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# MARKETING MANAGEMENT

LCMB7024\_LON

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ASSESSMENT 1

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## Introduction

The market is a competitive environment filled with rivals striving to stand out. It is fascinating to explore how companies operate. In this essay, I will address a key question: Is it better to be the first to launch a new product or service, or should one wait for another company to do so and then improve upon that initial offering?

Marketing management is akin to an art; it involves understanding consumer needs and aligning them with business goals (Smith & Taylor, 2025). I conclude that there are two main types of market participants: pioneers, who take risks with innovative ideas, and followers, who adopt a more practical and calculated approach. In this essay, I will investigate the advantages of each stance, drawing on current examples that are both inspiring and familiar in our daily lives.

Additionally, I aim to explore how these companies utilise the product lifecycle—from the launch of a new product or service to its eventual withdrawal from the market—to drive growth and maintain competitiveness. All the companies discussed are well-known brands that we frequently use, whether in technology, entertainment, or fast food. I am interested in analysing how their strategies contribute to their success or failure.

There may not be a definitive winner between being a pioneer or a follower; both have their strengths and weaknesses. What's most important is how each strategy is applied. I will begin by discussing the benefits of both approaches, analyse their tactics within the product lifecycle, and conclude with a reflection. I want to emphasise that both strategies can be effective if applied correctly.

## What are the advantages of being a pioneer and a follower company?

### Advantages of being a pioneering company

Being a pioneer is like exploring uncharted territory with a flashlight: it's exciting but also a bit intimidating. These companies introduce innovations such as revolutionary products, groundbreaking technologies, or unique ways to engage with customers that give them a significant advantage (Johnson & Lee, 2024). Launching a product first provides a clear edge, as there are no comparable offerings on the market. From this standpoint, being the first allows a company to dominate its sector; it enters the market without competition and thus controls its direction.

Moreover, being the first to market helps solidify the brand's reputation. Consumers recognise and trust the brand, fostering loyalty that makes it challenging for future competitors to break that bond. To summarise, being a market pioneer offers complete freedom for innovation. With no direct competitors initially, there is a unique opportunity to experiment and create something genuinely new.

To achieve this level of pioneering, it is essential to have substantial resources, including not just financial backing but also talent and a clear vision of goals. Although reaching this point is no easy feat, doing so can signify success, as the product may serve as a launchpad for an entire industry.

### **Example: SpaceX**

SpaceX is a case that perfectly illustrates what I commented on before. When Elon Musk founded it in 2002, no one, specifically the market we are referring to, invested in private space travel because it seemed unimaginable. However, by 2025, its reusable rockets, such as the Starship, will have appeared, making it unique in the world.

They pioneered making a rocket take off, land, and reuse on a large scale, something that seemed incredible a decade ago. That gave it absolute control of the market, to the point that today, they lead commercial launches and have contracts with NASA that use their rockets for their national space plan.

Its brand has become one of prestige and innovation, enjoying a reputation that places it at the forefront. By achieving this, they have led to the continuous expansion of opportunities to be unique, including human-crewed flights to the Moon and plans to colonise Mars. We haven't yet seen all that can be achieved, but being first has made them the brand to watch, just as this support pushes them to new limits.

### **Example: OpenAI**

OpenAI is another example of a pioneering company that has caused a breakthrough, changing the world.

In 2023, with the introduction of ChatGPT, this company put artificial intelligence in everyone's hands. They did not invent AI, but they made it practical and accessible, another way of being a pioneer, since a product or service, even if it is innovative, has to be accessible.

By 2025, its language models will be leading, used by companies for everything from customer service to business management. Being pioneers allowed them to capture a massive audience and establish themselves as role model in AI.

Their brand became synonymous with innovation and they overtook giants of the market, being the first gave them a place that with the growing appearance of AI from many competitors at an incredible rate, they do not get consumers to stop associating their products with those of ChatGPT, it is to be expected that over time it will be diluted but being pioneers is giving them an advantage.

## Advantages of being a follower company

Being a follower is not as highly regarded socially as being a pioneer; on the other hand, it is not easy, as it requires considerable astuteness, and the risk of competing with an established brand is significant. In the market, it is not the first to arrive who triumphs, but rather the one who utilises the resources most effectively.

When you arrive later, it is easy to examine where the pioneers have failed and correct them so that your product will not have the deficiencies that the pioneer company has or has had. And most importantly, the expense is significantly lower since they utilise proven methods and adjust them to their advantage. Nor can we forget that, as a product or service already on the market, these follower companies have access to market data, enabling them to observe consumer reactions and refine their offerings. Finally, they can leverage the distribution networks and consumption habits that the pioneers have already established.

Essentially, it is to capitalise on the path that the pioneers have established as much as possible and refine it. It could be said that they capitalise on the experience of the past and utilise it, transforming patience into power.

### **Example: TikTok Shop**

TikTok Shop is an eloquent example of what it means to be a follower company; it has revolutionised online shopping without inventing it.

Amazon was the pioneer of e-commerce and has maintained its lead for decades. However, in 2023, TikTok launched its shopping platform, which has continued to grow since then.

This company has not invented the concept of selling online, but it has observed how consumers spend hours watching videos, and from this insight, it has leveraged consumer shopping habits. They have eliminated errors such as the saturation of ads on Instagram or the complicated interfaces of eBay. They have developed it in a

simple yet addictive way, as straightforward as seeing a product in a video and being able to buy it without leaving the app.

Economically more profitable as they have not had to invest in educating consumers on how to buy, allowing them to compete with the pioneers using a new and more up-to-date way. They also use the data of their millions of users to fine-tune their catalogue precisely.

It is not a pioneering company in this field, but having a different vision makes it a follower with vision, so it can be understood that waiting for the right moment can create a powerful competitor with the potential to surpass the pioneer.

### **Example: Rivian**

Rivian is another case of a follower company.

Tesla was a pioneer in electric cars years ago, leading the market and paving the way for subsequent companies to follow. Rivian debuted in 2021 with a catalog of electric trucks and SUVs; the company has continued to grow rapidly.

They leveraged Tesla's research on long-range batteries and fast charging to target different consumer segments, tailoring their product to meet the needs of adventure enthusiasts and logistics professionals. They have been able to correct the mistakes made by Tesla, such as production delays. In this way, this company entered the market when electric vehicles were already accepted.

Now they take advantage of their product even better than their competitors since they made a contract with Amazon to deliver 10,000 units in 2024, this follower company is following the path that another pioneering company risks opening, they put observing, learning and improving to find their space in the market then and place themselves at the same level.

## What product lifecycle strategies do successful pioneers and followers employ to drive growth and maintain a strong competitive edge?

The product life cycle (PLC) is akin to the DNA of any product a company introduces to the world. It is a journey with four stages: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline (Brown & Harris, 2025).

The introduction of a product is the riskiest part of the process, as despite conducting market studies and assessing market acceptance, presenting a new product ultimately depends on consumer acceptance. I suppose it's the moment that generates the most tension and emotion. On the other hand, the process of decline is more straightforward; it involves deciding, when sales fall, whether a product should be withdrawn or revived.

The growth and maturity stages are the most remarkable; these phases of the process are where companies, whether pioneers or followers, utilise their best marketing and sales strategies to grow and stay ahead by competing with competitors and overcoming consumer habits.

### Strategies in the growth stage

In the growth stage, if all goes well, sales rise quickly, and the product or service begins to gain acceptance; conversely, competitors start to emerge. At this critical moment, you must decide whether to protect the product or expand its coverage. Here, it is relevant to act as either a pioneer company or a follower company, as the strategy to follow is quite different.

#### **- Position defence: Starbucks is a pioneering company.**

Starbucks is a good example of a company that uses a defensive strategy. By the 1990s, premium coffee had begun its climb; this company was a pioneer, having employed a positioning defence strategy that has worked for it to this day. They reinforced their brand by adapting their stores to create a space where customers could relax and work simultaneously while purchasing their coffee, thereby creating a cozy atmosphere. They have a consistent menu, featuring recurring products

according to the time of year, and they utilise their app for ordering. To retain loyal customers, they currently operate more than 38,000 stores worldwide. They remain leaders and maintain their leadership, prioritising quality and presence. Being pioneers in creating a coffee experience gave them a foundation with which to establish themselves and remain a leader.

### **- Frontal attack: BYD vs. Tesla**

BYD, as a follower company, is a Chinese electric car company. Tesla was the pioneer who introduced electric cars to the market, but BYD entered the growth stage of the market and made a direct attack.

Its models, such as the BYD Han or the Seal, offer cheaper batteries, as they utilise LFP technology that is less expensive than Tesla's, and autonomy that rivals that of the Model 3. In this way, they offer a similar product at a lower cost.

Its ads are direct and targeted to a general audience, including Tesla consumers. They have not invented electric cars, but as followers, they have utilised the industry at their disposal to compete with the pioneering and leading company.

BYD sold more than 3 million electric vehicles in 2024, surpassing Tesla for the first time, demonstrating the effectiveness of a frontal attack with the right strategy and resources. As a follower can become a competitor at the same level by leveraging its resources, this achievement highlights the importance of a strategic approach.

## **Strategies in the maturity stage**

In the maturity stage, sales stabilise, the market is complete, and competition is very aggressive. At this stage, companies have several options: they can seek to maintain their quota or find ways to extend the product's life.

It is common for products to be reinvented to maintain relevance.

### **-Greater penetration: Netflix is a pioneering company.**

Netflix was a pioneer in putting movies and series on demand in consumers' homes. Although the competition is increasing and diverse, Netflix remains the leading

player in the streaming industry. Use the most penetrating strategy very effectively. This company continues to produce and acquire new content, despite being in its maturity phase. They have also revised their plans to offer more affordable and competitive options, aiming to retain their existing subscribers and attract new ones. They have been able to add 8 million users in the last quarter of 2024 with that model.

Despite having gracious competitors like Disney+ and HBO Max, it remains the leader in a saturated market.

**-Global expansion: Shake Shack is a follower.**

Shake Shack is a company that focuses on burgers. In a saturated market led by companies like McDonald's and Burger King, Shake Shack has reached the maturity stage in its home market in the U.S. and is now expanding globally.

This company is expanding into Asia and Europe with menus tailored to each region; for example, in Korea, they offer a hamburger with gochujang sauce. That taps into demand in places where premium fast food still has room to grow.

They have appeared after the pioneers but use that advantage to extend the life of their product.

They continue to expand, utilising this tactic intelligently. In this way, although they did not invent the hamburger, they are taking it to places in the world where it is a novelty.

**-Technological leap: Bosch as a pioneering company.**

Bosch is a company that has changed its perspective very effectively.

In the maturity of the combustion car, where competitors such as Continental or Denso dominated the auto parts market, Bosch has made a bold shift towards electrification and IoT. While others continued to optimise diesel engines, they developed solid-state batteries and complete systems for electric vehicles that today power everything from the Porsche Taycan to the Tesla Model 3.

In 2023, its connected mobility division already generated £10.2 billion, and its IoT platform connected more than 10 million devices in smart factories and cities.

They used their expertise in automotive engineering to become a technology company that not only sells components but entire ecosystems of clean and digital mobility.

This company has led the electricity market by pioneering new developments. Despite being a century-old company, it has proven to be disruptive.

This example confirms that maturity is not the end but a stage that provides the possibility of making significant changes.

## Conclusion

As I conclude this review, it is clear to me that there is no single way to achieve business success. Companies can thrive in various ways: some by inventing what no one had imagined and others by improving existing concepts. What is evident is that both paths can be effective if appropriately leveraged.

Companies like SpaceX and OpenAI have not only developed new technologies but also transformed our perception of the world. Once, private space travel and interactions with AI seemed impossible; today, they are integral parts of our daily lives. Their true accomplishment lies not just in creating something new but in making us believe that such innovations are possible.

However, we must not underestimate those who follow in their footsteps. TikTok Shop and BYD exemplify that being the first does not always guarantee being the best. TikTok recognised something Amazon overlooked: Consumers want to shop while being entertained. Similarly, BYD recognised that electric cars do not have to be luxury items to be accessible across various market segments. They took existing ideas and further developed them.

It is particularly fascinating to observe how these companies adapt at various stages of their growth. Starbucks and Netflix are pioneers that continue to lead their industries because they consistently innovate. Shake Shack and Bosch demonstrate that even in mature markets, new opportunities can be discovered.

Ultimately, the market is not a race where the fastest wins; it is more like a game of chess, where every move counts. Pioneers may set the pieces on the board, but followers can succeed in the game by playing their pieces more strategically.

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