

Dealing with Homo duplex

- the Selfish and Groupish Consumer, Employee & Citizen!

The term Homo duplex was introduced by French sociologist and philosopher Émile Durkheim in the late 1900s. He considered humans to be 'Homo duplex' i.e. of two minds. The first, which he called 'profane' is the 'I'd like' nature that each individual is born with. Focused on bodily needs and drives, it pushes individuals to act in ways to satisfy their needs, wants and desires without consideration of the needs and desires of others.

'SACRED' and 'PROFANE'

The other part of human nature is social in origin, which Durkheim calls the 'sacred' or collective conscience. This collective conscience serves as a check on the will, a moral system made up of ethical codes, values, ideologies, and ideas. The collective conscience is formed through the socialization process by which the individual internalizes the codes, norms, and ethical values of society. It is the collective conscience that disciplines the individual will and limits the potentially unlimited desires and drives of the individual.

Balancing between these two divergent ideas, a human being swings between two sets of 'social sentiments' – one for each level. At the lower level, sentiments like respect and affection help individuals forge relationships with others. But Durkheim was most interested in the sentiments that bind people in groups — the collective emotions. These emotions dissolve the petty, small-minded self. They make people feel that they are part of something larger and more important than themselves.

Examples of Homo duplex behavior:

Durkheim argued that Homo duplex behavior is evident in all collective activity, from modern occupations to the most elementary forms of religious ritual. Collective emotions bind people together and make them feel they're part of a larger whole, such as the collective joy in Germany after winning the world cup, the anger

in the Middle East following the Arab spring, or the collective grief in the weeks post-9/11. Religion is also considered a way for human beings to connect to a larger collective consciousness and provide the followers with a 'sacred' ideal or goal.

Another example is that of a nation at war: even a pacifist individual would condone violence in a battlefield if their national identity were at stake. Similarly, politics is another example of Homo duplex behavior. The need for human beings to perceive a commonality with an ideology or cause and then connect and support anyone with the same ideology.

Manifestations of Homo duplex theory:

Homo duplex behavior is manifested across various dimensions:

Consumer choice: While choosing a product based on the basic performance criteria, any additional value-based profit can be gained only when the consumer perceives some additional intangible benefits associated with using a particular brand for the same product.

Subculture and Labeling: Being part of any subculture, human beings in every setting are labeled with a certain tag to directly connect them to a group or groups within a bigger whole. This assigning of human beings into groups and labeling them is a social norm for people to ensure social order is also a proven evolutionary behavior that can be connected to us being homo duplex.

Herd mentality: It is the tendency of individuals in a group to behave instinctively in the same way as the majority of the group. This once again can be explained by the Homo duplex behavior. The more 'sacred' group thinking becomes the norm, the more the individuals within a group conform to the group goals.

Implications of Homo duplex theory in Business:

Applying the Homo duplex theory for business, we will look at two main implications:

Consumer Value proposition

Over the last decades people have studied a lot about consumer behavior, their judgment of brands and the processes that underlie specific brand-related phenomena.

Research indicates that to consumers, each brand is like a person and has a brand image. Consumers will choose the product that they are willing to associate their personal image with. A clear brand proposition/image helps the product differentiate itself from competitors and a good example is Harley Davidson. To enhance the value of the brand, the company founded a club to create group/ subculture, where advocates of the brand and Harley Davidson life experience could provide a feeling of belonging to a sacred and unique society.

However we would like to look at the brand model from a consumer/ psychological angle. Consumers' adherence to brand name in their choices is a natural intention and is explained by the Homo duplex theory of group and individualistic, sacred and profane levels of our behavior.

Consumers have different levels of psychological engagement with brands because of different needs and goals. These levels of engagement are represented in the model by three layers.

First level – Object-centered, functionally-driven engagement
Identified as the basic need of a consumer for the product. Example: The need to commute cheaply – buying a motorcycle.

Second level - Self-centered engagement
Identified as a consumer's personal choice regarding the product. Example: The consumer's personal preferences on the model, the color and the mileage of the bike.

Third level - Social engagement
Identified as a consumer's need to connect with a certain brand image that either provides or enhances their self-image. Example: Consumer's choice to buy a Harley Davidson since he identifies himself as a HD rider.

The model defines five brand-related processes: Identifying - a consumer identifies the brand and its category, forms associations, and compares the similarities between brands; Experiencing - refers to sensory, affective and participatory experiences a consumer has with a brand; Integrating - combining brand information into an overall brand concept, personality and relationship with the brand;

Signifying - using the brand as an informational cue, identity signal and cultural symbol; Connecting with the brand - includes forming an attitude towards the brand, becoming personally attached and connecting to it in a brand community.

The Homo duplex theory states that we buy products and services not only because we need them (to satisfy our hunger, thirst, to cure disease, etc.), but also because we are constantly seeking to possess the feeling of belonging to a specific society. We interact with the world and construct self-concepts through symbols: brands. With this knowledge, companies can apply different marketing tools and concepts to acquire and retain customer loyalty. Knowing human beings' tendency to fulfill individualistic needs and belong to groups, companies could create functionally useful, psychologically important and culturally relevant brands. The question for any business here is whether they have identified the 'sacred' values and developed the 'sacred' value that connects their brands to consumers.

Employee value proposition

As local organizations are expanding beyond borders and multinationals begin expanding their businesses, the battle for talent is intensifying. Some industries are already facing high attrition rates, while others are struggling to increase the proportion of discretionary effort from their workforce. Innovation and global megatrends like demographic shifts, rapid technological advancement, the power of social media and environmental changes all point towards the need for 'agility' in business models to accommodate the dynamism in the business ecosystem. This agility can only be achieved if we have a highly motivated and committed 'agile' workforce that is willing to do more than just survive at work – the discretionary effort.

Attracting top talent is probably the least important issue. Retaining them is more complex and what is critical is providing the right ecosystems for top talent to perform to their ultimate potential and enhance it further from their last job.

From a strategic HR management perspective, it is widely argued that a well framed employee

value proposition (EVP) can lead to better organizational performance and an enhanced bottom line. A report from Global Talent Management and Rewards Study for Towers Watson found that organizations that had done the most work developing and executing their employee value proposition, achieved superior financial performance compared to businesses with less developed ones. According to Corporate Leadership Council's Research, a well thought through and executed EVP can increase the commitment of new hires by up to 29%, reduce new hire compensation premiums by up to 50%, and increase the likelihood of employees acting as advocates from an average of 24% to 47%.

The Motivation- Hygiene Theory

This states that the factors involved in producing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction. Therefore, the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but, rather, no job satisfaction. The results indicate that motivators were the primary cause of satisfaction, and hygiene factors the primary cause of unhappiness on the job.

From a Homo duplex framework it can be said that hygiene factors would be fulfilling employees' basic needs like salary, benefits and security. To enhance employee engagement it is essential to create 'sacred' value that provides the motivation needed to attract talent that values the same 'sacredness'. There are examples of companies like Google, who in spite of providing their employees with a bouquet of benefits, still had one of the highest attrition rates in 2013. So the question therefore is whether we as present and future global leaders have identified the 'sacred' motivations both for ourselves and our employees?

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