

Interview: Mark Ritson on consistency, pricing power, and the myths holding marketers back

MichaelAaron Flicker: [00:00:00] Welcome back to Behavioral Science For Brands, a podcast where we bridge the gap between academics and practical marketing. Every week we sit down and go deep behind some of the most important aspects of America's best marketing. I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

Richard Shotton: And I'm Richard Shotton.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And today we're sitting with Mark Ritson educator, consultant, columnist, and to us, one of the most provocative and influential voices in modern marketing.

Let's get into it. Mark, welcome to Behavioral Science for Brands. Richard and I are so excited to welcome you today.

Mark Ritson: Great to be here, Michael. Good happy New Year. We're just at the turn. So Merry 2026.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Thank you so much. Before we get into our conversation today, if you'll indulge me, I'd love to give our listeners a little bit of background on you, and then we'll get into today's conversation.

So, yeah, I said in the, [00:01:00] oh, please.

Mark Ritson: Look, I'm, I'm, I'm English originally, but I've lived in the States and then Australia for a long time. I was a marketing professor for about 25 years. Teaching at places like London Business School, Leonard, MIT, and then at Melbourne Business School. And then I more, it's, it's, my career is actually in reverse, right?

I started out as a professor when I was way too young and not very good, and then I became more and more a consultant. So the professor professorial thing got me into doing a lot of consulting work with a lot of big brands, and that became the real job. And then in the last 10 years, I became an entrepreneur and I set up mini MBA, which is basically training marketers at an MBA level, but online and in a more.

Well, in a better way, basically. And that's my main job now. I, we, we train about eight to 9,000 marketers a year. That's the hope this year. All, all, all around the world. And that, that's my main job now is [00:02:00] running those programs from, from Australia

MichaelAaron Flicker: and from, I saw on the website 40,000 alumni to date for mini marketing MBA.

Mark Ritson: Yeah. Yeah. 40,000. So we've been going about 10 years. We've covered about 40,000 and we have big growth plans ahead. So yeah, we, we are gradually, I think we're, the best estimate we've got is very hard to work this out. UK is our best market. We think we've trained 4% of British marketers. So in some ways that's big and in other ways it still gives us a lot of, a lot of, a lot of pie to eat.

You know,

MichaelAaron Flicker: I think how exciting that is and. One thing you left out that's so generous of you, you were a longtime contributor of Marketing Week. You currently are contributing, is it to both Ad Week and the Drum? Is that right?

Mark Ritson: Yeah, well, a lot actually. So I I, I've moved more into columns as time has gone on.

'cause I find it's the most enjoyable thing I do and it's the best way to [00:03:00] promote me and mini NBA, so I write now for the drum in the uk. I write for Adweek in the US I write for resume in, in Sphe and I write for horizontal in Deutschland and the drum in, and the drum in Australia. So I've got a lot of different, different columns going on.

But it's the fun thing. I try and do one in the morning each day before I do other stuff and it's a, I find it a lovely way to start the day.

MichaelAaron Flicker: That's lovely. So we've prepared for you what we're calling a quick fire round and Mark in all transparency, we've never done this before. Okay. So you'll be our, you'll be our test case.

We've got five questions.

Mark Ritson: And I haven't prepped them. You were very kindly sent me the questions. I definitely haven't read that. There's no interest in preparing anything. Right.

MichaelAaron Flicker: I think that this makes for the most advice to all good

Richard Shotton: students. Yeah,

MichaelAaron Flicker: yeah,

Mark Ritson: yeah, yeah, yeah. The preparation is well overrated.

Just bullshit your way through it.

MichaelAaron Flicker: You are on the stand, Mr. Tson.

Mark Ritson: Okay.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Question number one. What's one brand [00:04:00] that you think is doing brilliant work right now?

Mark Ritson: Ooh. Ah, e just one is the tricky bit. Ah, I'd still go Marks and Spencer, I think in the uk. And if you allow me an international one McCain fantastically efficient and, and, and brilliant at what they do.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah. If you, for the listeners that don't know about the Mark and Spencer or McCain, could you give us a Yeah. A little bit of why you think it's so good?

Mark Ritson: So, marks and Spencer or m and s is a hundred year old iconic retailer in the UK that had about a 15 year shitty time. But really has got itself together now and is in the most competitive retail market, I think in the world is is back on fire again.

And, and it's a, a perfect case study of revitalization. McCain is a different story. McCain is winning prizes galore for its advertising. It, it, it's managed to strategically get hold of a commodity thing like potato chips. [00:05:00]

Richard Shotton: Mm-hmm.

Mark Ritson: And essentially build brand build share, but really increase price in what could have been just, you know, a private label commodity shit hole.

It's, it's built a phenomenal brand pedigree and, and whoever I, I don't know anyone there. All I know is they're just doing Titanic stuff.

Richard Shotton: Jumping from brands to people. Mm-hmm. A little bit more hypothetical, if you could have dinner with any ad person dead alive, who, who, who would it be?

Mark Ritson: Ooh. Look I would say probably ag Laffy, who's the ex, twice ex CEO at, at p and g is probably my favorite marketing hero.

I wouldn't mind, I've never met him, so I wouldn't mind talking to him. He'd probably be top of my list. Yeah, I, I'd go, I'd go with, with ag.

Richard Shotton: What was so good about Ag G? What did you admire about him?

Mark Ritson: I just think he did everything perfectly. I mean, he looked, all you've gotta know is like p and g is still the high [00:06:00] watermark for marketing for most people.

Right. And they brought him back, you know, he did an amazing tenure as a marketing driven, CEO killed a bunch of brands, strategically fixed the portfolio, got disciplined back to p and g, and then they went, look, we, we really need you to come back and do it again. And he came back and did it again, and then set up, you know, it, it, it's a, he's a phenomenal leader, so he, he'd be, he'd be the, he'd be the guest.

Yeah.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Question number three, what's something that you believed strongly and have now changed your mind on.

Mark Ritson: Oh probably the, the the priority on segmentation. So I, I was part of the generation of marketers that were, were told by Ted Levitt that you had to segment and then target, and then position, and if you went after everyone, you were doing it wrong.

And the influence of Ehrenberg bass, in order to say actually [00:07:00] mass marketing is very, very underrated. And there's an argument for mass marketing

changed my mind. I, I'm not, I'm only harp in that camp. I believe in two speed. So I believe you definitely do mass marketing for the brand, for the long of it. I still like the target segments for activation, for the short of it for performance, but I never used to believe in mass at all.

It was always carve out a small chunk of the market. That's how you do it. I, I, I don't buy that anymore.

Richard Shotton: Okay. Question four on the quickfire round. Hypotheticals, you've got a magic wand. What marketing perception would you erase from people's minds, from the minds of all marketers?

Mark Ritson: Oh, I think probably that brand building is delivers results in the long term only.

So I think one of the big revelations of the last five years is that brand building works short and long. It's performance stuff that only works short and doesn't work long, and that that's okay. But if you run a good brand campaign, you'll start [00:08:00] selling shit the next morning. You, you don't have to wait, you know, two years for the initial impact.

And I think there's too many marketers laboring under that assumption.

MichaelAaron Flicker: If you could only share one marketing hill that you would die on, something you would fight to the end on. Mm-hmm. Can you share with everyone what that is?

Mark Ritson: Oh it's probably market orientation. I, i, i it, if we can just stop marketers from talking to the market and listening from listening to customers first.

Everything gets better. Like, it's the, it's the, it's the, it's the station that if you can get a marketer to be market oriented, the train normally goes from there in the right direction. And if, if you don't start with that, it always goes wrong. So yeah. Market orientation. We are not here to sell products.

We are here to satisfy the needs of customers. Sounds obvious, but it's not obvious to most companies.

MichaelAaron Flicker: One, click down on that. What's the best way to hear what the, what the [00:09:00] customer wants.

Mark Ritson: There isn't one way, right? So it, it, it, one of the tricks of, of good market research is, is having a portfolio of tools that depending on the context, enables you to access it.

You know, I'm, I'm, again, I'm a bit, right? So I love my qual, I love ethnography. There's a place for groups. I love my quant, I love survey, I love conjoint. I'm a huge fan of, of synthetic data. I think it's superior to, to most human data now. And so yeah, I like, I like all of that. So it depends, I think is my unfair answer.

Okay.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Your answer that did not answer, but it's perfect. It's, it's perfect.

Mark Ritson: It wasn't an answer at all. Yes.

MichaelAaron Flicker: The answer is did not have a preconceived notion of what's best, but to use all the tools in your tool belt Fair.

Mark Ritson: Yeah. Or, or make sure you consider them and then pick is my point. Right? Sometimes we do too much, but it, it, it depends on where you are at the, at that time.

Right. I've [00:10:00] got, I've worked with a lot of quant researchers that won't do qual and sometimes that's all they needed to have done. Do you know what I mean?

MichaelAaron Flicker: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Perfect. Perfect. Well, that ends our quick fire round and now we'd love to open the floor. You started the conversation by saying, happy 2026.

What's Mark Ritz? Top two things, maybe top three at most. What are the things you're most focused on as for marketers, as we get underway in 2026?

Mark Ritson: I mean, for marketers, there's a couple for me. I mean, they're all self-serving, obviously. We're gonna go big on the idea that being trained in marketing makes you better at marketing, which seems pretty obvious to most people, but not to the 75% of marketers that don't have any training in marketing.

So one of the big agendas for me is to make it clear that most marketers aren't trained in marketing and that leaves them at a significant disadvantage and they're companies at a significant disadvantage. So that's, that's definitely on my [00:11:00] list. America is on my list. So we've signed a partnership with Adweek.

They will launched a Adweek Mini MBA. We've never really gone after the us strategically at least we're about 5%, 10% American on the course and on the mini MBA. But we've, that's just been, we've acquired people, you know, we've never spent money there. So working with Adweek to really go after the US and, and that's interesting because.

A, it's huge. You know, it's, you know, I always think of it as 10 times the size of the uk. 'cause there's a network effect as well, you know, with American companies and also it's America. I was trained in America, you know, I did my postdoc in the States. I spent my first 10 years in the States. Marketing comes from the States.

It was invented in America. So to be able to go back with mini MBA and maybe make it successful has a symbolic value to me as well. You know, it's, it's, it feels, you know, I'm, I'm closer to 60 than 50 now, so I'm, I don't want to use the legacy word 'cause [00:12:00] I think that's horseshit, but I, I would like, I would like to spend the last 10 years of, of my sort of operating time.

I hope I'm not gonna be dead soon. On, on that mission, it feels like it's a great mission

MichaelAaron Flicker: because so many of our listeners are here in America. Mark.

Mark Ritson: Hmm.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Give, let's give a space for one. Incremental click on why the mini MBA meets that need of educating the 75% of marketers who don't have that. Why. Why is it the right size?

Why is it the right depth? That wasn't in our planned questions, but it feels like no.

Mark Ritson: Hey,

MichaelAaron Flicker: talk. Talk through it.

Mark Ritson: Hey, keep it, it's a great question for me to answer. Yeah. Thank you. Well, look, I think there's two main things, right? It's better than any other training on the planet. I, you know, I won a teaching prize at MIT six weeks after I got there.

I'm a, you know, I'm a very, very good marketing teacher. You know, I was an acclaimed professor. Most of the people running these online courses I've never taught before. I taught for 25 [00:13:00] years, so I know what I'm doing. And the course is amazing, right? Our net promoter score is 86, you know, I mean, and, and we, we train senior marketers.

These aren't kids, you know, the average age is 44. So first of all, it's just better than anything else out there, and we have the data to prove it. And second, I think equally importantly though, it's done around the student. So there's no live sessions. We've abandoned time. You do it from home and you do it wherever you want to do it.

You do it in the gym, you do it in the commute, you do it in the office with your colleagues. The idea of pulling people into a room for six hours with 99 other people, it, it's a 17th century model. It's not how people learn. So, you know, the combination of the best training in marketing in the world and, and the format, which is a killer.

Yeah, it means we, we know we have a great product. The challenge now is getting every, everyone in America to do it. And you know that, you know better than me with [00:14:00] Americans. The good thing about 'em is, other than there's lots of 'em, and they have a bit of money, is they love education far more than Europeans.

So if we can get it working, we really feel like there's a huge opportunity.

Richard Shotton: Right. At the beginning when you were talking about the training amongst Martys, you, you, you, you gave a stat of, you know, roughly 75% of martyrs not getting trade, and that's. Quite high figure. You'd imagine 75% of architects are hopefully are trained properly.

Why do you think as an industry it's resistant to that formal training?

Mark Ritson: Look, I think there's, there's a lot of answers to that. One of it is we all think, we all start out as consumers, right? And it's not like with architects, you start out living in a house and you go, Ooh, I think I could probably design a house 'cause I've lived in one.

But in, in marketing, I think, 'cause we all started life as a consumer, we feel like we're also already involved in the world of marketing. That's got something to do with it. Second, a lot of the marketing training is shit. [00:15:00] And, and it can be used as a very strong argument for not being trained. You know, most university courses and business school courses in marketing are the, they're the weak part of an MBA because the people teaching marketing don't work in marketing and have never worked in marketing.

I don't think that's, that's the right way. So yeah, we are not, we haven't been doing a good job. And then finally we have, you know, many of our significant influential figures around three quarters of them, 'cause it goes with the average, also don't have any training in marketing. And they go out of their way to also suggest that, you know, you don't need to be trained in marketing.

It's a waste of time. 'cause they're rationalizing themselves. And, and all of that's nonsense. You, you, you know, I have a very simple sentence, which I trot out about once a month on LinkedIn when someone goes after me with their, you know, you don't need this, you don't need that. And the sentence is just that being trained in marketing makes you better at marketing the end.[00:16:00]

MichaelAaron Flicker: If you were to think about the best feedback you got from the mini MBA program, things that people learned that they, they point to and they say, mark, what I took away, like the actual learning I had, could you share one or two of those?

Mark Ritson: Oh, look, there's two or three. I mean, we, we study this quite a lot, right?

The confidence piece is huge, right? A lot of these marketers that haven't had a training do feel deep in their soul, like their imposters and the cure for imposter syndrome is one, get a train, get a training, and then second, just realize how bad most people are. So the confidence thing is huge. The strategy thing is huge.

So most of the marketers we train have just done tactical stuff and suddenly. We can train them in the strategic approach that sets up the tactical approach and that sets fire to a lot of them. Another big bit of feedback we get is the big picture. Most people, even in their sort of 15th year of working in marketing, are in one little niche of it.

They've [00:17:00] never seen the big picture, they've never joined it all together, so they can't be a marketer. We, you know, the mini NBA marketing

covers everything, right? Not just comms, you know? So I think getting the big picture is something a lot of them appreciate as well. And yeah, when you lock it all together, you, you know, I think our current stat is about 94% of the people that do the course say it has immediately made them a much better marketer.

So it, it just makes them better at marketing, which, you know, is, that's the purpose, right? We're not here to educate. It's really not the purpose, right? We are here to make people better at marketing and, and, and we do it, and they love being better. Everyone likes improving. It turns out you.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Lovely. So we've, we, we, we've got all some homework to do.

Let's turn to some of your biggest concepts because if we can explain these to folks that could start to think about how to engage and, yeah. In one of Richard and [00:18:00] I's favorite articles of yours, you argue that consistency is the single most important aspect of marketing. Maybe you can talk about why Yeah.

And why so many brands are challenged with this.

Mark Ritson: Yeah. I mean, the challenge is the interesting bit, right? I mean, again, it seems like an obvious point. When you work on a brand or an ad campaign or, or any part of marketing for a three or four year tenure, you start to get bored with it. Because the crucial thing is the way we, let's take advertising as an example.

The way we create an ad is diametrically opposite to how an ad is consumed. We work on the ad for three months, we focus on it with enormous attention. It, we remember every aspect of it. We, we are literally eight hours a day looking at the thing, right? And then once it goes out into the wild, consumers don't know which brand it's from, are paying partial attention to it, haven't, don't really know what the company is.

And so [00:19:00] what happens, again, if you're not market oriented, is marketers start to forget. The vast majority of the market don't know who they are, don't pay any attention to them, have no interest in what they offer. And so consistency becomes crucial because for the most part, you are not operating with a high level of attention, and most people aren't, aren't taking this huge chunk of knowledge away each time.

So for me, consistency is really about just making sure there's a baseline of presence and familiarity, because that's all you'll get for most of the, your marketing efforts with most of the market. And that's okay, right? But when consumers get, when marketers get bored with their campaigns, think, oh, we've, we've done that, we've done a lot of purple, let's try something different.

Of course, they're entertaining themselves, but that's not the point. That's, we've got it. The consistency is for the consumer.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. There's a, there's an amazing study. It's quite an old one. It's a 1977 1, but it's this guy [00:20:00] Lee Ross, I think it was at Stanford, and he talks about this idea of the false consensus effect.

So essentially he makes the argument that again and again, unless you make very big efforts to overcome it, we massively overestimate the prevalence of our beliefs and behaviors. Yeah. So he does this super simple study, gives people a thought experiment, says, look, you're driving through a street, it's a 30 mile an hour zone.

You're doing 35. Policeman pulls you over, you bang to rights, gives you a speeding ticket. But when you get home you realize the speeding ticket's riddled with errors. You know it's the wrong registration number, wrong car make. So he says you probably, if you contested it, you could get, you could get away with it and get the fine rescinded, but you were actually guilty.

So what would you do is the question, would you contest or would you accept the fine? Once people answer and doesn't really care which way they answer, the real question is, okay, now you've answered, what do you think everyone else would do? And what you find is if people would contest the [00:21:00] fine, they think everyone else would.

If they'd accept the fine, they think most other people would accept it. That's it. And I think that's what happens often with Martin. You know? Yeah. They feel bored. They feel like they love this product, and therefore they're assuming everyone else shares those passions. They don't put enough effort into.

Mark Ritson: It's a very good observation, Richard. It's very good because it, it really, it really is quite obvious when you look at it that it's silly to do, but you're absolutely right. I mean, it's a combination of that consensus effect and lack of market orientation.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So, mark, we're talking about creative consistency.

And maybe you can help define for all of our listeners, what do we mean by consistency? Do we mean running the same exact ad? Do we mean that parts of the ad are consistent? Help listeners understand when, when we are advocating for consistency, what are we advocating should stay the same versus what can change?

Mark Ritson: Well, you know, there's, there's a sort of a continuum of consistency, you know, at at the most extreme level. Yeah. I mean, we could just be talking about running the same [00:22:00] ads for longer. We don't do that enough. We are pulling ads far too early and we are not, we, we are making too many ads that, that, so the first level is, yeah, it could just be that at, at a slightly sort of less extreme angle.

It, it's making sure there's a recurring motif within the work. What system? One called a fluent device. You know, you think about Spec Savers or Geico having a kind of a pattern in the ads that it always plays the same way. A consistency of story stellar artois back in the day, you know, reassuring the expensive, if you keep coming back at the more base level, it's just having the same distinctive brand assets present across all the work.

So even if you've got a new ad, you are using the same pallet to make sure it, it, it looks like you. And then even at the deeper level, it's strategic consistency. So it's not turning the wheel, you know, all the time with new positions and new [00:23:00] targets. So right across that gamma, it's, it's basically getting it right upfront and then allowing the work to, to, to build over many years.

I mean, the general rubric that I apply is, it takes about 10 years to get there. When you get that, you know, number into your head, the, the bigger picture and the the need for less twists and turns becomes apparent. I think

MichaelAaron Flicker: it, it's the concept of wearing in versus wearing out. And you've talked a lot about the, the idea of wear out maybe just being too heroize or too it's a myth.

It,

Mark Ritson: it, it's a myth. I mean, it came out of work that was done in the seventies on a lot of college students. And, and like a lot of that work at the time, it was very experimental and very a contextual, you know, so you can prove things in a lab that aren't necess, that are scientifically true, but not externally valid.

And, and I think maybe wear out was one of those variables. [00:24:00]
Certainly what we're seeing from a, a actual data that's been collected in the wild is that, you know, I, I think that everyone's found the same thing, but probably the best study is the system One study that looks at. 10,000 ads and looks at how long they've been in market from first airing to current airing.

And we're talking about a few days to, I think it's seven years. And the data set is absolutely flat in terms of average impact, average brand building impact. It shouldn't be flat. If such a thing as wear out were true, we should see some fine form of declining trend. It's not there. So for, for me, it's a, you know, obviously yes, at some point you do want to change your ads, but in other cases they may well keep working for you.

For many years and, and marketers have been far too impatient

Richard Shotton: with that data, could, could there be a bit of a problem with survivorship bias? Like if you, if you've run an ad for seven days or [00:25:00] whatever it was, presumably that ad was bloody awful, therefore you stopped it. So maybe there is a little bit of wear out happening, but.

Survivorship by, its kind of balance it

Mark Ritson: out. I think there's maybe a little bit in there. The thing that pushes back against it is that the ads that, you know, the, the young ads are still in market. It's just that they, you know, they haven't necessarily been pulled yet. Right. So the live ones are in there.

It still might be a, there might be a little bit of survivorship in there, but, but I think also we've, we've got such a huge sample of data and, you know, analytic partners have shown the same thing in with a different method. They're famously, you know, they had, what, 50, I think it was 52,000 ads.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah.

Yeah.

Mark Ritson: And they showed that, you know, 52,100 hadn't worn out and, you know, 200 had 14. Yeah. 14 in some

MichaelAaron Flicker: real low number. Yeah.

Mark Ritson: So I think, yeah, the, the, the methods are certainly a, you know, it's a tricky one, right? But generally what we're seeing is. The, the, the mental models of marketers are incredibly impatient, and the reality of the advertising they're [00:26:00] producing is far more durable.

Where, how long it goes is a different question to your point, Richard, but I think ge, you know, I'm, I'm a rhetorical academic in the sense that I, I don't really care about the stats, right? I, I want, I want to persuade marketers. To go in market for longer. You know, it's like the field of Bette stuff where everyone says, yeah, but they're only looking at the award-winning campaigns.

And I'm like, you know, I don't fucking care. Do you know what I mean? Like what you need to do is invest more money in branding, you know? Now that's not scientifically correct. It's in, it's inappropriate. Right.

Richard Shotton: But I heard Les eight make a nice analogy. He said, he lean into that and said, yeah, it's, it's, it's not, is a sliver of campaigns and it's the better campaigns that are in the IPA effectiveness database.

But he said, he, he, he said, use it. Think of it as a football analogy. It's like learning about what football is by watching Man City Barcelona and Liverpool. You know? Yes. Maybe it's a little bit different in non-league, but you can get the basic rules. That's right. You can get the basic things. I thought that was a, [00:27:00] a kind of,

Mark Ritson: that's a good analogy.

Yeah. I mean, the problem we get to is we get into the, I mean it's, it's bedeviled marketing for 50 years. At some point, the American marketing academics decided marketing was more of a hard science, and we went down this ridiculous path of. Of being more obsessed with the statistical performance of the data and the market research than what it was actually telling us.

In practice, we should have been more like, business schools should have been more like law schools and they weren't. They became more like, you know, chemistry schools.

Richard Shotton: What, what you be more like law law schools more like case studies or what, what would

Mark Ritson: Yeah. Look less normal, logical to use a \$50 word.

So we, we, we, we went down a path of saying, you know, marketing should be more scientific. And so what we should do is we should have essentially these. Very, very arcane high science journals doing extraordinary methodological handstands to produce knowledge. And the problem with that is it attracts people to the, to the [00:28:00] marketing academic field who are wonderful academic researchers, but know fuck all about marketing.

Whereas in law school, you, you get very good lawyers and very experienced lawyers or people that just love law, teaching law. We could have done with a bit more of that in the marketing discipline, I feel.

Yes.

Well, and there's a reason for that, Michael. It, it, again, it goes back to not having any education. So what a lot of these people are doing, I I, when they talk about how, or that they, you know, I, I get this question monthly, right? Someone will say to me [00:29:00] in a, in a world where consumer attention spans are much shorter, where the old rule of marketing doesn't no longer applies, where everything has changed, and, and you stop them and say, I don't care what your question is.

You, you, you've, you've panicked yourself into a wobbly mess there. You know what I mean? None of that is true. You know what I mean? You, you're talking nonsense before you even get to your question, right? But that's what happens in an industry where we don't have education. 'cause what we're trying to say is.

Everything that happened before is, is, is irrelevant, and that's why I, I don't need any training in this thing. It's all about what's happening right now, which is where I am right now. It's, it's definitely linked to it as well. Everything we are learning about marketing right now can be linked to what has happened in the past.

We aren't changing any faster than we changed 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago. It's just that a lot of these marketers weren't there. When the internet arrived or when TV supplanted radio, you know, it, it, it's a, it's an industry that's built on [00:30:00] change, and that's great, but it doesn't mean that everything has to be thrown out of a window.

And, and, but it helps the people that don't know the history of marketing and don't know about it formally to be able to say this is completely different. I mean, you look at product marketers, right? Product managers, they've invented

a completely nonsensical made up vocabulary that's half wrong and half based on shit from a marketing textbook.

And it's like, what? You know, what are you talking about? You know? Give

Michael Aaron Flicker: us a few examples of that. Like what, what,

Mark Ritson: well, the, you know, the IC ideal customer profile, the ICP, what the fuck? You know, look, you've just done segmentation and targeting and portrait in a sort of shitty way all in one go there.

You know what I mean? It's, it's, it's, it's fascinating and they have no idea. You know, I mean, the one that drives me potty is EE. Everyone's constantly trying to talk about how the four Ps of marketing are wrong. And not none of them know what they are, [00:31:00] literally what they are. Right? They've never read the work.

They don't know how, they don't know what the original intention of it was. It was, it's still relevant. 60 years later, we live in a marketing discipline that's obsessed with advertising because we didn't remember what McCarthy was telling us, which is there are four tactical horsemen, right? And promotion is one of them.

Don't forget the other three. But we started saying, oh no, but there's another P, which is purpose, and another one, which is philosophy, and another one, which is people. Meanwhile, the other three Ps. That he told us, you know, you're gonna have to watch out for, 'cause it's not just about advertising. All left the building and went to other places.

So yeah, we, we, we, we reinvent this discipline without first understanding it, which is a very, it's a very peculiar feature of marketing.

Richard Shotton: Hmm. Because that, that, that seems to be a, a, a theme of what you regularly write about the over focus on promotion expense of the other piece.

Mark Ritson: It's, it's not that interesting Richard, right.

I mean comms is, we all got [00:32:00] into marketing 'cause communications got our attention as consumers, right. We need to. Then once you get behind the desk, however, acknowledge that the promotional p is easily the least important

of the four, certainly the least valuable. Yeah. Product. Most of the, as I get older and more experienced, most of this comes down to product.

You, we, Michael's asking me about mini MBA at the start. It, it, it's, we are, we're marketing it. Okay. I think we're not particularly good at it, but we have a better product and that's, you know, 90% of the game and marketers can be involved in product is the lesson. Right. And price. Price is where it's at.

Right. All, all I've learned on my journey over the last 30 years is that it's all about profit, not revenue. That. Price is the great driver of, of profit more than anything else in that the company can, can, can actuate and that marketing's influence on price when the marketer knows what they're doing is phenomenal.

You put those [00:33:00] three things together and you've got a, an amazing, amazing formula for success. But we're bedeviled with an obsession with, you know, small 32nd films, which, you know, I've a, you know, I, you know, my standard line is they're about, you know, 8% total of the marketing field is, is comm, is communications.

So advertising, you know, what would we say give it about half of that 4%, you know?

Richard Shotton: So, so when it comes to pricing, what do you think are some of the most common mistakes that, that, that brands make? What, what are they biggest watch outs?

Mark Ritson: I mean, the main one is the, the way most companies set price is without the marketing team.

And it's not like I'm like, oh, we should let the marketing team get involved 'cause they're my friends. Marketers significantly change the way we do pricing if the marketer is a marketer and not an advertising person, right? So most companies without marketing influence set price by looking at two things that are irrelevant.

They look [00:34:00] at the costs of the product and they look at their competitors' prices through their own eyes rather than through the eyes of the consumer. And, and that's what finance people do. That's what they think is important, right? Cost really has nothing. You, you've almost gotta take the opposite approach.

You must liberate a company from even thinking about cost. It anchors them in the wrong place. You know what I mean? You, you obviously, you have to charge more than cost, but other than that, there isn't a lot of input there. We must move to what is a consumer prepared to pay under certain circumstances for the product.

And this, of course is the realm of marketing. So we need research to identify the value and the, and the amount that a consumer would be prepared to pay. And that can only be done by marketers who are trained in pricing and marketing and research. The other one that is also huge, probably even bigger than the initial setting of the price with research and more up your street is the way we [00:35:00] present a price is more important than the actual price.

And you are probably the only two people that would understand that. I say that and you go, well, yeah, that's fucking obvious. Yeah. We know that. Nobody else knows that. Right? Everyone else thinks that the physical dollar amount is more important than the way I presented it or framed it or anchored it or located it.

And you know, again, you know, we could do, you know, a nine hour documentary on it if you wanted, right? Yeah. But basically price setting should be handled by marketers. Price changes should be handled by marketers, not by finance people who have absolutely no clue about any of this at all.

Richard Shotton: Well, I think your point about price presentation is absolutely fascinating.

I always thinking if working with a brand, it's one of the first things I wanna do. Because if you've got a big website or in, or you're in control of your stores and you've got a bit of scale, you can run lots of tests. There's an amazing body of research into how to best [00:36:00] present prices. You know, don't talk about the total amount, break it down to smaller units, change the comparison set, give people three options, talk about differentials, not total price.

You can learn within a few hours which of these work for your brand. And it's straight to the bottom line.

Mark Ritson: And, and the thing that you guys don't understand, not because you're not stupid, because your world is, look what you can do with price at my end. When you do that shit and optimize it, the impact on corporate profitability is, it's insane, right?

It, it, it like, nevermind having a good ad. Fuck that. If, if we can experiment with price and frame it and, and, and just add, you know, a, you know, a 1%, the old Wharton studies are very, are very good. They, you know, they did it across thousands of businesses. A 1% increase in price. It averages out at around nine, 10% impact on profitability.

Right. So it, it's, it's stunning what can happen. Right. And, and, and so yeah, I mean, [00:37:00] pro, I mean, again, let's come back. We still need a good product that you still wanna buy and rebuy, but let's put that one down and say, we've got that worked out. Price absolutely. Is the next place you'd go. What is the absolute price we wanna set with research?

And then how do you want to communicate and present it? Absolutely.

MichaelAaron Flicker: We had Les Burnett on last year, mark, and he had a very interesting thing towards the end of our conversation. He said an understudied part in his opinion of in the field of marketing effectiveness, was how. Great brand building can reduce pricing sensitivity.

Mark Ritson: Yeah.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And, and so this is to your point that you, you know, it's not just the short where you can just display price differently to maybe move the, the action in the moment, but great full marketing can increase your ability to raise price and people will be less sensitive to that [00:38:00] change.

Mark Ritson: Yeah, I mean, I, I mentioned McCain when we started, right?

And if you look at McCain's IPA effectiveness winning paper the Grand Prix, they actually don't increase unit sales at all in the uk. They just double the price without any loss in demand. Yeah. And, and again, most people miss it. It's like, yeah, but they didn't increase this, their actual unit sales.

And you're like, yeah, I know. And they couldn't, you know, that doesn't matter because if you had a choice between increasing. Yeah, your total unit sales are doubling your actual price. You know, in most situations, you know which way you're gonna go, right? So, yeah. Yeah, yeah. I, I think it's a, it's a huge thing, but you need marketers that understand profit and gross margin, right?

I mean, most marketers are running these 30% discounts because they think that, oh, we'll still get 70% of the profit, right? But, but you won't, you know what I mean? You've just eviscerated all of your profitability there. You know,

when most companies run a 30, 40% off [00:39:00] all, all systems being the same, then you are, you are basically not gonna make any money.

Do you know what I mean? Like, of any kind at all. Unless you are, you've increased your demand phenomenally and you've got unlimited supply. You know what I mean? It doesn't make sense.

Richard Shotton: Mark, so we've talked about a couple of your themes that you regularly go back to consistency, the over focus on promotion. I think the other one that you. Regularly come back to, is an attack maybe on the kind of the tribal nature of Martin that people fall into camps of either being, it's all about distinctiveness or it's all about yeah.

Differentiation. You touched on both them, but you've got your idea of double D. Can you talk to us about

Mark Ritson: Yeah. It has an unfortunate connotation with breasts, which I try to avoid, but, and I'm not doing it like in a carry on style fashion, but you know, you know, an unknown fact. I don't write the column titles for my columns.

Right. And so various associate [00:40:00] editors have gone with, you know, double D marketing being the way, okay,

Richard Shotton: this was not your invention, you washing

Mark Ritson: your hands with, you need to get Russell Pars on to explain wincing. I'm like, it's true. They are. I mean, I think I might have mentioned the two D's, but when, when you write it as double D, those who familiar with the over of Playtex will and Wonder Bra will, will have a different mental image.

Yeah. Look, I, I don't like the tribalism. Because again, I think marketing is unusual in, in we are, we are a, both, this discipline almost every time that a a little bit of both, not necessarily in equal amounts, gives you a better result than choosing A or B. And we can do that with quantum qual research distinctiveness and differentiation strategy and creative, digital and traditional.

We're about to do it with synthetic data versus actual human data. Right. Which is better, you know what I mean? The, it turns out when you put 'em together, they're really, really good A a as they would be, because both is them normally wins, you know? [00:41:00] So for me, yeah, the battle with differentiation and distinctiveness has been a harder one for a couple of reasons.

First 'cause I think distinctiveness is the great discovery of the last sort of 10, 15 years. And we thank Aaron Bur bass for that. But also differentiation was incorrectly developed by Michael Porter in a way that was incorrect. So you don't get to say that very often, but I'm, I've taken me a long time to get to the conclusion.

But Porter's whole, whole approach to differentiation is wrong. Not, not its role, but the way he defines it. As an, as native English speakers, we all know that unique and different aren't the same thing. I'm taller than Michael. It doesn't mean that I'm unique in my inches or that Michael lacks inches.

It's that we're different in that I have more and he has less of that thing that's differentiation and it leads you down a totally different strategic path, which is much more [00:42:00] realistic but, but ironically much harder to achieve and then makes sense set next to distinctiveness. Then they become very powerful.

Right. But we've, thanks to Michael Porter, we've spent 30 years sending marketers out, trying to find something. Unique that literally never existed in the first place. Right.

MichaelAaron Flicker: I've read your writings on this quite a bit, mark, and so I just wanna drive home the point for listeners, you use this example of differentiation, meaning you can have more of something or less than another, and you're setting that up against saying you need something truly unique in the world.

Not true. You just talk for another 10 seconds about that. I just think this is the point that we want to correct in people's thinking.

Mark Ritson: Yeah. Look, and, and, and the problem I've got with Erenberg Bass is they correctly have shown that most brands don't have unique features. And I'm like, I know I'm with you on that.

But some of them have more associations for fun or for, you know, friendly or something, which [00:43:00] can be a very powerful relative driver. So what it shows you is everyone's on a seven point liker scale. Everyone's gonna have. Some associations on each of those attributes. And yes, it's correlated partly to size of brand.

And yes, you've got to be distinctive first to get on the map, to have that. All of that is true. But if you focus on one or two of those things for a very long time,

with really good creative, with more budget with better media choices, with products and other PS backing you up over a period of 10 years, you end up.

With actual relative differentiation, which if it's on the two or three things that are driving factors for consumers can give you a spectacular advantage in the market. Yeah. So I, I, I still think that the distinctiveness piece is the most important piece. 'cause both doesn't mean 50 [00:44:00] 50, right? That was be naive.

I still think distinctiveness is 70, 80% of the game in most brands. But I think an important piece is, and also we have this and this perceptions which enable us to sort of, to squeak ahead in, in other cases. So for me, yeah, it's gotta be there, but it's relative differentiation and it means when you do positioning, you have to be choiceful.

The biggest problem in marketing right now is positioning is a shit show. Everyone has too much. We are literally talking one or two things. You focus upon in your communications, not a PowerPoint deck with, you know, when you add up all the words, 30 or 40 words, that, that will achieve nothing.

Richard Shotton: Apologies for bringing this up because in your unique style, you said it's the, a fair but dumb question.

Mm-hmm. You say the most annoying question you get asked is, does this apply to B2B? Now, [00:45:00] what, why do you think that gets asked? Oh,

God.

Mark Ritson: It's, it's kind, it's like the tribal thing we just talked about, Richard, right? Yeah. We've got to have some special niche for small brands all of a sudden, and we've gotta have a completely separate niche for B2B brands.

My point is, you know, it's like chimpanzees and humans, and we can decide who is who in the B2B B2C analogy. We are 98.7% the same. So, you know, most of the stuff we can just get on with, do you know what I mean? I mean, my big problem is someone will say to me, you know, but does this apply to B2B? I see how it would work for B2C.

And they put it all together in this nice little Coca-Cola colored bag, you know, and you go, no, no, no, no, no, B2C isn't a thing. Right? Because in that B2C bag, you've got yeah, drinks, you've got yoga, you've got violins, you've got car

insurance, you've got, you know, sex toys, you've got fucking mortgages. You know, it, it, [00:46:00] none of them are the same.

They're all different, you know? So you are different. They're different. There's a co, there is a, you know, a, a a, a common 98.7% theme in this that we should just recognize and move on. Do you know what I mean? I'm, I'm, I'm really tired of it. We are literally 50% B2B, and 50% B2C on the mini NBA. The syllabus is the same.

We see no deviation in net promoter score or happiness between the two groups at all. You know, and if you look at the B2B Marketing Institute at LinkedIn, they've done that brilliant work over the years of pulling mostly B2C theories into B2B and then bringing some B2B theories, like the 95 5 rule into B2C.

That tells you everything. Right?

Richard Shotton: Oh, go on. So for the people that don't know the 95 5 rule.

Mark Ritson: Oh yeah. I mean it's John DO'S theory from Ehrenberg Bass originally. It's linked to me though, and I think I wanna make that link more, more, more, more famous. [00:47:00] Pete Weinberg and John Lombardo from at the time were working at the LinkedIn B2B Institute, came to Sydney and then flew first to Tasmania to get incredibly drunk with me.

And then. John, Pete just stayed in bed, but John to his credit, went to the Ehrenberg Bass Institute with an enormous hangover at like 6:00 AM flew to Adelaide. Met John Doz, and John was telling him about, you know, his, and he said, he sort of mentioned it in passing, you know, that, you know, well, obviously 95% of consumers are not in market at any time.

And, and Lombard was like, what was that? Say that again. And they made John's theory famous. Right. So what, what basically do has discovered is that if you look at any market, it started out in B2B, but it applies to B2C pretty, pretty well. So you've got, basically, you've got 95% of the market who are. Not in market right now.

I always use men with haircuts to illustrate the point. If you offered [00:48:00] a free haircut service on the street today, 95% of men wouldn't stop because even though it's free, they don't need a haircut, right? So they just keep moving. But 5% would go, great, I need a haircut. The minute you get that split, and it is not 95 5 in every case, but there's a proportionate amount everything changes and it explains most of the good theories of targeting the 95 5 rule.

For example, if we think about the 5% who are in market, you want to go after them with targeted rational product, bottom of the funnel communications, right? But because there's 19 times more. Not in market. You probably wanna spend more money predisposing the rest of the market because it's too late often to get them when they come in.

So we are predisposing the 95% with top of funnel emotional mass marketing. That's consistent so that when they are [00:49:00] triggered to be in purchase, they carry our brand preference, the salience for that brand into their, into their decision. And the data that has started to emerge says 70, 80% of the time the brand that you did have salience for here.

Is the one that you'll buy here? Yeah. Now again, you want to do both, but I think 95 5 is probably the most important new theory in certainly in 10 years in marketing.

Michael Aaron Flicker: And if you, and if you're listening to this conversation and you're excited to learn this concept, one of the best things for marketers to track, to know how they're doing towards this goal is there, like how can they know you made the compelling argument 10 year timeframe?

We want to pick a strategy. Yeah. We want to pick our assets. How do I know I'm moving in the right direction? What are the, what are the things I should look at, the signals or the leading indicators to know if I'm on the right track?

Mark Ritson: Look, again, we come [00:50:00] back to approaching it differently, right? So for the 5% you've got good old fashioned ROI, which is a highly appropriate metric.

Yeah. We give ROIA bunch of shit correctly, but not for the 5% I spent, you know. A hundred thousand dollars targeting a bunch of people to buy a muck rib sandwich. How many of them bought it within the next 24 hours? 'cause that's the, the timeframe, right? We can see the cost, we can see the return. We can test and learn.

So yeah, performance marketing and performance metrics for, for that is appropriate. The problem is for the brand building stuff, you can show a, a tentative link to what eventually happens later with econometrics and, and you should do that. But on a day-to-day basis, if you, as you know, people ask me all the time, what, what are the best me?

What are the, what are the killer metrics? And the answer is, well, what are your objectives? That's the killer metric, right? It's whatever the objective is. So if you are trying to drive salience, if you are trying to drive brand preference or [00:51:00] consideration, they're the things you should be measuring on the long term from the mass market on your campaign.

So brand metrics for branding and performance metrics for performance. And don't mix the two up is the point.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Separate the strategies, separate the tactics, and then separate the analysis for the results.

Mark Ritson: Yeah, I mean, I'm, I, I, I push back on people that say, look, the, the long and the short, it's all the same at the end of the day. Well, it is ultimately, but it is the key point about field and Burnett's work for me, which is very important to my career, is that it's a really crap title.

It's a really good title for a book, but it doesn't capture the real width of their work. It wasn't just long and short. It was mass and targeted. It was emotional and rational. Yeah. It was 95 and it was five. Yeah. There's much more to that work than just long term short term. Right. That made for a great book title, but it really [00:52:00] hides the true width of their contribution to marketing.

And I think you do need two pots, like separate your budget. I, I see marketers that can do this or can do that. There's very few that can do both. Most good CMOs have got two distinct teams, and I think that's appropriate as well. They're very different jobs with, with very different paradigms attached to them.

MichaelAaron Flicker: I'm watching our time and I'm going to think, Richard, shall we ask Mark any quick, any, any questions on behavioral science that our listeners would love and we want to get Mark's perspective on? Yeah, yeah.

Richard Shotton: Well, the only one I, I was, I was thinking of maybe quick before they get, we get to that like you've got a very good line in, in pity quotes, mark in the, in the columns.

And one of the ones I like that you said before is what people think of you is far less important than the more brutal objective of getting people to think about you.

Mark Ritson: Yeah.

Richard Shotton: Now, why do you think brands play it safe so often?
[00:53:00]

Mark Ritson: Oh, I, I think we've managed brands with too much emphasis on image and not enough on salience.

And I think we have to change our approach, right. I, I think we can trade back to my earlier point. You know, I think salience is 70, 80% of it and brand image, brand associations, maybe it's 20%. Once you get that balance, it's clear that you need to trade a lot of the control and perfectionism that we had in the naughties in brand management.

You know, ooh, you could destroy your brand, you know, with, with inconsistency and doing something that isn't quite right. We have to realize that you still want to be on brand, but there's a lot more forgiveness out there. And actually you can trade a little bit of taste, trade, a little bit of perfectionism so that people notice you.

And I think my career is a good example of that. You know, I've done things I'm very I say embarrassed about, but I'm not proud of, you know, I put my ass on the front cover of, of of, [00:54:00] of the marketing week. That's a good one. I did an article about the size of my penis, you know, it's pretty distasteful stuff, right?

But it, it, I think it was essential in, in, in order to get to that salience point. 'cause if it's not interesting and salient, all, all the bets are off. So, yeah, I do think we, we overconcern ourselves with the image at the expense of salience. And you know, the first rule of marketing is they must know that it's you.

Richard Shotton: Yes. 'cause maybe the e the most, one of the most effective ways to increase attention or awareness is sometimes to sacrifice a small proportion of people disliking you. You know, there will be people who have a

Mark Ritson: Yeah.

Richard Shotton: You know, angry reaction to some of those tactics. But for every one of those, it's probably 10 that know the name, know the that's it.

Article and and, and at least of thinking about it

Mark Ritson: and, and even the ones that are angry about a certain thing, you've [00:55:00] achieved your salience and there'll be other battles down the

track, right. If you don't exist in their consciousness. You know, I, I mean, you know, we talked about America at the start of the interview.

It's, you know, I, I'm neither loved nor hated in America, and that's, that's the problem. Do you know what I mean? Like, it's, that's the issue. You know what I mean? Without that, you don't, you literally don't exist. So, yeah, I do think you have to take, I think you have to realize you are less well known than your, you might think your brand is, and I think you have to also acknowledge that people forget about your brand all the time too.

One of the implications of salience is it isn't like awareness. It's, it's a, it's a constant battle to be at, at the top right, to come first, right? So, yeah, I think it, it, it has to be, the main focus is constantly producing it. And again, the contrast with brand managers is they think, well, I'm, you know, I've been doing this job for 10 years.

Everybody knows our brand. You know, I, I work for Benefit Cosmetics many years ago, a brilliant team, brilliant [00:56:00] CEO, who never really done any research. And we did a bit of research. And in the US market, which we thought was mature and basically done, we had something like 14% awareness. And they, they thought there was something wrong with the research.

And I'm like, no, no, no, no. It's just that most of the market don't really think about you. You think you are done because your sales have been a billion dollars flat for five years. That's not the case. You know, the, the game always goes on, you know.

Richard Shotton: And do you think there are any brands that spring to mind who've not fallen for that trap of playing to things too safe who have actually benefit through controversy?

Mark Ritson: Look, the classic one in the UK's brew dog, right? Which, which you know, has had its challenges, to say the least with its operational structure. But I think they're the first brand that worked out. And partly 'cause their positioning was they were this real authentic craft ale, you know, and they were gonna be real with their statements.

But that quickly you know, evolved 10 [00:57:00] years ago into, we're just gonna put out it really offensive outdoor advertising, really offensive, you know, brand names. Was it Pony Killer was one of their, one of their ails, you know what I mean? Like it, oh,

Richard Shotton: dead, dead Pony Club, I think.

Mark Ritson: Dead, dead, dead Pony Killer and stuff.

I mean, you know, they, they realized that people talking about them in the pub was kind of the goal. And what they said wasn't as important as Brew Dog being there. And I, I, you know, the, the, the, the great example that I always used was, was Marmite during Brexit. Marmite being a Unilever brand, they put the price up because of the, the, the, the sudden departure from the UK was gonna cause currency fluctuations.

So Marmite price went up significantly and there was a, a month of incredibly negative PR about it in the British newspapers. Tesco said, we refuse to sell Marmite 'cause they put the price up because of Brexit, blah, blah. You couldn't have seen a worse result. U gov had huge declines in [00:58:00] that brand's reputation, everything else.

And then at the end of the month, Marmite had sold more Marmite than ever before. And the lesson is salience, right. That, to your point, yeah. People were pissed off with Marmite, but fuck, they were talking about it like never before. So we have to recognize that. Yeah. That is a key point. The only caveat is that leads you into that blind alley of there's no such thing as bad publicity There is.

As, as Elon Musk is clearly demonstrating to us. It's just much less likely than we once thought.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. Yeah. And maybe Elon Musk is a, an example of how far you do have to push things to then start having an effect on, on, on, on sales.

Mark Ritson: Well, it's, it's that and also there's a couple of interesting factors.

Another one is how famous brand, well, family competition

Richard Shotton: and Yeah,

Mark Ritson: yeah. Well, how famous the brand already is. If it's a small brand, you could have Hitler consuming it and it would be good for you because you have like N point N 1% and suddenly you, you get a hundred percent of the [00:59:00] market. Finding out a value.

See what I mean? So size of brand is important. The other one is whether the publicity is running counter to your position. We forget now, but Tesla was a

progressive environmental brand not that long ago. So you, you add all that together and Yeah. The, the Tesla situation is a perfect example.

Michael Aaron Flicker: Your raising of Elon Musk no, not, not a not a personality.

Easy to miss. You've softened your stance on personal branding. Mm-hmm. You've once said an idiot's discipline filled with charlatan's, and we have learned that some of the rules of branding apply to individuals. But you could talk about what made you strong feel so strongly in the past, and what's changed either in the market or what's changed.

In the world that has caused you to change your opinion of that a little bit?

Mark Ritson: Oh, look, I still think it's pretty nonsensical, right? [01:00:00] So and the but I, I have been, yeah, I, I think I, I was too dismissive of it is, is probably what I would say, right? And what I mean by that is I, I think if you look at how we typically position brands, we use three Cs.

So we look at customer C, what does the customer want, company C, what have we got? And then competitor C, who are we up against? And we try and find within that, how we would position a brand. The problem I always had with personal branding was, the minute you start tweaking the company c in personal branding, which is you, you look like a wanker, right?

And, and the, and you can smell the inauthenticity. 80 feet away that someone is doing this because they're positioning themselves. Right. So my, my sort of, my, my, my back, my back position on it now is I do see how if you don't mess with yourself and you don't try and change yourself, thinking about what customers think of you or [01:01:00] people think of you versus the alternatives is still a worthwhile pursuit.

But the minute we start going, oh, you know, I'll think, I'll, I'll do this or I'll do that, I, I mean, you know, I, you know, for good and for bad. This is, this is, this is how I am. Do you know what I mean? But I have thought more about how it is presented with those other two vertices to be fair. So, yeah. Yeah. I think I've, I've watered down my position a bit.

It's still a lot of stuff about how to dress and talk and shit like that. Right. And, and of course the, the rule there is do you know, to thine own self be true? Right. Do it your way, you know?

MichaelAaron Flicker: Mark, we're coming towards the end of our conversation, but we wanted to ask, what would you like to leave listeners with?

We've covered a wide range of topics, you've shared a lot of very compelling ideas, but if you had to wrap it up for everybody, what's the thing you want for people to leave [01:02:00] this podcast thinking or feeling?

Mark Ritson: Look, I think the main one would be if there's one thing we work on with companies and, and with, with marketers when we train them, it's just have your strategy before you get involved in anything else.

Right. And, and, and strategy isn't that complex, right? We've never had more strategists in marketing and it's never been more confusing. Strategy is just three things. Who am I targeting? What's the position, which includes the distinctive assets as well. And then what's my handful of objectives? I, I, if, if people can be clear on those three things for their brand going into 2026 there, they'll be in a much stronger position on a, on a, on a multitude of levels.

So yeah, have, have a strategy. It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be mind boggling. It should be on a page. And if you can just spend a bit of time clarifying that and articulating it to yourself, you will be better off. [01:03:00]

Richard Shotton: You stressed. Handful objectives is the key there, limiting them and the danger of adding on a whole.

Laundry

Mark Ritson: list. Yeah. Yeah. We've got loads of data on this. You, you want a handful, literally you want four or five. If you have more than that, they don't happen. They just become a shopping list. Right. So, you know, ultimately, you know, strategy is deciding what you're not gonna do. So when it comes to targeting, it's, it's, you know, zoo narrowing in.

When it comes to positioning, as we've said, it's a couple of things. And when we come to objectives, it's three or four things that you're gonna do this year, even if you're a big brand. You know, again, ag Laffy has the great quote. If, if you have 10 or 11 objectives, they're not objectives, they're dreams.

That won't come true.

MichaelAaron Flicker: It is a lovely idea to end on. A reminder for all of our listeners. Wwww. Do people still say that anymore? [01:04:00] www.mini

mba.com is the place to go to learn more about Mark Ritson's work on how we can educate all of our marketing team members and all of our industry to become smarter, more holistic marketers.

Mark, thanks for being with us today and to all of our listeners at home, if you found this compelling, if you found this interesting, please share it with others who would find it helpful because that's how we spread important good ideas and like follow and comment. It helps us reach more of the right people that can be helped by this conversation.

Until next time, I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

Richard Shotton: And I'm Richard Shotton.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Thanks for being with us, mark.

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