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Introduction

Marketing represents the process and activities of the brands for the recognition and acquisition of the customers, advertisement and promotion of the products and brands, and sale of the products in the business markets (Kotler et al. 2020). Studies have analysed different activities and process of marketing such as customer relationship management, marketing communication and MIS, market research, advertisement and promotion, brand management and product development to help business organisations to promote the brand and engage customers differently. According to CIM, (2019), (Chartered Institute of Marketing), marketing is the significant management part of the organisation to fulfil the needs of the audiences after assessing their position in the markets. The essay will discuss how a brand can be a pioneer or follower with their advantages and effectiveness in the markets. Also, the study will discuss the ways companies apply effective strategies in each stage of the product life cycle for growth and competitive advantages in the business markets.

Pioneer and Follower Companies

Concept of Pioneer

Brands follow other's strategy when it comes to the success and risk management in the business in competitive business era (Dibb et al. 2019). However, some brands enter into the markets as the pioneer whereas others enter the markets as followers by their natures. By nature, a **pioneer company** is the type of company among others in the business sector that enters into the business markets, sets the ground and introduces new products and services (Greeven et al. 2023). They are the first ones to develop the products and services that lead to innovation and creativity. Pioneers can establish strong brand recognition and customer loyalty, giving them a long-term competitive edge (Kumar and Reinartz, 2018). High R&D costs and market uncertainty can lead to financial risks if the product fails.

Advantages of being a Pioneer company

As the first mover in the business markets, the pioneer companies are able to work on the brand image, market share, brand identity, and customer trusts and loyalty towards their brands (Fahy and Jobber, 2019). In the competitive era, pioneer companies are able to access many benefits.

Innovation and establishment of business: It starts with the establishment of the ground while accepting innovation (Hague, 2019). They are the first ones to make a move in the sector with ground breaking ideas, technologies, innovative ideas, new products, processes and services which contribute to the competitive edge in the market. Studies showed that pioneer companies do not follow other strategies and processes while working on their product and services and achieving market share and brand value (Greeven et al. 2023).

Resource Allocation and Utilisation: In the case of resource allocation and planning, pioneer companies tend to control the utilization of the resources. With their innovative ideas and products for the markets, other companies can follow in their footsteps and strategies. However, the pioneer companies can create trust and value in customers with loyalty towards the brands (Kotler et al. 2020).

Brand Image: When it comes to the development of business sale and income, companies have to rely on effective marketing strategies (Cristoni and Tonelli, 2018). The right marketing strategy influences the performance of pioneer organisations in the long run. Their ability to create and communicate brand image, awareness and identity, and knowledge help them to build an empire and example for others.

Challenges: But, to enter first into the market with new products and services requires more costs in team development, R&D and risk management (Dibb et al. 2019). Even the uncertainly and market risks can affect the success and performance of pioneer companies. However, with great risk management and strategy, pioneer companies can utilize innovation and product development process in business markets (Kumar and Reinartz, 2018).

Examples: Different brands have imposed the nature of pioneer companies in different markets. The most common name of pioneer companies is Apple Inc. The company is the pioneer company

bringing iPhone with unique features and nature of the service. The market position with revolutionary products, brand value and image have contributed to their establishment and growth of the business. In the era of technology and online platform, Amazon has utilised e-commerce services to be a pioneer company. Starting with selling books, Amazon has worked on cloud computing, AI and e-commerce services, with more growth and success in business as the pioneer company.

Concept of Follower

By nature, a follower company represents the type of company that follows the market leaders and pioneer company and enters the market as the late entrant (Kotler et al. 2020). Followers can learn from pioneers' mistakes, reducing risks and development costs while improving product offerings. They may struggle to gain market share against well-established pioneers with strong brand loyalty (Greeven et al. 2023). The follower companies learn the market and risks handled by the pioneer companies, observe the actions and strategies developed by the market leaders and handle their position. They follow the footsteps of the market leader while entering into the available business era and existing market (Wurzel et al. 2018). They can modify the available products and services without bringing innovation.

Advantages of being a Follower company

Considering the type and strategy of follower companies, the organisations tend to access benefits at different levels. These are as follows:

Following the strategy of market leader: It starts with entering into the existing markets which lower risks, costs and market challenges for the follower companies (Dibb et al. 2019). As they follow the strategy of pioneer companies, they can reduce costs, challenge and time for product development and strategy development.

Risk management and Cost management: The abilities to control the impacts and possibility of uncertainties and risks have added value to the growth of follower companies (Kotler et al. 2020). The organisations often deal with the cost of R&D and innovation development which can be

lower in follower companies. They can understand the market environment and trends of customers from the experience and activities done by successful brands (Wurzel et al. 2018). The establishment of the pioneer companies, learning from their risks and success in the markets, and available knowledge can help follower companies gain competitive advantages through knowledge, cost management, strategy development and modification of service (Kotabe and Helsen, 2022).

Product development: Following the strategies and practice of market leaders, follower companies can modify and improve the available products and services. They can add value or improve the quality of the products with less costs and challenges for product development in business markets (Dibb et al. 2019). Studies showed that successful brands and follower companies are considered as the fast following brands for their coping mechanism and ability to grasp the market facts (Hague, 2019).

Challenges: But, follower companies cannot ignore available challenges regarding their nature and strategy. As they follow the strategy and market of existing companies, the struggles are higher for follower companies to gain brand loyalty, awareness and market shares (Kumar and Reinartz, 2018). Even the competition is higher for them in the long run.

Example: One of the successful fast-follower companies in the market, Samsung, has established its market position while competing with Apple Inc. The company is one of the dominating companies in the smartphone market while following the strategies and market performance of pioneer companies.

Product Life Cycle Strategies

Concept of Product life cycle

Successful pioneer and follower companies leverage product life cycle strategies in different stages. Pioneers (First to Market) in the growth stage, aim to increase market share and profits whereas Followers tend to utilize a "fast follower" approach, and customer retention strategies with their strategy (Kotler et al. 2020). The product life cycle (PLC) represents the life of any product or service from introduction to decline and these stages allow organisations to think and implement the right strategies for business growth and a strong market position (Hooley et al. 2020). Pioneer and follower companies would apply strategies in stages of PLC differently.

Product life cycle strategies of successful pioneer companies

Introduction Stage: The introduction of products in the market is the crucial stage for pioneer companies (Hooley et al. 2020). The pioneer companies have to spend a lot on R&D and other activities for the introduction of the products and services in the markets. They research the market and trends, assess the demands and preferences of customers, analyse the available competition and apply market, product and pricing strategy in the introduction stage (Whittington, et al., 2020). Tesla, being a pioneer company, has ensured to introduce the first EV with self-driving tech after analyzing and researching the market.

Growth Stage: In the Growth stage, the pioneer companies can see how their new product and services are growing and the companies have to pay attention to drive sale growth, income and market share (Hooley et al. 2020). In this stage of the product lifecycle, pioneer companies start to reach and explore wider audiences. Pioneer companies take risks and face challenges in the markets where after introducing their products, they are more likely to create and manage brand loyalty and competitive position (Dibb et al. 2019).

They would operate and promote the brand through multiple channels, improve the features, nature and qualities of the products, and improve their position and competitive advantages with leading and development (Greeven et al., 2023). Their preference from the introduction shifts to the brand loyalty development and expansion. Considering the activities done by Apple Inc., it clearly showed how the company added more features to the existing products and added more product lines for the customers.

Maturity Stage: In the maturity stage, the products are already matured. The customers are already using the products and service and different companies are innovating on products and entering into the markets (Hooley et al. 2020). The main focus of business organisations in this stage is to maintain market share, position and profitability. Companies invest in marketing and promotional strategies while managing responsibility in maturity stages of the product lifecycle.

In the saturated market, pioneer companies pay attention to applying different strategies such as cost leadership, differentiation, product enhancement and segmentations (Kotler et al. 2020). Within the competitive business era, they start to lower costs by focusing on efficiency, competitive pricing and development of product features. Also, they can target customers of specific market segmentation (Whittington, et al., 2020). McDonald's has worked on its expansion while utilizing technologies and a diversified menu to deal with the issues within the saturated market.

Decline Stage: Finally, in the decline stage, the sale of the products will be reduced and the challenges can be higher for surviving only (Hooley et al. 2020). The pioneer companies cannot revive the demand for the same products in the markets which highly requires applying a harvesting strategy for survival such as minimal investment in any product for the sake of sale and profit (Greeven et al., 2023). Kodak could not revive the demand for their camera as the technology was advancing. Hence, the company shifted the business to a niche market while minimizing the expense and withdrawing the product.

Product life cycle strategies of follower companies

Introduction Stage: The follower companies act differently while dealing with product life cycle stages and competition in markets (Hooley et al. 2020). In the introduction stage, the follower companies tend to learn from the market leaders and pioneers. In such a situation, they identify the business opportunities to work on the business establishment and enter into the markets (Whittington, et al., 2020). In this stage, the most common strategies of follower companies are to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the pioneer companies in order to develop or modify the features and bring a similar product. Following the steps of Tesla, NIO has brought the EV to the customers who prefer technologies over the pricing strategies in products.

Growth stage: In the growth stage, the follower companies focus on business growth with higher sale, market share, income and position (Kotler et al. 2020). To deal with the competition and existing market leaders, they start to offer competitive alternative. The follower companies may not have the same advantages at the market likewise pioneer companies, but, they are free from all the risks and issues that also occur to pioneer companies.

Thus, the strategies of follower companies for the growth stage are related to price competition and product differentiation (Dibb et al., 2019). They work on cost management for affordable pricing strategy for the customers and differentiation of the products for higher value of customers (Hague, 2019). Some follower companies would apply marketing strategies to reach target customers of pioneer companies for the sale and income. As a Follower Company, Samsung has applied Attack strategies to reach customers who are targeted by Apple Inc.

Maturity Stage: In the maturity stage, the market is saturating and the follower companies have to work on a competitive position for market share and profitability in the long run (Hooley et al. 2020). In such a situation, they would work hard for the cost management, product differentiation and enhancement of the existing products, efficiency development and targeting market segmentation. Some companies may diversify the products, reinvent the products and service while facing the possibility of phasing out of the product that fail to target the customers.

The value creation through products and services to the customers is also part of marketing where organisations have to care for the demands and preferences of the customers. Also, they would work on personalization and tailoring the offerings and services (Kotler et al. 2020). There are some competitors of McDonald's who have worked on cost management and differentiation strategy in the maturity stage such as Burger King in the same market.

Decline Stage: Finally, in the decline stage, the follower companies may find more challenges to survive and create marketing position (Kotler et al. 2020). They might follow the strategies and practice of pioneer companies for the business success. However, the common strategies in the stage for follower companies are to reduce the costs of the business while focusing on communicating and targeting customers in multiple channel (Whittington, et al., 2020). Samsung has explored new application and products for the markets while applying reinventing strategy in the competitive era to survive.

Comparison

In the product life cycle stage, pioneer and follower companies deal with the customers and market differently with same purposes for the business growth and competitive position. The costs and risks are higher for pioneer companies in introduction stage compared to follower companies. They have to research and introduce the new product where follower companies have to modify them for entering into the market.

Growth and Maturity Stage: However, compared to growth and maturity stage for pioneer companies, follower companies deal with more challenges and competition to survive. Hence, pioneer companies would work on product development and innovation where follower companies invest to marketing and product modification, pricing strategy and distribution channel strategies. These are effective survival strategies for them in the competitive era.

Conclusion

Pioneer and follower companies tend to have their ways of strategies to deal with the competition and market challenges while improving business performance and gaining access to benefits and resources (Kotler et al. 2020). They manage to apply strategies in the product life cycle based on their challenges, position and preferences for the market growth. In the case of pioneer companies and successful brands that entered the market first, the businesses have been able to gain more value and brand loyalty who followed them. On the other hand, follower companies can handle the challenges related to the establishment and growth of the businesses.

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