

Positive Psychology 2020

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Positive Psychology 2020 – Market Analysis

According to the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, positive psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. Positive Psychology is based on two ideas: That people seek meaning, and that they possess strengths that can help them find it. In other words, people want to do more than survive, they want to thrive. They have the ability to live the lives they want, even if they might need a little help to do it. This orientation moves psychology beyond the realm of fixing problems or treating disorders, to helping people be their best selves and lead better lives. Marketing is beginning to recognize these ideas and build on them, giving rise to positive psychology marketing.

Since the 1940s, psychology students (and marketers) have looked at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a guideline for human needs. At the lowest level are physiological needs and security needs, such as food, water, shelter, air to breathe rest and feel safe. Once those needs are met, humans have psychological needs, such as the needs for love and friendship, and the need for accomplishment or to feel good about one's self. These orders of need are sometimes called deficiency needs, or D-needs.

These levels of need are all about deficiency or lack. And marketing has generally always played to these lower order needs with a "problem - solution" orientation. You have a need; we have a product or service that can fill it. Buy our product and you'll be less miserable.

But the highest order need - the need for self-actualization, or the need to fulfill your highest potential - is one that psychologists and marketers have only recently begun to recognize. These are sometimes referred to as B-needs because they are not just about filling a need but about being; becoming a better person.

Positive Psychology Marketing Catching On

According to Maslow, as one level of deficiency needs became fulfilled, humans would inevitably discover new levels of need until they finally reached the level of self-actualization. For instance, if your need for food, shelter and security was fulfilled, you might then notice your loneliness, and become aware of your need for love and friends. Once you were no longer lonely, you might begin to feel that you ought to accomplish something. For the last 100 or so years, most marketers have been focused on fulfilling deficiency needs. For the most part, this has worked in spectacular fashion. Consumers have purchased products to fulfill needs for food, shelter, security, friends, and family.

Even accomplishment needs can be marketed: Think for-profit universities and career coaching. But still, people yearn for more. They are now looking to enhance their state of being; marketing is beginning to reflect this. Several recent marketing campaigns have demonstrated how positive psychology is increasingly being incorporated into modern-day marketing. Dove soap once marketed itself as a product that could help you have softer skin, now it is about "Real Beauty," promising to help you "embrace your natural beauty," which is more about self-acceptance and self-love than it is about cleaning your skin. A few years back, Olay promised to help you "love the skin you are in." Again, this is not just about moisturizing the skin; it's about loving yourself.

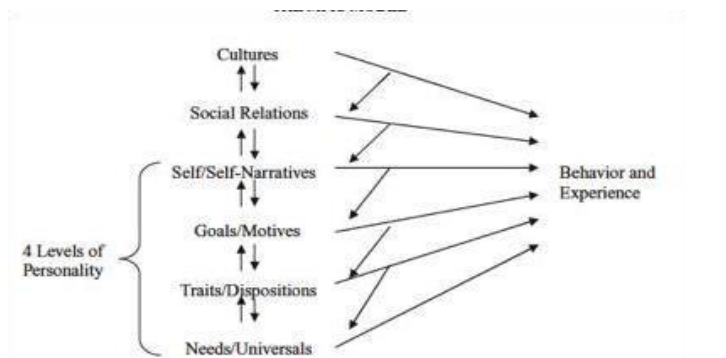
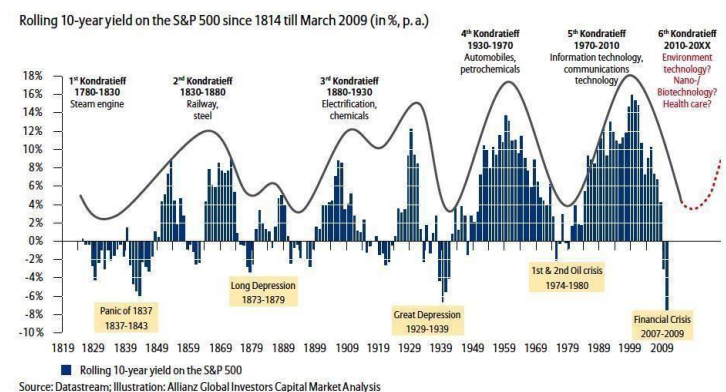


Figure 2. The Multiple Levels of Personality in Context (MPIC) model.

Marketers, of course, are experts at identifying and jumping on board when a concept is having its moment, and positive psychology is definitely having one. There's a shift taking place where people are no longer seeking fulfillment through simply acquiring more stuff, but through ideas like mindfulness, acceptance and purpose that are more likely to lead to real happiness. Brands are no longer just touting what they do, and why they do it, but the purpose behind what they do. The signs are there that positive psychology could be marketing's future, leading marketers away from a focus on simply solving problems with a product, towards the meaning behind the product - why does it exist? How can it help customers become the person they want to be and lead to true personal fulfillment?



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