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Introduction

The success of a company is often dependent on the choice of whether to be a first mover or late entrants in a market in this rapidly changing business environment. Pioneers provide a product or service to a market sooner than their competitors and they lead the industry standard, often accounting for a superior share of the market in its early stages. Pioneers enjoy brand loyalty, a trusted consumer base, and the first-mover advantage; just think of companies like Tesla that pioneered the electric vehicle industry by launching new products before their competition (Bohnsack, Pinkse, & Kolk, 2014). At the same time, though, pioneering comes with significant risks, costs and struggles — consumer demand for something that is not yet proven, the high cost of developing and bringing it to market, and educating the market about the innovation itself. Followers, on the other hand, do not enter the market until after the pioneers and thus have the opportunity to discover what works and what does not. For example, followers mitigate the risks of entering the market by improving existing products, providing more value, and learning from the response to the pioneers' products (Shapiro & Varian, 1999). Samsung, for example, was forced to follow in the footsteps of Apple in the smartphone market, innovating a stronger array of features while providing a diverse number of models at various price points, allowing it to rapidly capture market share (Gans, 2016).

2. Advantages of Being a Pioneer

2.1 Discuss, Analyse and Critically Evaluate the Advantages

The follower company has never entered a market until the pioneer introduced a new product or service. While pioneers take the first-mover pain, followers have some strategic advantages because they can learn from the success and errors of the pioneers.

Those that follow are able to watch the trailblazers. Followers can improve the product, minimise expensive mistakes, and refine the design by learning from what the leaders have done and what they have done wrong. For instance, Uber was a fast follower in ride-sharing and also observed Lyft's initial missteps and optimised its own app design, improved driver relations, and simplified its portfolio, finally surpassing Lyft (Bremmer, 2012).

Reduced R&D costs accrue to followers. They can concentrate on improving an existing design rather than starting from square one because they don't have to build the product from the ground up. Microsoft, for example, also made a late entry into the video game console market with the Xbox after Sony's PlayStation had already claimed the high ground. Instead of the steep costs of innovation, Microsoft took the existing technology and added online capabilities, processing power, and other Microsoft product integrations (Gans, 2016).

Pioneers often have to educate the market, to explain to customers why a new product, service, etc. is valuable. By contrast, followers are able to take advantage of the market education already accomplished by the pioneers. For instance, PepsiCo did not have to invest money in educating consumers in soft drinks, because by the time it entered the soft drink market, Coca-Cola had already established the category. Pepsi, on the other hand, aimed to differentiate and promote its product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Influencers can also use consumer feedback to enhance their products. After a pioneer launches a product, followers can utilize learnings from the market to improve the product's design and function. Kotler and Keller (2016) state that Samsung, itself, kept taking consumer feedback into account to improve its smartphone battery life and screen size that pushed itself to be the more competitive peer of Apple.

These gains are customarily exploited and many companies have wavered at the forefront of their field due to these enhancements. Uber and Microsoft, but also PepsiCo and Samsung, are perhaps the best-known examples of follower companies that have successfully leveraged lower R&D expenditures, consumer feedback, and the lessons learnt from pioneers.

2.2 What are the Key Advantages of Being a Follower Company?

A follower company is one that comes into the market after the pioneer has first introduced any product, service, or innovation. Learning from Pioneers allows Followers to benefit from several strategic advantages.

One of the largest benefits of being a follower is that you have the chance to learn from the mistakes of frontiersmen. As first movers navigate these challenges, followers can learn from their mistakes and adapt their strategies accordingly, fine-tuning their products or services in the process. For example, Red Bull broke into the energy drink market after early competitors failed to create strong brands. In August 2012, Red Bull had the greatest market share (Bremmer, 2012), with product success was powered by this approach.

It also enables customers who visit Followers directly to read reviews. Consumers are getting these offerings, and they're giving them a tonne of fantastic feedback about what they want tweaked. That allows followers to adjust their product to better fit what the market wants. An example of this would be how Samsung incorporated its customers feedback to make its Galaxy series better, such as incorporating better camera and battery life, which contributed to them becoming a leading smartphone company in the market (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Followers can skip the expensive costs of educating the market that innovators have to pay. Educating the market on the value of a new product category requires a lot of effort and resources, often spreading across multiple top tips to create its category. In contrast, followers can build on what has already been paved by the pioneers, allowing them to concentrate their endeavors to product refinement and targeted marketing. This allowed Coca-Cola to capitalize on market education that Pepsi had already set in place, allowing Coca-Cola to focus all its energy on differentiating its product, like Diet Coke (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

These benefits helped a few companies become market leaders. Examples of followers that have benefitted from lower R&D costs, consumer feedback, and avoiding

the cost of market education include Red Bull, Samsung and Coca-Cola. While these companies were not the first in their sectors, they have built upon the foundation established by ground-breakers to hire better-fit team members, perfect their products, and hone their marketing: allowing them to cement themselves in the front-running position of their industry.

2.3 Provide at Least Three to Five Examples for Each Pioneer and Follower Company

Pioneer Companies:

Apple: The iPhone transformed the mobile phone market and established an industry standard for subsequent handheld devices (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Google: The first successful search engine that pioneered the rules and principles of the internet search algorithms and continued to dominate the market for many years on (Varian, 2017).

Tesla: Tesla pioneered the electric vehicle market, becoming a leader in the automotive industry (Bohnsack, Pinkse, & Kolk, 2014).

Follower Companies:

Samsung joined the smartphone marketplace after Apple, enhancing the design and features of mobile devices (Gans, 2016).

PepsiCo followed behind Coca-Cola in the beverage industry and made use of providing different product types like Diet Pepsi (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Sony attempted to enter the digital camera market after Canon and Nikon, focusing on improving resolution and the user interface to differentiate its products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Company Type	Company	Industry	Advantages
Pioneer	Apple	Smartphones	First-mover advantage with massive market share, brand recognition, and premium pricing for the iPhone (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018)
Pioneer	Google	Search Engine	Defined the internet search industry, creating a market standard with advanced algorithms and continuing dominance (Varian, 2017)
Pioneer	Tesla	Electric Vehicles	Pioneered the electric vehicle market, leading to brand recognition and premium pricing for EVs (Bohnsack, Pinkse, & Kolk, 2014)
Follower	Samsung	Smartphones	Enhanced smartphone design with larger screens, Android OS, and customizable features, becoming a strong market player (Gans, 2016)
Follower	PepsiCo	Soft Drinks	Differentiated with product variety like Diet Pepsi, targeting health-conscious consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018)
Follower	Sony	Digital Cameras	Entered digital camera market, improving resolution and user interface to stand out from Canon and Nikon (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018)

3. Product Life Cycle (PLC) Strategies for Pioneers and Followers

The product life cycle (PLC) is a progression of stages that a product goes through from its introduction to its decline in the market. The four primary stages of the PLC are Introduction, Growth, Maturity and Decline. Both pioneers and followers can establish strategies during the Growth and Maturity stages that will dictate the longevity of their success.

3.1 Discuss, Analyze and Critically Evaluate the Growth and Maturity Stages of the PLC for Pioneers

The pioneers go through disproportionate expansion in the growth stage when their offering becomes widely accepted. Adopters increase sales, and then brand awareness follows. For instance, the iPhone from Apple retained its dominance in the market through incremental improvements in hardware and software, such as improved camera

systems, processors and software features (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). At this point, pioneers began to progressively differentiate their products, rendering them distinctive, and protecting themselves from new entrants. But if the program of continuous innovation slows, competitors can start to chip away at their market share.

The maturity stage is when the market is saturated and most of the potential customers have adopted the product. Growth decelerates, and competition increases as more companies provide the same products. In this stage, innovators need to build on their product uniqueness and customer loyalty to capture market share. An example of a company integrating its hardware and software products into a connected ecosystem that encourages brand loyalty (even with competitors, such as Samsung and Google) would be Apple with its suite of devices, software and services (iCloud and Apple Music) (Bohnsack et al., 2014).

Pioneers can also diversify by widening their product range or entering new markets. As an example, Apple diversified into the wearables market with the launch of its smartwatch in order to create additional sources of revenue as its smartphone became mature in the market (Shapiro & Varian, 1999). In this stage penetration strategy, which deals with increasing the market share in the same market, can be applied. This enables trailblazers to make the most of their current customer base and maintain leadership.

The concern is, the more mature a category achieves, the more likely other firms will again jump in to reduce those margins (if you are a pioneer, your success during maturation depends on cost management). One of the ways classic automakers can expand their market is through the development of electric vehicles (EVs), an area where Tesla, a leader in EV technology, is a prime example of a company that diversifies into areas such as energy to grow (Bohnsack, Pinkse, & Kolk, 2014) along with battery storage and solar panels to keep themselves as competitive as possible and to lessen the pressure on classic automakers when they enter the electric vehicle market.

3.2 Discuss, Analyze and Critically Evaluate the Growth and Maturity Stages of the PLC for Followers

For followers, the slow stage usually starts after pioneers create a market. Followers take what pioneers have done, and make a better version of their product, and potentially at lower cost. Samsung, for instance, responded to the gaps left in consumer preference (bigger screens, removable batteries, and the Android OS at this time) when they entered the smartphone market after Apple (Gans, 2016). Followers avoid the frozen risks of product development and market education that pioneers have when they enter the market later.

During maturity, followers must compete by establishing advantages based on product differentiation and cost structure management. An example of how a company can manage to survive and increase its market share is Samsung; which, through the well-managed availability of various smartphones in different price segments has catered to both the top-tier as well as budget consumers alike and has managed to maintain a high share of the market over the years (Kotler & Keller, 2016). At this point followers use extended use strategy to get customers to use their product in different ways, or to expand the use of the product across different demographics or applications.

To remain competitive during maturity, they have to invest in operational efficiencies and economies of scale to lower costs so prices remain appealing. Other companies, such as Samsung, have invested heavily into their production processes and thus are able to provide good quality products at a low price, as a result, it remains profitable even at the maturity stage (Shapiro & Varian, 1999).

In addition, driving product extensions or niche marketing can keep these followers growing. For example, Samsung's expansion from smartphones into other product lines such as tablets, wearables, and other consumer electronics demonstrates how followers can broaden their product offerings to meet evolving consumer demands and secure their continued presence in the marketplace (Shapiro & Varian, 1999).

3.3 Provide Examples for Pioneers and Followers and Analyze How Each Stage Provides Strong Competitive Advantage

Pioneer Examples:

Apple: Apple changed the smartphone industry with the introduction of the iPhone. At the growth phase, the company consistently unveiled state-of-the-art functions from Face ID to advanced camera technology. Apple leveraged brand loyalty and ecosystem integration to keep customers within the Apple product suite in Maturity (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Tesla: Tesla saw that the electric vehicle market was still very much in infancy when it entered the market, and there were premium offerings with some advanced tech available. With the electric vehicle market reaching maturity, it further diversified into energy products, including solar panels and battery storage systems, to remain its leadership (Bohnsack, Pinkse & Kolk, 2014).

Follower Examples:

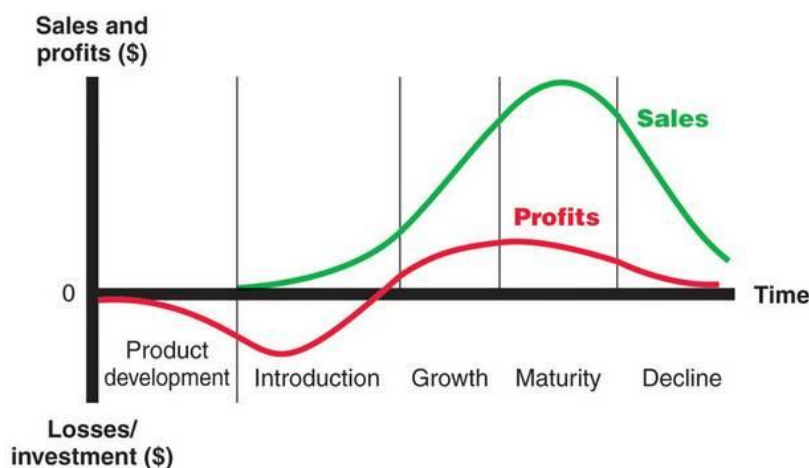
Pioneer: Samsung was late to the smartphone market (after Apple, by a decade) but monopolized differentiation by having more model variety, bigger displays and the Android ecosystem. In the growth stage, Samsung capitalized on market trends and made a name for itself. They still continued to grow when they reached the maturity stage and started to offer multiple price segments and ventured into other electronic devices such as smart watches and tablets (Gans, 2016).

PepsiCo: PepsiCo joined Coca-Cola in the soft drink market, establishing a niche with new products like Diet Pepsi and flavored variations. In the maturity stage, Pepsi sustained its market share in the beverage industry by attracting health-conscious consumers with low-calorie beverage options (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

3.4 Critically Analyse and Compare the Growth and Maturity Stages for Pioneer and Follower Companies

Since the first mover advantage pioneers, such as the pace of growth in the several stages of the PLC. Their approach revolves around tech, brand separation, and consumer devotion to keep their market position. Having established themselves as the market leader in the growth phase, pioneers can only remain ahead of rising competition by continually innovating and diversifying and managing costs to maintain margins in the maturity phase.

They split the market with all other followers (like Samsung or Pepsi) that come after pioneers create demand and awareness in the consumers' minds. In the growth stage, followers build on the work of pioneers, improving the product and providing similar value at a lower price. Close to the maturity stage, followers will try to compete mainly on costs (cost leadership) and deliver differentiated and diversified products within the market segment producer by diversifying to continue to increase market share and profit. In addition, followers can continue to grow even when faced with competition from the top by providing a diverse range of products or by targeting niche markets.



Pioneers of a market have the advantage of creating a market for themselves and capturing market share early, while followers benefit from lower risk and the ability to learn from what the pioneers succeed in and fail at. The common goal between both types of companies is their ability to innovate, manage costs, and have certain differentiation in their offerings to ensure they are not easily displaced in this competitive environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has the advantages of having the first mover or followers in the Product Life Cycle (PLC) and how does both of these strategies help in the growth and competitive advantage of a company. Leaders — Apple and Tesla, for example — get the first-mover advantages that enable them to carve out favorable positions in the marketplace, develop brand loyalty and establish industry standards. At the growth stage, pioneers need to continually innovate in order to stay ahead of their competition, while the maturity stage focuses on retaining customer loyalty and entering into new markets or diversifying. On the other hand, product followers such as Samsung and Pepsi can look to better repeat existing products and enter markets with existing demand. Followers introduce new features or provide better value during the growth phase of the cycle, while they concentrate on cost management and market segmentation in the maturity stage. Both strategies have merits, yet the willingness to adjust to market forces and consistently innovate is paramount for both the pioneers and followers alike to finally attain ongoing success.

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