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1.1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the market entering strategy in the business world, companies are categorized as pioneer and followers. The success or failure of new product releases is largely dependent on strategic timing in today's fiercely competitive global marketplaces (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988).

PIONEER COMPANY – It is referred to as the first business that launches a new technology, service, or product in the market. It introduces new goods, service, or technology before rivals do, frequently influencing consumer preferences and establishing benchmarks for the sector (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). Examples of such pioneering companies include Tesla and Apple, which have proved to be beneficial worldwide. Another few companies, which once were globally considered to have a rich history, and also had gone under significant decline or faced challenges are British airways, Rolls Royce, The Royal Mint, Oxford University Press and Marconi.

FOLLOWER COMPANY – Also known by market follower, is defined as the business promoted by copying successful tactics or goods, concentrates on preserving its current market share rather than competing with the market leader. Although it is not a market leader, it is renowned for its fierce competition in an effort to grow its market share. Some of the well renowned examples of follower companies are Samsung in terms of smartphones, Xiaomi in case of consumer electronics, Gymshark, Burberry and LandRover, Calvin Klein, Coca Cola and Forbes.

In strategic marketing, businesses have to decide whether to be a pioneer (or first mover) in a market or a follower.

1.2. ADVANTAGES OF BEING A PIONEER COMPANY

- 1.2.1. First Mover Advantage** - Before rivals enter the market, pioneer enterprises can build a strong brand presence and a devoted following. They manage to establish themselves in the market before anybody else does, making it challenging for others to take their place. This early establishment also leads to the development of brand loyalty. By attracting early adopters and taking advantage of the learning curve, first movers can eventually lower costs. (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988)
- 1.2.2. Technology Advancements** - In order to keep a competitive edge, pioneers frequently take the lead in research and development (R&D) by their inventions which results them in getting various advantages in this field of R&D. (Schnaars, 1994)
- 1.2.3. Stronger Network** – Pioneering companies are known to have strong supplier and distributing network in marketing. By securing exclusive distribution and supplier contracts, pioneers might make it more difficult for late comers to compete (Carpenter & Nakamoto, 1989)
- 1.2.4. Power of Price** – Because there is little competition and their innovations are novel, pioneers are able to charge higher rates. (Golder & Tellis, 1993)

1.3. FEW EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PIONEER COMPANIES

- I. **Tesla:** One of the best examples of a successful pioneer is Tesla. It debuted high-end EVs when the market was still mainly doubtful of their feasibility. The company had a significant competitive advantage because of its early dedication to developing both cars and an integrated charging infrastructure (Supercharger network) (Tesla Inc., 2023). Tesla has established a devoted and a loyal fanbase and established itself as a pioneer in sustainability and innovation.
- With a global EV market share of roughly 19% in 2023, Tesla dominated the EV industry thanks to its relentless innovation, vertical integration, and R&D commitment (Tesla Inc., 2023).

- II. **Dyson:** Using cyclonic separation technology, Dyson created the first bagless vacuum cleaner in history, completely changing the vacuum cleaner market. Dyson maintained its technological superiority and established a solid brand identity as a pioneer. (Tefi Alonso, 2024)
- III. **DeepMind :** An AI startup that Google purchased was a leader in machine learning and artificial intelligence, creating cutting-edge algorithms that revolutionized sectors including gaming and healthcare.

But being a pioneer doesn't guarantee success. It necessitates constant creativity, daring, and the capacity to generate new demands and challenge difficulties (Suarez & Lanzolla, 2020).

1.4. ADVANTAGES OF BEING A FOLLOWER COMPANY

Follower companies enter the market later, taking lessons from the failures and achievements of pioneers, whereas pioneer companies introduce new products or technology. Some of the advantages of being a follower companies conclude as following :

- 1.4.1. Cost Efficiency** - By building on previous inventions, follower companies can avoid the enormous expenditures associated with creating new technology from the ground up. This helps in reducing the cost rate that needs to be spent on research and development. (Schnaars, 1994)
- 1.4.2. Minimum Errors** - Followers can spot market vulnerabilities and steer clear of early mistakes by watching pioneers. This gives the follower companies to make fewer mistakes and an opportunity to provide the ideal product that the consumer wants. (Tellis & Golder, 2001)
- 1.4.3. Lower Risk of Market Uncertainty** - Avoiding the uncertainty that pioneers encounter while launching a new product or technology is one of the main benefits of becoming a follower company. New product demand is unpredictable for pioneers, but follower companies join once the market feasibility is established (Kerin & Peterson, 1992). Because there is no assurance that their product will be successful and because they need to make large investments in marketing and research, so the Followers have a better chance of success and can enter a tested market with less risks (Kerin, Varadarajan & Peterson, 1992).

1.4.4. Flexibility & Adaptability - By entering the market at the appropriate moment, followers can escape early volatility and adjust to market movements (Suarez & Lanzolla, 2007). Followers are able to quickly adjust to shifting consumer preferences and market conditions. (Askar et al, 2021).

1.5. FEW EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL FOLLOWER COMPANIES

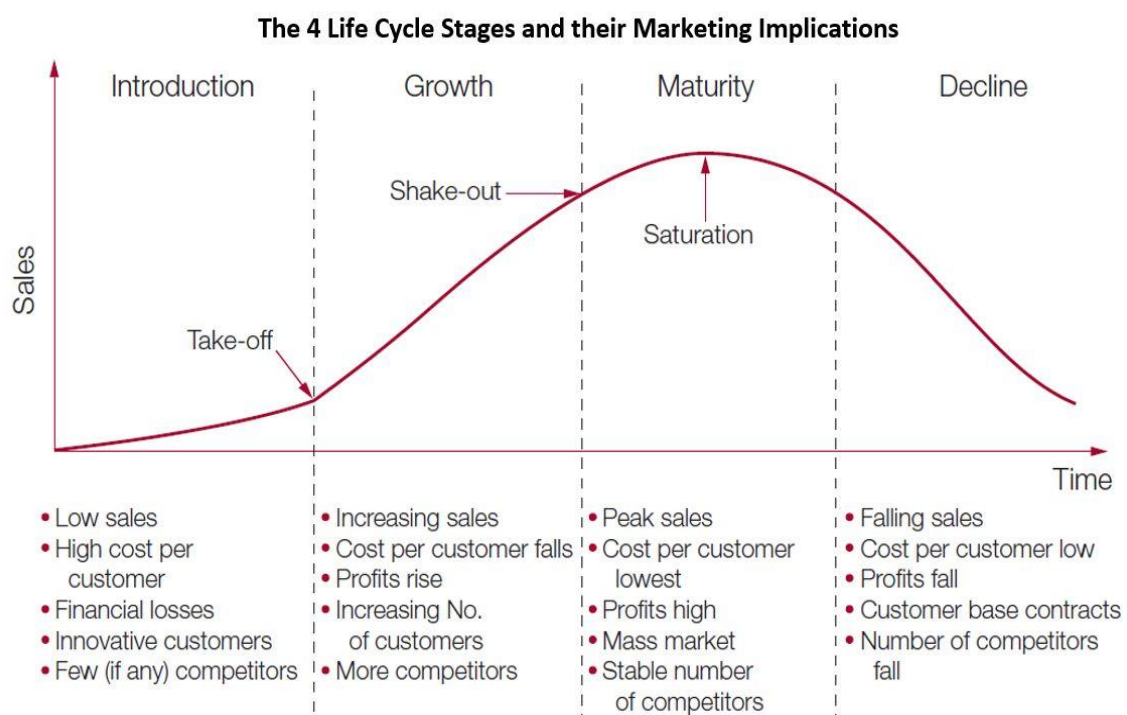
- I. **TESCO** – It was established in 1919 and soon grew to become the biggest supermarket chain in the UK which adopted innovations like self-checkouts and also explored and gained insight from online grocery shopping on a bigger scale.
- II. **ASOS** – Also known as one of the leading companies in fashion store online, ASOS was founded in 2000 and gained inspiration from pioneering companies such as Amazon and e-bay, focusing on influencer marketing skills and quick fashion.
- III. **Vodafone** – One of the most renowned company that is spread globally, has become a follower company by observing pioneer company BT's (British Telecom) dominance of landlines, making Vodafone to concentrate on mobile services, taking advantage of advancements in mobile technology and growing globally.

2.1. PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

The stages that a product is anticipated to go through are described as the product life cycle (CFI team, 2014). The Product Life Cycle (PLC) model is a key paradigm in marketing that defines the movement of a product through four distinct stages: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These four stages are explained as follows:

- 1. Introduction Stage:** The introduction stage's objectives are to create demand and establish a substantial market presence. (Carol M. Kopp, 2024)

2. **Growth Stage:** It includes differentiating and refining its products to improve its functionality keeping in check with customer's feedback. (Reviewed by David Kindness, 2024)
3. **Maturity Stage:** The goals of this stage are to retain market share and maximum profit by lowering costs, developing goods, and exploring new niches(Carol M. Kopp, 2024).
4. **Decline Stage:** This stage refers to innovate and diversify the product to avoid its declination.



2.2. PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE STRATEGIES FOR PIONEER COMPANIES

A pioneering strategy is one in which a corporation gains a significant market share by becoming the first to enter an industry (MBA Skool Team, 2023). Some successful pioneer companies rely on these strategies mentioned below:

- I. **Market Creation and Innovation** – It includes developing strategies to attract early adopters and corporations informing their customers about the new debut.

Which helps to increase product consumption demand (Porter,1985). This necessitated significant investments in research, marketing, refining, and product distribution (Barus, 2023).

Example – Apple spent millions promoting the iPhone at launch to drive demand and buzz. Pioneers typically use skimming pricing as a pricing technique to recover R&D costs(Grant, 2018). To attract early adopters, **Tesla** initially made the price of its electric vehicles high Distribution Channels. It is critical to establish powerful distribution networks(Electric vehicles, 2008). **Amazon** invented e-commerce by building a vast logistics network to ensure speedy delivery (Amazon.com, 2025).

- II. **Market Expansion and Branding** –It's primary focus is on creating things on a big scale at reduced costs that meet the customer's expectation. Pioneers also develop additional products and services to increase consumer retention.
EXAMPLE - Netflix pioneered on-demand streaming, but it proceeded to expand globally and enhance content licensing and original productions to keep up with competitors such as Hulu and Disney+(Streaming Services, 2007). **Amazon** began by selling books, but it soon branched out into other product categories, setting itself apart with data-driven suggestions and swift delivery (E-commerce, 1995). **Revolut**, a pioneer digital banking company added cryptocurrency and stock trading in it expanding itself globally.
- III. **Brand Loyalty and Sustained Innovation** – Since the product has already hit the market at the third stage, it must compete with its rivals. Diversifying the product, emphasizing brand loyalty, and improving the product by adding new features to keep customers interested are ways to achieve this sustainability.
EXAMPLE – Coca cola – The worldwide famous drink, maintains its hegemony through strong worldwide marketing, ongoing product changes (Diet Coke, Coca-Cola Zero), and brand loyalty programs. **AMAZON** – As a leader in e-commerce, Amazon set itself apart with Amazon Prime, offering exclusive perks like quicker shipping and streaming services to maintain its market dominance (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). **Rolls Royce**, a leading pioneer company also dealt with aircraft engines along with luxury cars. It generates high net-worth to customers along with luxury.

- IV. Cost Management and Business Evolution** – This includes the verification of brand product and if the loss is noticed in product sale, then pioneers have three options: diversify into other markets, rebrand, or discontinue the product.
- EXAMPLE - IBM** – As hardware sales fell, IBM, a hardware pioneering company, turned its attention to cloud computing and artificial intelligence to ensure its long-term survival (Chesbrough, 2003). Now imagine, recreating a product to meet customer's demands. Such as, **Apple** dropped the iPod but incorporated its features into the iPhone. **Sony** shifted its focus from popular TVs to high-end, premium models (Reuters.com, 2023).

2.3. PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE STRATEGIES FOR FOLLOWER COMPANIES

- I. MARKET ENTRY** – Instead of spending money on whole new ideas, followers improve already-existing products by providing them at reasonable rates. (Schnaars, 1994).
- EXAMPLE – Samsung and Xiaomi** entered the market after Apple but offer cost-effective and wide range of models that are easy to afford by customers. (Brandcredential.com, 2024).
- II. MARKET SEGMENTATION AND DIFFERENTIATION** – Followers minimize R&D costs and increase market share by enhancing product quality, adding new features, and implementing assertive marketing methods.
- EXAMPLE – Xiaomi** trailed Apple and Samsung in terms of smartphones by providing premium devices at more affordable costs and growing quickly in developing nations (Kumar & Puranam, 2012). **Huawei** competed with Apple and Samsung by entering the telecom business later and concentrating on offering affordable smartphones and cutting-edge 5G technologies (Telecoms & Smartphones). **Monzo**, a follower company followed by the idea of Revolut, focussed on community driven approach and helped in innovative budgeting tools in the digital banking era.
- III. BRAND STRENGTHENING AND EXPANSION** – This stage involves employ strategic pricing, collaborations, and endorsements to boost brand value and improve the consumer experience.

EXAMPLE – Pepsico, aka Pepsi increased its market share through price promotions, celebrity endorsements, and youth-oriented advertising efforts, while Coca-Cola invented soft drinks (Bell, 2017) . **Amazon** which is a follower company inspired by the idea of Walmart and ebay, even outperformed ebay by offering Prime memberships, quicker delivery, and better customer service. **Ocado**, another grocery specialized shop, was inspired by Amazon's model and also end up partnering with big supermarkets M&S.

IV. PRODUCT INNOVATION – This stage includes the opportunities that follower companies look for to keep the product relevant in market so as to avoid its declination and expand their market or enter new industries to sustain the product.

EXAMPLE – Netflix managed to avoid it's decline by shifting from DVD service to stream online globally. This adaptation helped it to grow steadily in market and outshine as a follower company. It followed Blockbuster for its long term growth (Christensen, 1997).

2.4. COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES OF PIONEER AND FOLLOWER STRATEGIES

STRATEGY STAGE	PIONEER COMPANY STRATEGY	EXAMPLE	FOLLOWER COMPANY STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
INTRODUCTION	R&D awareness	Apple vs Tesla (EVs)	Existing markets, Reasonable Rate, Low Risk	Samsung, Xiaomi (smartphones)
GROWTH	Differentiation, Scaling	Netflix and Amazon Prime (streaming), Revolut (Fin Tech)	Cost Reduction, Product Quality, Differentiation	Xiaomi and Huawei (smartphones), Monzo (Fin Tech)
MATURITY	Brand Loyalty	Coca cola, Amazon, Rolls Royce	Pricing, Brand Strengthening	Pepsi vs Coca-cola, Amazon, Ocado
DECLINE	Shift to new business	IBM, Apple and Sony	Product Innovation and Expansion	Netflix (expansion from DVD to Streaming)

CONCLUSION

To preserve growth and a competitive edge, both pioneer and follower firms employ separate but successful tactics at various stages of the Product Life Cycle (PLC). Pioneers like Apple, Tesla, and Coca-Cola engage in innovation, market education, and distinction, whereas followers like Samsung, Xiaomi, and PepsiCo focus on cost efficiency, product refinement, and aggressive growth. Companies that successfully tailor their strategy to their place in the PLC can maintain long-term growth and industry leadership.

The combination of invention (pioneers) and strategic adaptation (following) creates a dynamic and competitive marketplace that benefits customers by providing better products and services. In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, businesses must embrace agility and data-driven decision-making. Whether leading or following, sustainable competitive advantage depends on ongoing innovation, lifecycle awareness, and the strategic balance between being first and best.

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