields such as finance, human resources, production, and the traditional arts and science professions are highlighted while marketing is treated with neglect, if not disdain. Yet marketing holds a key position in these countries. Although marketing generally lags behind in most areas of economic life, it is the most effective stimulus of economic development, especially in its ability to develop entrepreneurs and managers speedily. Moreover, it provides what is the greatest need of a developing country; a systematic discipline in a vital domain of economic activity, a discipline which is based on generalised theoretical concepts, and which can, thus, be taught as well as learned. In this conceptual paper the dialogue focuses on the needs and wants people have, which marketers are well positioned to provide effectively to society, as consumers of marketing, in response to changes taking place in the marketplace.

The paper commences with an exploration of marketing as a business discipline, followed by a discourse of marketing as a social discipline. In this discussion, the focus is on the second meaning in which marketing has become a discipline: the role of marketing in economy and society. To make it relevant to our business environment, this paper concentrates on the role of marketing in economic development, particularly in a developing country with *growth* potential.

The proposition is brief. Marketing has a vital role to play in respect of such *growth* areas. In fact marketing is the critical *multiplier* of such development.

It is suggested that in most parts of our current environment all of mankind shares the same vision, the same objective, the same goal, the same hope, and believes in the same tools. This vision might, in gross over-simplification, be called *industrialisation*.

Marketing is central in a liberalised developing economy. Indeed, the essential aspect of a developing economy and the factor, the absence of which keeps it *under-developed*, is the inability to organise economic efforts and energies, to harness resources, wants, and capacities, and so to convert a self-limiting static system into creative, self-generating organic growth. ***And this is where marketing comes in.***

The key points as to how effective marketing can contribute to economic development are subsequently presented. Firstly, it is suggested that what is needed in any *growth* country to make economic development realistic, and simultaneously produce a poignant manifestation of what economic development can engender, is a marketing system:

Secondly, it is proposed that marketing is the most easily accessible *multiplier* of managers and entrepreneurs in an *underdeveloped* growth area, that managers and particularly entrepreneurs are the foremost need of these countries, in the first place and that *economic development* is not a force of nature.

Thirdly, it is postulated that marketing in a developing country is the developer of standards - of standards for product and service as well as of standards of conduct, integrity, of reliability, of foresight, and of concern for the basic long-term impact of decisions on the customer, the supplier, the economy, and the society.

Fourthly, the paper advocates that marketing is vital in economic development because, among all business disciplines, it is the most learnable and teachable, adding that a critical factor in this world of ours is the learnability and teachability of what it means to be an entrepreneur and manager. For it is the entrepreneur and the manager alone who can cause economic development to happen.

The penultimate proposition is that many marketers today are also involved in the development of the discipline of entrepreneurship and management. In this regard, marketers are at the cutting edge of providing an understanding of the basic problems of organising people of diversified and highly advanced skill and judgement together in one effective organisation.

Finally, in the new and unprecedented world in which we live, in a world that knows both a new unity of vision and growth, marketing has a special and central role to play. This role goes beyond:

- "Getting the stuff out the back door"
- "Getting the most sales with the least cost"
- "The optimal integration of our values and wants as customers, citizens, and persons, with our productive resources and intellectual achievements" - the role marketing plays in society.

In a developing economy, marketing is, of course, all of this. But moreover, in an economy that is striving to break the age-old bond of man to misery, want, and destitution, marketing is also the catalyst for the transmutation of latent resources into actual resources, of desires into accomplishments, and the development of responsible economic leaders and informed economic citizens.