The theme of innovation has been central to the strategy formulation for any organization. This theme has various implications in multiple disciplines including marketing, sociology, psychology, strategy, and organizational behaviour as well as interdisciplinary approaches. In this book, the author challenges the traditional approach of marketers. This book is built on the idea that customers do not simply buy products or services; they ‘hire’ them to get a particular job done. It looks at the way marketers have been informed about consumer choices and discusses how a shift of focus onto strategies based on the job theory can orient our minds to capitalize on the purchase intention of customers and retain them in the longer run. The book aims to examine what causes growth and how to create it.

The book, meant not only for experts in the field of marketing but also for common readers, is divided into three sections: the first section provides an introduction to job theory. Clayton M. Christensen claims that his own theory of disruptive innovation, a competitive response to an innovation, does not provide a road map for the clients. It fails to answer where to create new market and predict how products will succeed. He believes that one size fits none; therefore, the right question to ask is, how well does the given product serve the customers’ jobs to be done. He defines job as a progress that a person is trying to make in a particular circumstance.

It is important to understand the life circumstance of the individual who is seeking to accomplish a job as that would enable the companies to customize their products. However, more often than not it is not taken into account, deterring us from predicting consumer behaviour. The job theory does not focus on the concept of ‘needs’ like in traditional marketing as it does not explain every behaviour. The authors argue that the job is dependent on priority of circumstances and guiding principles of life and is also contingent on social and emotional needs. Job insights can be gained from stories
rather than statistics. One needs to find out about what progress the person is trying to achieve: the functional, or social and emotional dimensions of the desired progress, or the circumstances of struggle and the obstacles getting in the way of the person making that progress. Are consumers making ends meet with the imperfect solutions through some kind of compensating behaviour? How would they define quality and what are the trade-offs they are willing to make are some questions that the authors encourage the companies to ask. The authors claim that it may also provide an insight into what customers want and will pay a premium for. The book states that the job theory is an integration tool and that the customary framing of competition needs to go beyond buckets such as companies, industries, or products for one to succeed. Further, the authors add that one can find jobs by judging their own lives and find opportunity in non-consumption; hence, altering the entire competitive landscape.

The focus of the book gradually shifts towards application of job theory in the second section. Here, the authors enlist five job-hunting strategies: finding a job close to home; competing with non-consumption; workarounds and compensating behaviour; looking for negative jobs—tasks which people don’t want to do; the unusual uses—one product may serve several purposes: an opportunity for launching a new product for a particular service lies therein. The authors state that while looking at the job, the emotional score cannot be overlooked—one has to search for a cause for enabling a wider outreach. A further point of discussion emerges when the authors draw the attention as to why a particular product is fired, that is, why a product fails to retain consumer in the longer run. In discussing the forces compelling one to look for a new solution as opposed to the forces of opposing change (important and often ignored); that is, habits and the discomfort in choosing something new; the difficulties in letting go of a product with social and emotional dimensions are talked about. The authors argue that a job spec would enable the marketers to supersede the entire set of competing solutions and the existing obstacles and anxieties. Experiences are crucial as it is primarily why the product would be hired again and again and are sought in both buying and using the product. A step of caution is listed thereafter: one should track not only the big hire (the first purchase) but more importantly the little hire, that is, when the product gets hired again. This will help the company decipher if the job is getting done by the product or not.

Job theory is not a framework for marketing but a powerful lens; job-based innovations are hard to copy; thus, conferring a competitive advantage. If the company can communicate its purpose to the consumers, it would be less vulnerable to customers who hire it for the wrong reasons. Digressing into too many new features makes a brand lose out on its purpose.

The third and the final section of the book presents a design of ‘jobs to be done organization’. The authors are cautious to point out that jobs are flexible; they have always existed. However, what evolves is the process of solving them. The authors assert that organizations can gain a competitive advantage through the way they integrate across functions to perform the consumer’s job. The authors illustrate the significance of the integrating process which can create ideal experiences for consumers. Job theory aims to change the way success is measured by shifting the focus from internal financial performance metrics to customer benefit metrics. Additionally, the authors focus on the fallacies that companies fall prey to, impeding their growth in the long run. Three fallacies are discussed namely: the fallacy of active versus passive; the fallacy of surface growth, and the fallacy of conforming data. The authors illustrate how under the pressure of various data sets man-made companies lose sight of why their products were hired in the first place. The urge to make profits by selling added number of products causes them to digress. Drawing from the previous discussions, the authors’ state how the jobs-focused organization enables distributed decision-making; align resources with what matters the most: customer progress. The concluding chapter aims to discuss the inherent expectations and limitations of the work; namely: what this theory can accomplish; what job is and what it is not, and finally, cultivate curiosity for readers.

Overall, Competing against Luck is significant as a prelude to the job theory. It requires a shift in perspective from the traditional marketing concept of needs to creating experiences for the consumer; thereby leading to increasing number of ‘little hires’. The book is filled with examples to support the arguments and claims of the authors, which might offer clarity to the readers about the various underpinnings and aspects of the theory. The authors have made astute use of antithesis through most of the chapters to establish a cogent, contrasting relationship between traditional marketing approach and the perspective offered by job theory by juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. The use of hypophora...
as an attractive rhetorical is not infrequent in the book, with the aim to raise curiosity and interest of readers, to which subsequently a well-formulated answer is provided at length. The book is well organized and is an easy read for enriching a reader’s understanding of job theory; however, certain aspects such as—how to tactfully find such jobs? The methodology for collecting the qualitative data and its ensuing analysis; the blueprint for measuring employee efficiency in the jobs to be done organization; the plan of action in the face of technological or policy shift are unanswered. Since the emphasis is on the introduction to job theory and its subsequent applications, it might seem a bit abstract to those looking for specific guidelines, but for those seeking an introduction to the topic, the book surely does a commendable job.

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