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1.

MARKETING STRATEGY

Marketing strategy is a long-term, forward-looking approach and an overall game plan of any organization or any business with the fundamental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage by understanding the needs and want of customers. It refers to a business's overall game plan for reaching prospective consumers and turning them into loyal consumers of the products or services the business provides. A carefully cultivated marketing strategy should be fundamentally rooted in a company's value proposition and personality, which summarizes the competitive advantage a company, holds over rival businesses. The main aim of marketing is to know and understand the customers so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself.

In marketing strategy, it is essential to include the marketing mix. The marketing mix is the set of controllable tactical marketing tools that a company uses to produce a desired response from its target market. It consists of everything that a company can do to influence demand for its product. It is also a tool to help marketing planning and execution. The most integral part of the marketing mix includes the below;

- **Product:** The goods and/or services offered by a company to its customers.
- **Price:** The amount of money paid by customers to purchase product
- **Place (or distribution):** The activities that make the product available to consumers.
- **Promotion:** The activities that communicate the product's features and benefits and persuade customers to purchase the product.

Marketing strategies includes processes to ensure an organisation carries out its strategies from the thinking stages down to inception. Processes includes:

1. Research and data acquisition, which involves gathering data from external and internal environment.
2. Analysis and assumptions: This involves applying the data acquired to strategic assessments of how to proceed in creating new plans for the organisations product/brand/services.
3. Vision: This involves the direction to follow for the future state of an organisation, after carrying out necessary research and data analysis of an organisation. The vision of an organisation will determine the steps to follow when carrying out or devising new methods to infiltrate the market.
4. Commitment:
5. Implementation: This refers to the action plans and realities put in place to ensure that a plan or vision becomes real ad palpable. Implementation involves scheduling, budgeting and identifying the methods that is suitable for going into the marketing or presenting an organisation and its brands/services to the public. This usually involves the process of communication (advertising, experiential market, social media influencing, etc.).
6. Execution: This is when the product/service is ready to be executed into marketing for consumers' use.

Brand strategy is also an integral part of marketing strategy because it determines the direction of which an organisation should go in the production and creation of new or existing brand or services provided by said organisation. The number of brands/services will determine the type or methods of marketing strategy an organisation is willing to go in a quarter or production year.

Conclusion

Marketing strategies should ideally have longer lifespan than individual marketing plans because they contain value propositions and other key elements of a company's brand, which generally hold consistent over the long haul. In other words, marketing strategies cover big-picture messaging.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the use of marketing strategies to optimize the communication of a consistent message of the company's brands to stakeholders. Coupling methods together, improves communication as it harnesses the benefits of each channel, when combined together builds a clearer and vaster impact than if used individually. IMC requires marketers to identify the boundaries around the promotional mix elements and to consider the effectiveness of the campaign's message. IMC is a simple concept. It ensures that all forms of communications and messages are carefully linked together. Integrated Marketing Communications, basically, means integrating all the promotional tools, so that they work together in harmony. The rationale behind integrated marketing communications (IMC) is to achieve the promotional objectives in reaching target markets and to raise awareness of the companies' products and services. Therefore, IMC may involve the combination of a different promotional tool.

Integrated marketing communications is a holistic planning process that focuses on integrating messages across communications disciplines, creative executions, media, timing and stakeholders. An integrated approach has emerged as the dominant approach used by companies to plan and execute their marketing communication programs and has been described as a paradigm shift.

IMC is a strategic process that is required to produce a consistent brand message that is aimed at each customer's touch point. Its goal is simply to use multiple modes of communication, including; advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, direct marketing, interactive marketing, publicity and public relations. These promotional tools foster awareness of a company's products or services, inform people about features and benefits, and move them to make a purchase.

Personal selling may be used to target the precise market segments. Certain customers may deserve more attention than others, particularly those who are the most profitable customers. The most successful sales representatives are customer-centric, as they adapt to their offerings to customers.

Sales promotions may be consumer-oriented, retail-oriented or trade-oriented. The promotional activities are designed to stimulate and induce customers into buying from the business. Sales promotions are marketing activities that provide an incentive

to stimulate immediate action. There are two types of sales promotion: consumer-oriented sales promotion and trade-oriented sales promotions. Sales promotions consists of those promotional activities, which supplements other market activities.

Direct marketing seeks to create one-to-one personal relationships with customers. The sophisticated databases are increasingly allowing many businesses to communicate directly with consumers through variety of media, including; electronic newsletters, mobile messaging apps, websites, online adverts, fliers, online and offline catalogues, promotional letters and targeted advertisements.

Interactive marketing enables two-way communications between the businesses and their customers. This exchange takes place online through email, social media, and blogs. Both direct and interactive marketing techniques can be used to target consumers with personalized messages.

Public relations is a very useful tool, which if used effectively, can help improve the businesses' corporate image, boost reputation and stimulate demand. PR operates through unpaid channels. Therefore, the business may have less control over how the PR efforts will play out. The PR is a management function that helps an organisation to establish and maintain communication with the public. PR promotes a favourable opinion of the company, its product, and its services. Publicity also has the considerable advantage of reaching out to audience members who might normally resist other promotional tools. An advantage of publicity is that customers often perceive the word-of-mouth marketing as being more credible than other forms of promotion. However, the businesses cannot control the favourable or unfavourable messages about products or service, particularly those that may appear in online reviews. Publicity and public relations supports other marketing tools, and could be seen as the backbone of the promotional mix. The success achieved by other elements of the mix could be either damaged or reduced by bad public relations or negative publicity, something that is undesirable to businesses.

Effective IMC plans are aimed to provide relevant, consistent and complimentary messages to customers. Hence, the objectives of marketing communications is too create awareness, provide knowledge, and create favourable impressions to attain a preferred position in the customers' minds. Ultimately, they are intended to move prospects through the purchasing funnel, to close the sale.

The adverse effect of the pandemic in the sales or production of the brand: **Dettol Soap** produced by the company, **Reckitt Benckiser**, is affected by the elements of the marketing mix via its 4Ps; type of product (health), Place (Nigeria), its price, and promotional influences. These influences included popularity, and the COVID-19 pandemic itself serving as a tool for publicity, giving the brands usage for fighting/killing germs.

The first element, Product, will service as the most influential and positive element of the brand sales and marketing in the pandemic season given its usage. **Dettol** soap as a brand produced to combat germs will be sort after more during this perquisite because citizens will want to have all the protection they can get against the virus. This will lead to more sales and production of the brand to meet consumers' demand. In return, it will affect **Reckitt Benckiser** financial returns for the year 2020.

With the price of Dettol staying the same, may would prefer to switch to the soap to provide additional sense of protection to the virus. As an affordable brand to the majority of the population in Nigeria, the company, **Reckitt Benckiser**, may intend to the needs of consumers either by strategizing a new marketing technique to include the Class-D/E economic citizens by producing smaller sized products to match the 'pockets' of these class or by carrying out a 'Bonus' plan to sell more products at lesser costs. This, in turn, will affect the brand perspective and draw in more consumers, while retaining loyalty from previous customers.

Promotion, as part of the mix, plays a big role in the pandemic season. Promotion includes advertising, publicity and public relations. During the pandemic Reckitt Benckiser carried out an ad in India (by the agency *McCann*), this ad served promotional function to teach the public the perfect way to wash hands using its soap as well as the benefits of using the antiseptic for cleaning and bathing purposes. With the need to educate the public about the necessity of fighting the virus, Dettol producers will carry out more promotional activities to let consumers know about their product. Ads techniques such as out-of-home and social media adverts may be introduced during the pandemic as a marketing tool to push the product out to all areas of the market. Promotion, as a marketing mix, in the case of Reckitt's Dettol, will go hand in hand with place (i.e. market). This is because Dettol will want to

include everyone in the sales of their product, including areas not specific or covered by their marketing plan. This can be done in several ways including experiential marketing or door-to-door campaigns. Dettol's focus will not just be sales to wholesalers but also retailers. This will ensure that their product goes to all channels, streets, shops and homes in their primary market place, i.e. Nigeria.

Conclusively, the main 'P's of the marketing mix; Product, Place, Price, Promotion, in the company '**Reckitt Benckiser**' and its popular brand, **Dettol**, will be positively affected by the COVID-19 because there would be an increase in demand of product(s) which will in turn lead to new strategies that would be carried out via the use of these elements. Although, the 4Ps are the key elements, they will also affect other factors such as process (which falls under product production), physical environment, and people (which comes under 'Place'). Therefore, if **Reckitt Benckiser** can place value and create formidable market strategies to push Dettol forward into market, the coronavirus pandemic will be an avenue for profit and gains, rather than a decline in production and financial returns for the company.