INDIA @ 75

Joka Wild
MBAEx

Cover Story
India's economic Journey

Business Conclave
Lattice 22

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS:

IS IT STILL RELEVANT IN POST PANDEMIC WORLD OR NEEDS REVISIT?

"A Marketing Strategist who is curious about exploring new initiatives for change & transformation."

Manojit Kumar Dalai
MBAEx Class of 2023

'Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most discussed models of understanding human psychology & consumer behaviour and is extensively used across various domains of business management studies. It is an idea in psychology proposed by American Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper 'A Theory of Human Motivation' in the journal 'Psychological Review'. Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of human innate curiosity. His theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, some of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans. The theory is a classification system intended to reflect the universal needs of society as its base, then proceeding to more acquired emotions. The hierarchy of needs is split between deficiency needs and growth needs,

with two key themes involved within the theory being individualism and the prioritization of needs. While the theory is usually shown as a pyramid in illustrations, Maslow himself never created a pyramid to represent the hierarchy of needs.

The hierarchy of needs is a psychological idea and also an assessment tool, particularly in education. The hierarchy remains a popular framework in sociology research, including management training and higher education. The hierarchy of needs is used to study how humans intrinsically partake in behavioural motivation. Maslow used the terms 'physiological needs', 'safety needs', 'love and belonging', 'esteem', and 'self-actualization' to describe the pattern through which human needs and motivations generally move. This means that, according to the theory, for motivation to arise at the next stage,

each prior stage must be satisfied by an individual. The hierarchy has been used to explain how effort and motivation are correlated in the context of human behaviour. Each of these individual levels contains a certain amount of internal sensation that must be met for an individual to complete their hierarchy.

source
https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

Fig. 1: Illustration of existing pyramid of Maslow's hierarchy of needs

The goal in Maslow's hierarchy is to attain the level or stage of self-actualization. Although widely used and researched, does Maslow's hierarchy of needs hold through in the current context (post COVID'19 pandemic era)? While there can be numerous criticisms, one key aspect that I find missing is the absence of 'Entertainment' as a classification of need. Many fundamentalists would argue that it can be classified under 'esteem' needs itself, but we need to observe that

Maslow himself in his definition of 'esteem' needs doesn't classify 'entertainment' as one & goes on to stress that satisfaction arising from 'ego' only to be termed as 'esteem' needs. Further with the advent of the pandemic, entertainment in itself has evolved in its quotient from just being about theatres, musicals, movies, and sports. It has taken on numerous forms with the evolution of technology e.g., 3D, OTT, video games, online gaming portals, metaverse, and many more. As the pandemic affected mobility & social engagement, entertainment has grown to become more elusive for individual consumption. It has not only engaged the current society in its endeavour but has grown to become an integral part of the individual lifestyle. Hence, we see a lot of research & development spent by these industries to churn out newer products in terms of content at an ever-growing speed. The technical advancements will not only increase adoption but also surpass the traditional form of entertainment which was rather consumed in a social context. Revenue from the gaming industry grew by 12 per cent in 2020 up to $140 billion, more than the combined of movies & sports. The amount of time spent watching content on OTT platforms grew to 204 billion minutes in 2021. The preference for OTTs is now expected to extend from metro cities to tier II & tier III cities as well. Research estimates that the metaverse market size will reach USD 1607 billion in 2030, registering a robust CAGR of 43% throughout the forecast period. Hence, it's no surprise that we see a lot of giant technical firms investing in these

technologies or curating data to generate content for these customers. Hence even though engaging the 'ID', 'Entertainment' needs to be classified as a separate hierarchy of needs for deeper studies on human psychology & consumer behaviour. Now having established the fact, the other query that we arrive at is, where do we place it in the pyramid? According to me, it should go right up there above 'love & belonging' and right below 'esteem'. It is an individualistic need but necessarily would stem once social belonging needs are met & then an individual would pursue ego needs, moving higher from the entertainment needs.

Having placed 'Entertainment' in the hierarchy, I now raise an argument that, though the original hierarchy states that a lower level must be completely satisfied and fulfilled before moving on to a higher pursuit; is it always true? I don't agree with so & I believe I would gain a lot of agreement on this since there is evidence to suggest that the levels continuously overlap with each other. We have observed during the pandemic in our households & in our neighbourhood, the overlapping of those needs and our subsequent change in behaviour & consumption pattern. A lot of healthcare & public domain workers moved into the realm of 'self-

actualization' whereas their previous needs may have been unmet. But not considering the pandemic also, as our social construct has evolved with the adoption of technology, we have seen frequent overlapping of individuals amongst these hierarchies. So rationalizing, there is no hierarchy of order in the pyramid. Any individual can be at any ladder of the pyramid & can keep flowing to other ladders irrespective of hierarchy. As individuals, as our needs arise, we keep traversing the ladder, up or down. One may achieve self-actualization without meeting other needs (e.g., people abstaining from sexual relationships), but having attained 'self-actualization' they may not have desire left for any other needs. One of the finest personalities to be identified as an individual example is Mr. Ratan Tata, one of the favourite Indian industrialists. Though I retain that the theory is based on the assumption of individualism & is designed for normal circumstances only.
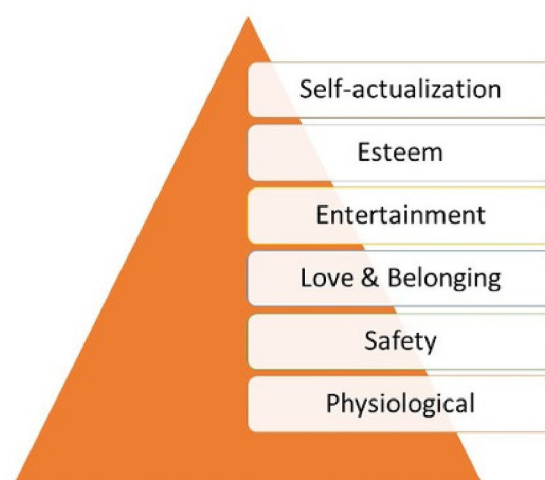

Fig. 2: Revised illustration of the Maslow's Hierarchy by the author

N.B. All thoughts illustrated in this article are individual thoughts of the author only & open to discussion.