the marketing review

Calendar-led marketing: Strategic synchronisation of timing

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Reflecting the potent impact that calendars have on marketplace behaviour, calendar-led marketing (CLM) is the strategic and tactical consideration of recurring calendrical periods in the development of the content and timing of marketing practices. Calendrical periods include those within the time-of-day, day-of-week, day/period-of-month, and day/period-of-year cycles, such as mornings, Tuesdays, end-of-the-month, winter, Christmas, and so on. Because marketplace behaviours tend to be disproportionately distributed across calendrical periods, every period is unique and thus represents unique marketing challenges and opportunities.

Stemming largely from exploratory research, this paper first provides an overview of CLM and its relevance. Next, six categories of CLM strategies are discussed in the spirit of providing examples, insights and guidance for marketers interested in exploiting calendar-led opportunities. These strategic categories are (1) calendrical bandwagon focus, (2) calendrical stretch, (3) calendrical repositioning, (4) calendrical piggybacking, (5) calendar-led innovation, and (6) calendrical co-branding.

Keywords Calendars, Calendar-led marketing (CLM), Time, Timing, Strategic windows, Exploratory research

Introduction: It's a calendar-led world

Wet and crying, baby Jonathan wakes his father, Steve, at 3.00 a.m. Steve quickly realises he's already used the last disposable diaper. It's too bad, because the store where he normally buys diapers won't open for another six hours.

Later that morning, after somehow solving the diaper dilemma, Steve waves goodbye to his wife, Donna, who plans to stop by a local fast food restaurant to eat breakfast before commuting to work. Upon arriving at the

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The Marketing Review, 2017, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 73-86
http://dx.doi.org/10.1362/146934717X14909733966119
ISSN1469-347X print / ISSN 1472-1384 online ©Westburn Publishers Ltd.

restaurant, she's disappointed to learn that the business stopped serving breakfast 23 minutes earlier.

Hungry but undaunted, Donna arrives at the office where she works as a sales rep for a major life insurance company. Optimistic about closing a sale, she contacts a prospect to arrange an appointment. Unfortunately, the sale is jeopardised when Donna learns that the prospect's calendar is too full to meet with her in the foreseeable future.

While driving home from work later that day, Donna listens to the radio and hears about an upcoming sales event at her favourite clothing store. Unfortunately, she's almost out of cash and the event is scheduled prior to her next payday, so she regretfully decides to avoid the sale.

The marketplace realities faced by Steve and Donna are not uncommon. Every day, countless sales opportunities are lost due to timing mismatches between buyers and sellers. Buyers may rate product features and quality as high, regard prices as quite reasonable, perceive promotional messages as relevant, and consider customer-contact employees to be dedicated professionals, but potential sales fail to materialise when organisations' calendars don't synchronise well with those of targeted buyers. Simply put, it's not enough for marketers to win customers; they must win their customers' calendars too.

In today's busy marketplace, people - including businesspeople and buyers - rely heavily on their calendars to coordinate with others, schedule what seems to be an increasing number of activities and otherwise plan their day-to-day affairs - shaping the temporal rhythm of their individual lives and those of other people and organisations in the world around them. There are few exceptions according to one study that found that 98 percent of surveyed US households referred to a calendar at least once a day, and almost two-thirds of those referred to a calendar more frequently. Only six percent said calendars were "*unimportant*" to them in their "*work/daily/personal activities*" (Kuruvilla, 2010). It may be that calendars are among the most widely used planning tools in the world.

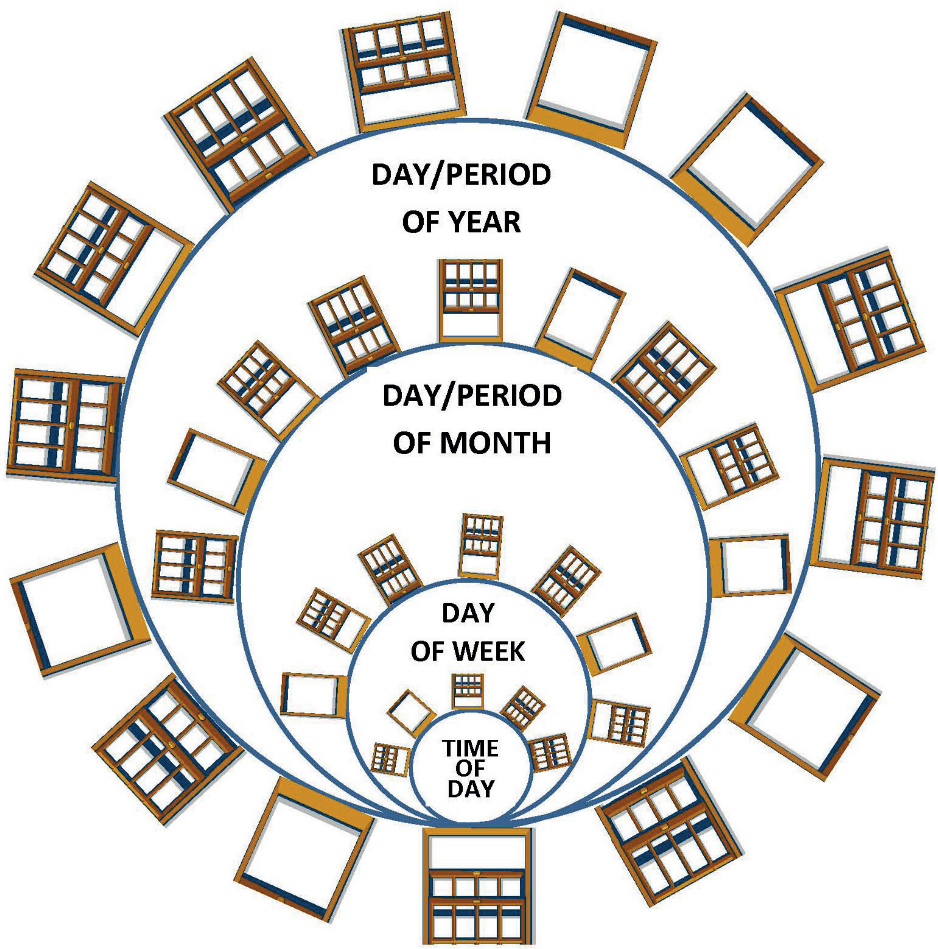
So, to be effective in a world filled with calendar-led buyers, marketers too must be calendar-led. This means giving strategic and tactical consideration to calendrical periods in the development of the content and timing of marketing practices. It means thinking intently about the unique mix of meanings, sentiments and behaviours associated with each period on the calendar - avoiding the temptation to view calendrical periods of the same duration as equal and interchangeable blocks of time. Indeed, each calendrical period is unique, largely attributed to the calendar-led nature of buyers whose preferences and predispositions, purchase and consumption patterns, media exposure, price sensitivity, and responsiveness to marketing communications, among other variables, vary across times of the day, days of the week, periods of the month, and periods of the year.

Understanding the individuality of calendrical periods and the calendar-led nature of buyers helps marketers appreciate the importance of calendrical timing. They know that windows of marketing opportunity may be open during some periods but closed or partially closed during other periods, as visually displayed in Figure 1. So, in the formulation of marketing plans, calendar-led marketers continually consider both sides of the two-sided "when-what?" coin: (Side 1) *When* should a given marketing practice take place?, and (Side 2) *What* marketing practices should be undertaken during a given time period?

Accordingly, this paper takes an exploratory look at the role of calendars in the marketplace - the influence they exert on both buyers and marketers, and how astute firms practice calendar-led marketing (CLM). In doing so, the objective is to sensitise marketing practitioners to the topic and provide some insights and guidance for those interested in identifying and exploiting calendar-led opportunities.

Organised around six categories of CLM strategies in the sections that follow, observations and assertions stem from a synthesis of existing literature, scrutiny of hundreds of CLM advertisements and promotional materials, and extensive data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involving 64 practicing marketing managers in a variety of industries and more than 170 consumers representing a cross-section of the general public. Prominent categories of strategies emerging from this exploratory investigation are

Figure 1 Calendrical periods as sometimes open and sometimes closed windows of marketing opportunity



classified as: (1) calendrical bandwagon focus, (2) calendrical stretch, (3) calendrical repositioning, (4) calendrical piggybacking, (5) calendar-led innovation, and (6) calendrical co-branding.

Strategy of calendrical bandwagon focus: Chasing popular time periods

According to an old African saying, if you chase several monkeys, all will escape. Heeding this cautionary hunting observation, astute firms avoid plans that may spread limited resources so thin that ineffectiveness, inefficiency and loss of competitiveness are inevitable. So, it's not uncommon for business leaders to advocate 'doing what we do best' and 'not trying to be all things to all people' by focusing resources on relatively homogeneous groups of buyers (commonly known as 'target marketing'), geographic regions, channel positions (e.g., manufacturing vs. retailing), product categories, and technologies.

A similar quest for focus prompts calendar-led marketers to recognise that more windows of opportunity are open during some calendrical periods than during others, hence the strategy of allocating a disproportionate share of marketing resources to calendrical periods with the greatest promise to satisfy objectives. At the extreme are fireworks stands, Christmas tree lots, and pop-up costume and toy stores that operate during a few peak-demand weeks or days each year and remain dormant the remainder of the year.

Businesses that remain open year-round may focus advertising and promotion efforts during selected high-demand periods, such as coffee shops that advertise heavily in the morning, restaurants that promote heavily to build weekend traffic, and the sale of gym and weight loss memberships pushed in late December and early January when consumers are setting New Year's resolutions. As several marketing managers pointed out when interviewed by the research team, advertising and promotion efforts tend to be most effective at times when buyers are predisposed to buy.

Multiple considerations are relevant in the process of selecting the 'best' calendrical period(s) upon which to focus, but because many are product-, firm- or market-specific, there do not appear to be any calendrical periods when windows of marketing opportunity are universally open or closed. However, a systematic consideration of the multiple factors that influence buyers' calendrical timing can be particularly helpful in assessing the extent to which windows of marketing opportunity may be open for specific calendrical periods. Consistent with such an analysis is the contemplation of these fundamental questions of calendrical timing:

- *When are buyers' product-related needs or interests likely to be highest?* Climate drives seasonal demand for swimsuits, biological cravings stimulate consumption of morning coffee, culture prompts the timing of holiday gift purchases, and so on.
- *What is the timing of buyers' media habits?* To understand buyers' media habits is to know when to advertise and in which media. Although media habits vary across market segments, early weekday mornings and late afternoons are most typically peak radio-listening

times, evenings are 'prime time' for television exposure, and newspaper readership is highest on weekends.

- *When do buyers receive income?* Not surprisingly, increased spending is associated with paydays (Jacobe & Jones, 2009). Windfall periods such as income tax refund season are open windows of opportunity as well; 73 percent of US taxpayers received refunds in 2014, averaging about $2,792 (Internal Revenue Service, 2014).
- *When do buyers have discretionary time?* Of course, job, school and other time commitments limit the timing options for shopping and consumption activities - especially for more time-consuming activities such as purchasing a major household appliance or going to the theatre, vs. buying gasoline or a sandwich at a convenience store. Weekends are often peak purchasing periods (Jacobe & Jones, 2009), in part because 71 percent of the US workforce does not work on weekends (Ingraham, 2014).

Strategy of calendrical stretch: Starting the party early and keeping it going late

Periods of peak demand discussed earlier are appealing as proven winners that represent a mix of marketplace conditions that can make marketers salivate. That is, peak periods tend to occur when the timing of product availability converges with buyers' predisposition to purchase, backed by the availability of buyers' money and time to do so.

On the downside, peak periods can be short-lived and competitors always seem to crash the party. Further, extreme efforts to capitalise on peak periods while largely ignoring other periods may be less than optimum for the organisation - straining operations, stressing workers, creating quality mishaps during peak periods, and underutilising employees and assets during lull periods. So, calendar-led marketers often think in terms of stretching the peak periods to begin a bit earlier and/or continue a bit longer - to extend the good times and possibly beat the timing of competitors who fail to stretch. Common stretch practices include:

- Stretching single or single-period events into multiple events that extend their duration, e.g., stretching the championship game into a championship *series* or adding pre- and post-game festivities and other activities.
- Stretching holi*day*s into holiday weekends or 'seasons', e.g., from Thanksgiving Day to Thanksgiving weekend, from President's Day, Memorial Day and Labor Day to three-day weekends, and from Christmas Day to Christmas season. The promotion of gift-giving, greeting cards, costumes and decorations advance the observance of many holidays and occasions by several days or weeks.
- Employing advances in technology or otherwise introducing innovations to fight against calendrical constraints imposed by nature, e.g., ski resorts' use of snow-making machines to stretch the length of the ski season, or the introduction of additives in exterior house paints to ensure proper oxidation during colder temperatures.

- Displaying and promoting seasonal merchandise slightly before the season begins.
- Offering discounts or other incentives during non-peak periods.
- Steering calendrically-flexible customers away from peak periods, such as when scheduling reservations.

The pioneering stretch practices of retailer Harry Gordon Selfridge in the early 1900s provide significant insights and continue to be used today. Selfridge enjoyed a prosperous career working for Chicago retailer Marshall Field before opening his own department store in London in the early part of the 20th century (which grew into the small chain of Selfridges Ltd.). Selfridge realised the importance of the Christmas shopping season, but noticed that most shoppers didn't seem to get into the gift-buying/shopping spirit of Christmas until a few days prior to the holiday. He reasoned that if he could nudge shoppers into the spirit of Christmas a few days or weeks earlier, they would spend more time shopping and buy more gifts for the holiday. So, to encourage a Christmas mood, Selfridge made sure that Christmas displays were in place well in advance of Christmas. He also pioneered the familiar Christmas countdown practice to remind shoppers how many more shopping days remained until Christmas. Later, Christmas music was added to enhance his stores' ambience.

Selfridge's efforts were so successful in stretching forward the peak-demand period for Christmas that today Christmas is not considered only a holi*day*, but a 'season' as well. Today, marketers for Selfridge's stores continue their efforts to stretch the Christmas season. The company's website claims to be the only department store in the world to launch the Christmas season as early as August 4th (Selfridges Group, 2014).

A modern-day phenomenon takes Selfridge's approach a step further and stretches the length of the holiday shopping season in the opposite direction. That is, by promoting the sale of gift cards, retailers stretch the holiday shopping season into late December and January when gift card recipients tend to redeem their gift cards. In effect, this stretch creates a second Christmas shopping season. Home Town Buffet restaurants pursue a similar objective of stretching the 'season' for Mother's Day by giving bounce back cards to mothers who visit the restaurants on Mother's Day. The cards entitle mothers to a free meal on their *next* visit, which increases repeat patronage during the period immediately following Mother's Day (https://www.facebook.com/HomeTownBuffet).

Strategy of calendrical repositioning: More than smoke and mirrors

A product or brand's 'position' may be thought of as the figurative space it occupies in the marketplace in terms of how buyers and prospective buyers perceive its attributes, applications, quality, convenience, image, and other aspects relative to competing alternatives. A product or brand's position also may include perceptions of the type of buyers who use the product or brand and the calendrical context of when it is purchased or consumed. It follows that calendrical repositioning involves efforts to alter one or more of these perceptions in order to shift the timing of buyers' purchase or consumption behaviour. Doing this could involve direct or obvious attempts to change the calendrical context of purchase or consumption, or more subtle efforts to identify new uses and/or find new users that are likely to have the same effect.

Direct repositioning of the calendrical context

For some products there are compelling reasons for the calendrical timing of purchase or consumption - reasons which buyers are not likely to abandon in response to marketers' pleas to do so. The winter time demand for snow shovels and mittens are obvious examples. However, in other instances, the justification for the existence of traditional peaks and troughs in the timing of consumption or demand may be much less compelling - thus opening somewhat counter-cyclical windows of opportunity. In the early 1920s, for example, after noticing a pronounced summer bias in their brand's demand, The Coca-Cola Company launched a print ad campaign to encourage consumers to drink Coke during the winter too. Ads featured warmly clad snow skiers gracefully gliding down a snow-packed mountain while holding a ski pole in one hand and a bottle of Coca-Cola in the other - implying that winter and Coca-Cola are quite compatible. Today, the company's advertising use of wintry scenes and polar bears continues to reinforce the promotional slogan that 'thirst knows no season'.

Thinking in terms of time-of-day fluctuations in consumption, the Florida Orange Growers Association (FOGA) launched its on-going ad campaign in the mid-1970s to encourage consumers to rethink their daily pattern of consumption. In the campaign, the organisation's frequently repeated slogan reminds consumers that 'orange juice isn't just for breakfast anymore'. The author suggests that McDonald's may have noticed the success of FOGA's campaign when the fast-food giant recently renamed its 'Breakfast Burrito' - now 'Sausage Burrito' - to reposition the calendrical context of the menu item to increase its sales throughout the day.

New uses and users

Sometimes cyclical fluctuations in demand or consumption may be attributed to a limited range of applications, which may correspond to a limited number of users and a limited calendrical time frame for those applications. Accordingly, calendrical windows of opportunity may open to alter timing and increase total demand if alternative uses can be identified and exploited. Consider the history of marbles, for example. Traditionally marketed as toys for children, their demand was concentrated in the fourth quarter of the calendar year. As new uses of marbles have emerged to serve a wider array of users, the aggregate demand for marbles has become much less seasonal. Today, it is not uncommon to find marbles and their glass orb aliases (e.g., gems, glass beads, decorative fillers, decorative accents) in multiple departments within the same store - each involving a different use and targeting different buyers. Some of these departments include:

- Toys: marbles sold separately or as parts of other toys and games.
- Home improvement: marbles resting in the bottom of cans of spray paint waiting to mix the paint when shaken.

- Floral: marbles used to anchor and decorate flower vases.
- Arts and crafts: marbles used as adornments in hand-crafted sculptures, picture frames, ash trays, and so on.
- Pets: marbles used for lining the bottom of fish tanks.
- Jewellery: marbles used in bracelets, pendants and necklaces.
- Sporting goods: marbles positioned as 'sling shot ammo' in communities where the use of sling shots is legally permitted.

To the extent that demand patterns vary across applications, windows of opportunity may open frequently, sometimes for one use and sometimes for another. When multiple applications are prevalent, each may exhibit its own pronounced calendrical pattern of demand or consumption, but collectively the multiple applications are likely to generate higher total sales and result in less calendrical variability in patterns of demand and consumption.

Calendrical piggybacking: Riding the timing of established behaviours

According to the principle of calendrical conformity, buyers tend to lapse into cyclic routines, or otherwise establish habits of engaging in certain activities during certain calendrical periods. Breaking these established routines or habits to establish new ones can be a formidable task. So, marketers who are intent on introducing new brands, new purchase/consumption patterns or other new behaviours to prospective customers should note that prospects appear to be more cooperative when the new behaviours fit neatly within established calendrical routines. This is the rationale for behavioural piggyback efforts that link new behaviours by design or suggestion with buyers' more-established habits or routines. This approach may be most appropriate for mundane or avoidance-type behaviours that are not particularly urgent, pleasant or rewarding enough by themselves to sufficiently motivate buyers to schedule or remember them on their own merits.

One example of the behavioural piggyback approach is found on the website for vitamin-maker NatureMade. Its spokesperson, a registered dietician, recommends that daily multivitamins be taken each morning with breakfast because "*the breakfast meal is often a convenient time to remember to take your vitamins*" (Dorval, 2015). In extreme contrast, consider the nearly insurmountable challenge of consumers habitualising a hypothetical prescribed vitamin schedule of one pill every 17 hours, 39 hours or some other calendrically out-of-synch interval! The following examples further illustrate how marketers use this behavioural piggyback approach to fit proposed consumption behaviours (<u>underlined</u>) with habits or routines that already fill reserved time slots on consumers' calendars (*italicised*).

- Rayovac, makers of household batteries, reminds consumers to <u>check the batteries in their smoke detectors</u> twice a year *when adjusting their clocks for Daylight Saving Time* (http://www.rayovac.com/products/specialty-batteries/educate/fire-safety.aspx).

- Ads observed by the author for *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane, Australian newspaper) imply that reading the newspaper makes the *daily train commute to the office* more enjoyable. Similarly, billboards suggest that picking up pastries at Quick Trip convenience stores should be part of one's *morning commute*.
- For decades the Folger's coffee jingle has advocated piggybacking their brand with the morning routine: "*The best part of* waking up *is* *Folger's in your cup*" (http://www.folgerscoffee.com/our-story/history).

Strategies of calendar-led innovation: Accommodating calendrical realities

Numerous calendar-led innovations alter the calendrical timing of buyer behaviours. These include the introduction of new products or new product forms, new product attributes, facilitative products, and media-related innovations.

There's no shortage of examples of innovation efforts to diversify the product mix to smooth what otherwise might be periodic fluctuations in demand, and in the process, keeping employees productive and assets utilised. Examples are:

- Sporting goods manufacturers produce equipment for multiple sports that attract participants at different periods throughout the year. Similarly, garment manufacturers produce different items for different seasons.
- Ski resorts reinvent themselves in the summer for campers, hikers and nature enthusiasts. Similarly, universities offer various sports, music and other 'camps' to young children during the summer when most college students are away from campus.
- Food service establishments serving traditional lunch or dinner patrons often expand their menus to include breakfast items for morning customers and 'snack' items to attract customers between meals.
- Chocolate-makers transform their products' shapes and packaging in observance of holidays and occasions throughout the year, e.g., heart-shaped items for Valentine's Day, chocolate bunnies for Easter, and so on.

Many product innovations that truly have changed the calendrical timing of buyer behaviour involve technological advances that fight back against the calendrical timing constraints historically imposed by nature or tradition. Consider these historical examples:

- Driving an automobile in 1920 was primarily a warm-weather activity as most vehicles at that time were of an 'open' design. But by the early 1930s, when 'closed' vehicles were dominant, motoring became much more of a year-round activity. The addition of lights, windshield wipers, heating, air conditioning, and other innovations also helped free motorists from nature's calendrical grip.

- The widespread adoption of canning technology and frozen food processing technology greatly reduced the seasonal nature of fruit and vegetable consumption.
- The development and adoption of electric refrigerators also extended the shelf life of perishable foods. Therefore homemakers' shopping routines became more flexible and they were not constrained by the necessity to shop for food daily.
- The widespread adoption of air conditioning by retailers helped smooth seasonal and time-of-day patterns of shopping behaviour by making shopping experiences more comfortable throughout the year and throughout the day.
- For many, but not all consumers, the innovation and adoption of credit cards beginning in the 1950s helped reduce the calendrical timing impact of the pay cycle. That is, the use of credit cards means consumers' purchase patterns are not as closely tied to paydays, so the tendency to postpone purchases until payday is lessened.

More recent innovations continue to smooth calendrical fluctuations of buyer behaviour. For example, mobile- and internet-related innovations have shattered the timing of many consumers' cyclical media consumption and shopping routines, or allowed them to customise their own routines, because technology allows them to choose their own timing. News, information and entertainment is now available continuously, at the timing whim of the audience, so there's no need to wait for the arrival of the morning newspaper or for televised broadcasts during network-scheduled daily or weekly time slots. Similarly, as an increasing number of goods and services (and especially information about them) are available online 24/7, the necessity for shoppers to wait until stores open continues to decrease.

Calendrical co-branding: No shortage of aliases

Each calendrical period is, in effect, its own brand. Each has its own name or combination of names; it may be morning, Saturday, end-of-the-month, weekend, winter, and so on. Moreover, each is perceived to have a meaning distinct from those of other periods - a unique mix of behaviours, needs, preferences, sentiments, phenomena, opportunities, constraints and memories. Interviewed consumers and marketing managers were quick to point out meaningful differences across calendrical periods and almost all claimed to have most and least favourite times of the day, days of the week and months of the year.

Historically, early calendrical brand meanings were defined by nature, with daily cycles of daylight and darkness, and annual cycles of climate largely dictating when our ancient ancestors should hunt, plant, harvest, migrate, seek shelter, rest, and otherwise live their lives.

Major cultural entities such as church and state further branded calendrical periods - both by assigning formal names to each period and by designating specific times of day for prayer, certain days of the week for worship or public gatherings (including market days), and annual periods for 'holy' days, festivals and other observances. These calendrical designations focused public attention, helped routinise individuals' behaviour, and helped coordinate the timing of behaviour across multiple parties.

Now, somewhere in the world, every day commemorates a religious holiday, the birthday of a famous artist, inventor or statesman, and the anniversary of an important historical event. Likewise, weeks and months are routinely designated to recognise or raise awareness of groups and causes. Literally every day, week and month of the year has been co-branded numerous times and across numerous cultures around the world. There are no exceptions.

Not surprisingly, individual organisations select calendrical periods for co-branding too. In much the same way that organisations may strive to differentiate themselves by attempting to 'own' a key word or idea in buyers' minds, e.g., Federal Express and "*overnight*" (Trout, 2004, p. 102), an important goal of calendrical co-branding is to 'own' a recurring time or time block on buyers' calendars. The calendar-led leadership of Tote'm Stores (Southland Corporation's chain of convenience stores) may have been thinking along these lines in 1946 when they expanded their operating hours to serve customers daily from 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. while also changing the name of the stores to the now familiar '7-Eleven' brand (http://corp.7-eleven.com/corp-BAK/history).

More recently, for millions of American football fans, the National Football League 'owns' Monday nights each fall with its calendrically co-branded 'Monday Night Football' telecasts. The calendrical co-branding prompts fans to associate Monday nights with football and include the telecast as part of their weekly routine. Devoted fans plan accordingly - giving the telecast superordinate status while rescheduling or cancelling subordinate activities.

In much the same way, promotion-minded food and beverage retailers often lay claim to specific days of the week by co-branding them as Monday Madness, Taco Tuesdays, Whacky Wednesdays, Thirsty Thursdays, and so on. The cyclic, recurring regularity of these and other co-branded calendrical periods provides the basis for an ongoing effort to reinforce the promotional events and cultivate a loyal following of routine-driven customers who synchronise their calendars to mesh with the timing of the co-branded periods.

Co-branding calendrical periods on the annual cycle enables organisations to tap into public sentiments regarding history and heritage, which can add legitimacy to the period selected for co-branding. For example, organisations may lay claim to under-recognised time periods that are publicly noteworthy and promotionally relevant. The marketing trustees of Ziploc brand sandwich bags did just that when they seized the birthday of the 18th century inventor of the sandwich, John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, to promote 'National Sandwich Day' (NSD) annually on November 3rd. Not surprisingly, Ziploc marketers use NSD as a lever to promote the consumption of sandwiches, which is linked to the consumption of plastic sandwich bags. A stroll down *History Lane* typically identifies multiple birthdays and anniversaries that represent opportunities for calendrical co-branding. A few possibilities:

- Innovation history: When was the category, design or technology developed? First patented? First sold? Who were the key inventors, designers and developers, and when are their birthdays?
- Company history: When was the company founded? On what date was the firm's first unit sold? Who founded the company and when were they born?
- Cultural and political history: Who are the target market's heroes? When are their birthdays and what are the key dates associated with their contributions? What are the anniversaries of other noteworthy historical events?

Summary and concluding thoughts

This paper has highlighted what may be the most widely used and most influential, yet under-researched, planning tools in the world - calendars. The uneven distribution of behaviour across calendrical periods makes it clear that the marketplace and all actors operating within it are calendar-led. Because calendars play integral roles in the timing of both buyer and marketing behaviour, a deep understanding of their use and influence promises to increase both the effectiveness and cost efficiency of marketing efforts. Marketers who ignore calendars do so at their own peril.

Six categories of calendrical marketing strategies were discussed. *Calendrical bandwagon focus strategies* concentrate resources on calendrical periods when demand is known to be high - periods often found when buyers' need for or interest in the product converges with their media accessibility, time available to shop and money available to spend.

Calendrical stretch strategies involve efforts to advance and/or extend the calendrical timing of high-demand periods. Retail examples include shelving merchandise early to advance the Christmas shopping season and promoting the sale of gift cards to extend it.

Calendrical repositioning strategies involve efforts to alter buyers' perceptions of the product or brand in an effort to shift the timing of purchase or consumption behaviour. Buyers who typically think of a product or brand being purchased or consumed during some periods may be challenged to associate it with other periods. Finding and promoting new uses of a product is another form of calendrical repositioning that may appeal to new groups of buyers whose purchase or consumption timing may vary from that of existing buyers.

Calendrical piggybacking is an attempt to habitualise the timing of proposed buyer behaviours by linking their timing with more familiar and habitually-entrenched behaviours. For example, testing the batteries in one's smoke detectors is a chore that's easily forgotten as an independent behaviour, but one that's more likely to be remembered when consumers are reminded to check them twice a year when they adjust their clocks for Daylight Saving Time.

Calendar-led innovations include the introduction of counter-cyclical products to smooth fluctuations in demand, product improvements to push back against calendrical timing constraints historically imposed by nature, and other innovations such as credit cards that also help to offset the effects of calendrical timing constraints.

Finally, *calendrical co-branding* strategies involve organisations adopting and renaming calendrical periods, and then convincing buyers to share the co-branded periods with them. Co-branded periods may be found on each of the four major calendrical cycles:

- Time-of-day: 'Moonlight Madness Sale', a late-night sales event at a discount store.
- Day-of-week: 'Taco Tuesdays', Tuesday discounts at a fast food restaurant.
- Period/day-of-month: 'Five-Five Sale', sale items priced for $5 on the 5th of the month.
- Period/day-of-year: 'National Sandwich Day' (November 3rd).

Although published research of calendar-led buyer behaviour and marketing practices is limited, the history of the marketplace suggests that many calendar-led marketing (CLM) practices have existed for decades, and in some cases, hundreds of years. What is new, or newer, are the technological advances and accompanying data of recent years that make the practice of CLM more practical and more cost efficient than ever before. The access to increasingly large amounts of time-stamped data, for example, enables marketers to detect variation in demand and other buyer behaviours from period to period across calendrical cycles. When these data are coupled with data for individual buyers, such as through loyalty clubs, marketers are well-positioned to learn how their customer mixes vary across calendrical cycles.

Beyond these diagnostics, technology also assists marketers in the implementation of CLM practices. For example, in contrast to catalogue marketers of yesteryear who withheld revisions for several weeks until the printing of the next catalogue, today's online marketers can change product offerings, descriptive information, appeals, visuals and prices easily, instantly and as frequently as they wish to stay in synch with calendrical time periods. Similarly, whereas past generations of retail clerks manually changed store signage and tediously applied new price stickers to individual items of merchandise, designated employees for today's brick and mortar stores can utilise electronic shelf tags and displays to change prices and displayed product information with only a few key strokes. From the comfort of a back office or remote location, they can do this several times a day, if they wish, to adjust to shifting profiles of the customer mix or to variations in shoppers' price-sensitivity across calendrical periods.

Also suggesting that the time is right for a stepped-up interest in CLM, are hyper-competition, calls for accountability and the increasing interest in improving marketing ROI - trends that have heightened marketers' sensitivity to the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the marketing investments they make. Understanding the calendrical context of the marketplace enables marketers to customise marketing programmes to 'fit' the period at hand - thus improving the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Further, in much the same way that the now familiar concept of target marketing has enabled marketers of the past few decades to focus their limited resources on selected market segments to increase returns, CLM promises to increase the efficient allocation of limited marketing resources by focusing them on selected calendrical periods that represent open windows of marketing opportunity.

While calendars in some form or another have existed as long as marketers have, clearly it's time for marketers to re-evaluate and possibly extend their understanding and use of calendars in what is becoming an increasingly calendar-led world.

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