

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Using Marketing Strategies to Produce Positive Marketing Performance: An Exposition

Anthony Agyemang

Senior Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Cape Coast Polytechnic, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract:

The exposition is to vividly describe and explain what a marketing strategy is and how it can be used to produce a positive marketing performance. Companies go to great lengths to come out with a marketing strategy to prosecute their marketing agenda. Coming out with a marketing strategy is a never-finished business because of the volatile nature of the market. The market is a moving target, and the military general needs to 'review' constantly or continuously his 'battle plans'. The exposition will rely copiously on marketing management literature on how marketing strategy can be used to induce positive marketing performance will be preferred in recommendations.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, Positive marketing performance, Ghana

1. Introduction

Wilson (2001) defines a marketing strategy as the procedure, method, technique, process; a company uses to do its marketing. It is the organised way in which an organization conducts its marketing. Why, How, When, Where, What, Who, are all answered in the marketing strategy formulation stage. The strategy is the pilot or the compass for carrying out the marketing assignment. It is always meticulously followed in the process of performing the marketing function.

Where does marketing start and where does it end? Every marketing function has a given objective and the objective must be pursued and obtained at the end of the day. If the objective is to make the product or service known to everybody in the market, then a promotional plan must be developed and used to achieve that objective. A message must be developed and the message plan comprehensively followed to bring the message to everybody. It may take some time for the full development of the message plan. A marketer needs a marketing strategy and a useful ally in the prosecution of the marketing business. It does not take one person to formulate or come out with a marketing strategy. It is a collaborative process where all relevant stakeholders are involved in the conception to the evaluation of the marketing strategy.

What bring out positive marketing outcomes? A positive marketing outcome is the desirable the marketer wants to achieve at the end of the day. At least, customers must be drawn to his product or service and then make a positive decision, i.e. to procure the product and eventually contribute to an increase in the sales of the product. Jain (2002) sees marketing performance in many ways. Every marketing effort must produce a result; the result should be such that marketing management will be satisfied in the process of marketing. He lists a lot of positive marketing performance. An increase in an organization's market share, bringing about a product or service awareness, achieving a breakthrough in the distribution of the organization's products, achieving a breakthrough with the organization's communication message, ability to persuade customers with catchy advertisements, ability to withstand the subterfuges and maneuverings of the competition, inducing buyers to positively recommend the product or service to friends and relations, and at the same time bring the product or service ambassadors and encouraging friends to try the product and eventually making a purchase. When marketers market a product, they expect a positive outcome, the outcome must commensurate the expense and the energy used in the marketing effort.

Does it mean that if a positive outcome is not got at the end of the day, the marketing effort is a failure? This is not necessarily so for a lot of factors contribute toward successful marketing and if at the end of the day, one does not get what one expects, he has been a failure. A weak or a not too strong economy will not produce a favourable marketing outcomes. If the economy is in a depression, or unemployment is at a very intolerable level, marketers should not expect a positive result. It calls for a diagnosis to be able to put the blame at where it belongs.

2. What Induce Positive Marketing Performance?

According to CIM (UK) (2002); there are knowable positive or negative marketing performance. It is incumbent on marketers to do a clinical analysis to find out what went wrong and then prescribe a treatment regimen. Has the product line been comprehensively examined? Does the market prefer your product or not? (These questions must be answered or tackled at the market and marketing research phases). Answers must be found to them and then used strategically in the marketing process.

Top marketing management has a role to play. They are the 'rear and soul' of the marketing armada (Mintzberg, 2004). They are to come out with clear policies on what must be done by the department of marketing. They are also to indoctrinate and orientate the marketing department to the task ahead. Their ability to socialise the marketing fraternity to the task ahead is a sine qua non. Using cutting edge technologies to collect intelligence on the competition can aid positive marketing performance. It is not enough to have the intelligence; it must be applied in an intelligent manner to be able to outwit the competition. Organizing periodic training seminars or workshops for marketing staff is not out of place. Top corporate management must 'think and act' marketing to be able to put marketing on a very safe pedestal (O'Brien, 2002). Marketing involves everybody, it is also seamless, it is boundary-less and it also encapsulates everybody and these must be seriously drummed into the ears of every corporate player and especially team players. It is crucial employees are let to know that marketing does not end and it is ever evolving, because of the shifts in the demographics. Scientifically separating markets and marketing differentially is essential, but segments don't stay same for too long.

A microscopic analysis of the competition and customers who buy the organization's products or services must be fully understood. Why they buy what they buy and for whom they buy and whether they have any complaints on your product or service. The parameters to be used in doing business in the market must be thoroughly understood. Is it business as usual or there are some categorical imperatives (Immanuel Kant). Marketing is a serious business and must therefore be tackled with all seriousness. When assignments are given to employees, they must be scrupulously monitored to ensure that the correct thing is done always and everywhere they find themselves in the course of duty. The micro and macroeconomic environment, both endogenous and exogenous variables have their parts to play in ensuring positive marketing performance. But a good marketing house is needed for good results at the end of the day.

3. What the Inhibitors of Positive Marketing Performance Are and How They Can be Overcome

Henry Ford (founder of Ford Motors), Crainier, (2001) once said, every manufacturer, must make his or her product like he or herself, so that if a manufacturer likes his product, then every buyer who buys the product will like the product. If at the reception, the clerk or receptionist is always squeezing the face when attending to customers who call at the company's premises, it inhibits marketing performance. It does not take only a bad product to create disaffection, even the entrance to your premises can equally obstruct or impair marketing performance. An organization's ambience contributes to marketing performance. If the environment is serene, and employees friendly towards everyone who calls, it exudes positive performance. Inhibition of positive marketing performance span a lot of aggregates. Time of service and how punctual staff is to work and handling by complaints and faults reported by customers. The zeal or the vim with which employees receive complaints and also a show of solidarity towards the complaints exudes performance. What policies has the organization got for those who report of faults or defective products, are there assurances that the defective product will be soon replaced or repaired for free? Does the organization see them as friends or enemies? Does the organization have a policy such that whoever calls at the premises is given the encouragement and the confidence to call always when needed. Showing cordiality to every distressed caller or visitor engenders positive marketing performance as the callers and the visitors will be telling other customers of the organization. The inhibitors could be company made or natural. Nobody can stop the hurricane from passing, but the refrigerator can be prevented from malfunctioning and thereby preventing distress call from a buyer. If there is a policy in place that enables users of refrigerators from overloading or even the 'electrical circuiting' is professionally followed by listening to technicians and electrical engineers, then faults will not occur. It is not within the ambit of organizations to stop power outages, but they can have in place a standby generator to mitigate the effects of frequent power outages such that production is not adversely affected.

Proper reengineering of the entire service delivery value chain (BPP, 2002) can minimize the negative outcomes of worker apathy, worker lateness, or worker indolence all which adversely stand in the way of positive marketing performance.

Aside the endogenous variables which can and do negatively affect or inhibit positive marketing performance, political instability, volatility in the environment, exchange rate fluctuations, a weak economy, etc. do obstruct or impede positive marketing performance. Overcoming the impediments is through reengineering marketing which needs everybody.

4. Collaborators in Positive Marketing Performance

It does not take one person to market a product, it takes everybody in the organization to positively market a product or service. The company's internal infrastructure is the first collaborator. The infrastructure if well arranged, talks positively about the organization and therefore exudes positive performance. Work flow and work processes and organization's management who are desirous in achieving high productivity levels. They are preoccupied with organization's success and perpetuity in business, and so are therefore 'in tune' with their mission statement and are prepared to play well to achieve total organizational objective of productivity and efficiency (Peters and Waterman, 2002). Employees' ethic to achieve in spite of problems and setbacks, the inordinate zeal to be among the top players in the industry, the desire to be able to pay dividends to shareholders at the end of the business year, the overall ambition of becoming the market leader one day, to be given the respect wherever necessary, to be able to expand, grow and develop in the industry in which the organization finds itself, to leave footprints, or an indelible imprint for posterity and above all, to leave a legacy which will leave a landmark in the history of the organization. It is up to top management to have the ambition to dictate and domineer the work force in a positive sense, for they will be called upon to explain if things go haywire. Employees being given the unfettered freedom to be semi-autonomous where necessary and given the reasonable achievable targets to work at, induce employees to be liberated and empowered to deliver. Top management must not behave like monsters. Top managers must behave such that employees' creativity, versatility, innovativity, inventivity, originality and flexibility are all fired up at any point in time.

The organization's technological infrastructure must empower workers to deliver at their peak. It is good the needed infrastructure and the resources needed by workers to be able to deliver are always there for production to go on. The entire organizational value chain must not be compromised. Quality products cannot be produced without the necessary infrastructure build up, both technically and technologically. The manuals, the codes of conduct, the blueprints for worker productivity, the necessary benchmarks, the values the organization is desirous of having in place, must be there. If employees are given the opportunity to air their views on matters affecting their performance, with the correct employee attitude, and all things being equal, worker performance will be enhanced. A democratic managerial work culture is therefore a sine qua non for high or positive marketing performance.

5. Formulating a Marketing Strategy to Be Used to Affect a Positive Marketing Performance

Crafting a marketing strategy is a never-finished business (Kotler, 2003). According to the author, the constant and continuous shifts in the marketing environment warrant that marketing strategists be in a state of watchfulness and vigilance. The market is a moving target, it is always on the move and therefore one strategy or an unreviewed unrevised, unmodified strategy can be used. Marketing strategists have the hugely herculean task of updating and fine-tuning their marketing strategies as the marketing environment so dictates. It is not enough having a marketing strategy but having one that can address and fulfil the marketing agenda. In crafting a marketing strategy, where does the strategist start and end? He starts by doing thorough scanning of the environment to ascertain the facilitators and blockers of marketing efforts. Is the environment full of blockers or facilitators? If the environment is inimical to marketing, what can be done to remove the blockers or blockades to marketing? Are the blockades surmountable or insurmountable? Are the blockades a permanent feature or will be there for a short period? The inhibitors or blockers must be microscopically dissected so as to ascertain their removability or their isolation so as to work on them to make way for marketing business to go on. Scanning the environment is always a difficult assignment as the environment is very wide ranging and very detailed with a lot of issues, sociological, demographical, ecological, political, economic, climatological, geographical, "architectural", anthropological, biological, etc. to be dealt with in detail. They can either enhance or impede marketing efforts. Comprehending the environment and eventually adapting to the environment is mandatory for successful marketing.

What is the strategy meant to achieve? If the strategy is to enable the company to have an increase in its market share, then whatever the company must do (marketing-wise) to achieve that objective is what the strategy must be formulated to do. The strategy must then be subdivided into plans or stages all with the ultimate objective of achieving the strategic objective. The objective is the end and the strategy the means to be used to achieve the ultimate objective. The first question to be asked is, where is the company's market(s), and how big is the market, who is in the market, who are the competitors, how robust or vigilant are they, are they very strong, do they have the technological largesse to prevent others from competing in the market, is the industry in which the company is very big to accommodate many business players, or it is a small industry. The next is customer factors: is the number of customers always growing, are they always communicated to on the company's products, are they aware of the potency, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, usability of the company's products, etc.

Next is the product life cycle concept. Is the market at its introduction stage, growth stage, mature, declining, or dying stage. Has the company got the resources commensurate with the marketing strategy? For example, a company may want to achieve nationwide distribution of its products, but may not have the logistics or the agents or middlemen to help it achieve that goal. It is very mandatory an internal capacity assessment is done and the necessary audits done (marketing-wise). The strategy must conform to what the company has on the ground. If there are gaps, the gaps must be addressed to ensure effective marketing. The support, collaboration, cooperation of all corporate players in this regard is crucial.

Initially, marketing department must convene a meeting and invite leaders of departments to brainstorm on the strategy. It must build consensus so that at the implementation stage of the strategy, there will be no hiccups. Operational plans must be developed at this stage and other players must be encouraged to buy into the operational plan and their inputs too sought for to ensure effective collaboration. Bottlenecks that are likely to arise in course of the implementation must be pointed out and addressed appropriately. There will be difficulties and misunderstandings, but what is necessary is that, a truce must always be found (per Jain, 2003). The players must be orientated to the strategy for their tacit cooperation and support.

How is the strategy to be rolled out? The strategy is to be used for all marketing programming and planning. It is to be the compass or the pilot for the entire marketing organogram. It is critical the strategy is properly directed and managed to achieve what it is meant for. Ascertaining the efficacy of a strategy is through the following five criteria. One, appropriateness in the light of company resources, two, tolerable degree of risk, three, appropriate time horizon, four, internally consistent, and five, externally consistent. The strategy must be monitored to find out whether it is doing what it is meant to do. There are always elaborate programmes to be used to achieve that purpose. There are indications to point to the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of the strategy in use. After monitoring, evaluation is done, and after evaluation, control follows and finally auditing the strategy. The strategy is to be used to serve the purpose for which it was built.

6. Using the Strategy to Enhance Positive Marketing Performance

The marketing strategy is the grand stratagem put in place by the marketing organisation and the marketing apparatus are to know to. No deviations will be tolerated, for it is the weapon to be used to outwit all opponents. It is the grand master marketing war plan to be used to achieve the objective of enlarging the organization's market share and possibly, attaining a hegemonic position in the future. The strategy is microcosmic and entails and integrate every activity in the marketing architecture to elicit marketing success. The strategy is to fire and rekindle performance in the entire marketing space. There is no sitting on the fence by the marketing garrison. Any sitting on the fence will not be tolerated, for marketing is always a known business. After the marketing

generalissimo has outlined his plan and relayed to all who matter in the marketing business, they are clearly told what to do and what is also expected of them. There is no room for failure on the part of the marketing team. Duties will be clearly delineated and demarcated, and tasks and assignments specifically spelt out so as to know who to blame for what went wrong when and where. No room for any alibi on the part of the marketing followership. Obedience to the rules of the marketing game is expected from everybody in the marketing warfare team. On the battlefield, they are to look out for opponents' weak points and prepare and exploit the weaknesses in the arsenal of the opponent. Sun Tzu's graduated response, brinkmanship, limited threats, massive retaliation, diplomacy of violence, and threat systems are all drummed into the ears of the garrison. They are also to take instructions from the top hierarchy who are to ensure that the marketing battle is won. Whenever it is necessary to have a review of the strategy, it is important it is done, for the battle terrain cannot remain same every day, changes can occur, and the entire master plan must be modified to conform to the battle on the ground. As a Greek proverb goes (Jain, 2004) it is only a dead military general who does not revise his battle notes. It is even marketing suicidal. Troops are told to move fast where necessary and to move slow when the situation calls for it. For every battle, there is a unique strategy. What is imperative is for the hierarchy to be able to comprehend the situation and search for an antidote to confront the challenge. There will be mistakes, but they must be corrected immediately and the field troops informed of any changes made in the strategy, for the troops to dance the same dance and not dance differently to torpedo the strategy in place.

What must be asked by the apparatchiki is:

- Is what we are doing what we were told to do?
- Is what we are doing deliver the results expected?
- Are we to consult the top hierarchy whenever it is expedient to do so?
- How shall we know whether we are in the right or in the wrong?
- How do we assess our efforts?
- Who is to tell us, if we are wrong?

These are critical questions and suitable answers must be found for them. Stamina may even diminish and how do they even refuel or reenergize to be able to continue with the war. Reinforcement, may even be necessary at the point in time. Crisis meetings at the point is not out of order, especially when there is the need for the troops to meet to brainstorm on their performance, and where necessary find ways and means to up their "game" for victory to be got at the end of the day.

The marketing strategy is the lynchpin of the entire marketing hierarchy. It is the strategy that fuels and fires the entire marketing war. What is necessary to put the strategy in a steady state for it to be able to deliver is necessary. The strategy is also a composite and all the constituents must synergistically blend for total efficiency. A perfect analogy is that of a motor vehicle; if the clutching is not in good condition, the movement of the vehicle will be affected. The clutching must be put in order for a smooth movement of the vehicle. The strategy cannot repair itself, it is those who monitor and evaluate, that can put it in a good working condition. What is very important to note is that, marketing strategies can wear down or out, and if it happens, there must be means to convert them to their original state, this calls for marketing engineering or researching to ascertain the source of the wear out and what is concisely necessary to be done to it. There is no waiting period. It is an emergency and the tear cannot wait. The military general should be visiting his flocks regularly to ascertain their 'battle compliance' level, and where it has fallen low, remedied for higher efficiency. The strategy cannot work on its own, it is the entire marketing action machinery that is supposed to work to galvanise performance (Wilson & Giligan, 2004). The momentum must be permanently maintained for smooth working. It must be pointed out that marketing strategies are the outcomes of a comprehensive internal marketing environment and external marketing environment engineering. Marketing strategies are not the only means of enhancing positive marketing performance. A good system for conducting marketing research, marketing staff who are always fired up and ready to perform (their morale to achieve). An organization conforming to the norms and the ethics of marketing, conducting periodic marketing audits to smooth out the rough edges of marketing as a department, a good marketing programming, a buoyant, resilient, robust economy, a good network of roads, a well-connected mass media organizations (we cannot leave out advertising agencies or organizations), a conducive and congenial marketing tolerant culture, a competitive espritde corps among organizations in the competition and in the industry doing business to survive, a well-structured legal and regulatory framework to promote business development and a political regime that encourages businesses to expand and strengthen their business.

7. Recommendations

It is easy to talk about a marketing strategy, but it is not easy crafting and then using marketing strategy. There must be synchronicity between the objective and the strategy to be used to achieve it. It is imperative that all corporate players come to the realisation that formulating a marketing strategy concerns every corporate player.

It is essential the strategist comes to the realisation that formulating a marketing strategy is iterative, it is not got at a go, it is in a continuum and the strategy can be "fine-tuned" as time goes on. It is a never-finished business. It must be stressed that not every strategy is useable. Therefore, the implementability and workability of the strategy is crucial.

Strategists must not lose sight of the fact that it does not take one person to craft a strategy, the inputs of all those who matter must be sought and used in the "mixing process" of fashioning out a strategy. Marketing is general managerial and includes everybody who matters in the company's scheme of affairs. After a strategy has been formulated, it must be "test-fired" to ascertain its sustainability and conformability. After all, the formulation process is 'engineering' in itself. A lot of brainstorming and consensus building to avoid subterfuges and torpedoing by rebels and deviants. Everybody must be won over.

There is a caution. Having the best crafted marketing strategy is not going to produce the best marketing performance results. This is for the fact that a lot of factors interplay to produce marketing performance success. Marketing performance success encapsulates a lot.

We must emphasise the fact that it is almost impossible to succeed in every marketing endeavour for very many reasons. The economy may not be a favourable or the economic management may not be right or positive marketing friendly. Obtaining good marketing performance is also microcosmic, the infrastructure of roads and the marketing paraphernalia that 'push' marketing must all be available and working in the desired direction. Worker morale cannot be absent and tacit top management must be a necessity. Inducing workers to give off their best with the establishment of incentives and the "lubricants" that oil the wheels of marketing performance must be ever present.

Positive marketing performance is a vital ingredient for market growth. Market growth engenders business and corporate growth. Positive marketing performance is a sine qua non for any business searching for corporate success. There are triggers for positive marketing performance: The product or service quality must be above average or close to excellent. The organization must be visible to all potential and actual buyers. There must be mechanisms in place to incite or induce these buyers to take action. The hunter needs to up his game to get a catch. It is expedient the hunter keeps revising his tracks and do close monitoring by keeping his ears close to the ground to positively engineer his marketing for excellent performance. Good marketing performance must be worked at and good results obtained to the satisfaction of everybody.

There is the caveat of the competition and industry benchmarks must be attended to. The competition may be buoyant and that does not mean the company must play it soft. It must also be aggressive and have the ethic of succeeding eventually. The industry benchmarks are the 'ground rules' to be followed and they must be followed with all seriousness for success at the market place. An Italian proverb says it is the tough ship that gets going in the tough sea. Market and competition toughness do not produce failure; they enhance success rather.

8. Conclusion

A soldier going to war does not only need the gun to be used for shooting. What is critical is how the shooting is done and the objective of the shooting. Is he to shoot to maim or to kill or to defend. At the end of the day, he will be judged on how well or bad the shooting was done. The gun cannot on its own shoot, it is soldiers who will shoot with the gun and then get results whether positive or negative. But it is the positive that it always expected. The soldier needs perfect training to be able to meet the expectations of his superiors who put him in the battlefield. Is the soldier always expected to succeed? The answer is yes, there is no room for failures. He can shoot alright, but he must shoot such that at the end of the day the results will endure to his favour. Therefore, he must do the shooting per the standard put in place. He is not to deviate from the 'command' given by the general. The caveat is, shoot and the results must be yours. The soldier has been 'conditioned' by his master so that victory is the end result. He can pull the trigger and then get the results, if the enabling environment and the resources are all given and then the rules have been put in place for him to comply with. Shooting well to obtain results is a possibility if the soldier has been given the good mindset and all the positivity he needs to compete or do a good assignment.

9. Recommendations

Every marketing strategist wants to succeed at the end of his marketing battle. He wants to be a winner. Therefore, whatever he needs to have to succeed must be provided. He needs to have all the arsenals and the armoury for a total demolition of the enemy to be in place. It is not easy getting the arsenal and the armoury for total success, but the top military hierarchy must go to every extent possible to provide all the infrastructure the soldier needs to succeed. With the infrastructure in place, and all things being equal, success will come the way of the organization.

Having the infrastructure per se, will not automatically generate the success one wants. The agility and the total ambience for success in place, will induce the positive performance and that is the objective of marketing management. Top marketing management must provide the 'good' marketing strategy and then introduce fully these 'good' strategies to the marketing combatants for success.

10. References

- i. Crainier, S. (2000). *The Management Century*, Booz, New York, N.Y. 10158 – 0012, Allen and Hamilton.
- ii. Dickson, P. R. (1997); *Marketing Management*, Philadelphia, U.S.A: Harcourt Brace, College Publishers.
- iii. Duboff, R. (2000). *Market Research Matters*, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- iv. Gilligan, C., & Wilson, R. M. S. (2004). *Strategic marketing planning*, Jordan Hill, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann
- v. Jain, S.C. (2005). *Marketing Management: Planning and Strategy*, Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A: Addison Wesley.
- vi. Kotler, P. (1990). *Marketing Management*, Private Limited, New Delhi – 110001: Prentice-Hall
- vii. Mintzberg, H. (2004). *The Rise and Fall of Planning*, Harvard Business Review, January-February
- viii. Peters, T. & Waterman, R. H., Jr. (1982). *In Search of Excellence*, Scotland: Omnia Books Limited.
- ix. Schouborger, R. J.(1997). *Operations Management*, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A: Irwin McGraw-Hill
- x. Wilson, I. (1990). *The state of strategic planning, What Went Wrong, Technical Forecasting and Social Change* 37
- xi. Wind, J. Y., & Jeremy M. (1999). *Driving Change*, London: Kogan Paul Limited