

Programme: Master of Business Administration

Module: Marketing Management

Module code: LCMB7024

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Assignment Title: Assessment Component 1-Essay

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Total Number of Words: 2728

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Introduction

The process of planning, developing and executing marketing activities to achieve long term business objective and being competitive (Drummond, 2020). It is a strategic marketing that decides when a product or technology is successful or not (Varadarajan, 2023). Timing is a very strong element of strategic marketing, be it in launching new products or new technologies (Wilson, 2020). An early pioneer or later follower goes a long way in ensuring a company's success in terms of making a market entry (Mittal and Swami, 2020). This essay will be about giving advantage and disadvantage of both Pioneer and follower in the market. First movers take advantage of some pioneer advantages such as brand recognition and customer loyalty, and followers can learn from market feedbacks and avoid early risk (Lieberman and Montgomery, 2021).



Figure 1 Strategic Marketing; Source: (B Yang, 2022)

The above figure focuses on the alignment of every marketing movement with big business goals that helps to build competitive advantages with sustainable growth. The technique will further analyse the use of strategies of life cycle of the product to sustain competitive positioning by both pioneering companies and follow companies.

2. Advantages of Being a Pioneer

2.1. Definition of Pioneer Companies

Pioneer company is a company that is entrant of the new product, service or technology in the market (Kerin, Varadarajan and Peterson, 2022). These companies are driving innovation, setting trends in the industry, and setting the bar for what the consumers would expect in the market place before the competition even gets in to the space (Cirik and Makadok, 2021).

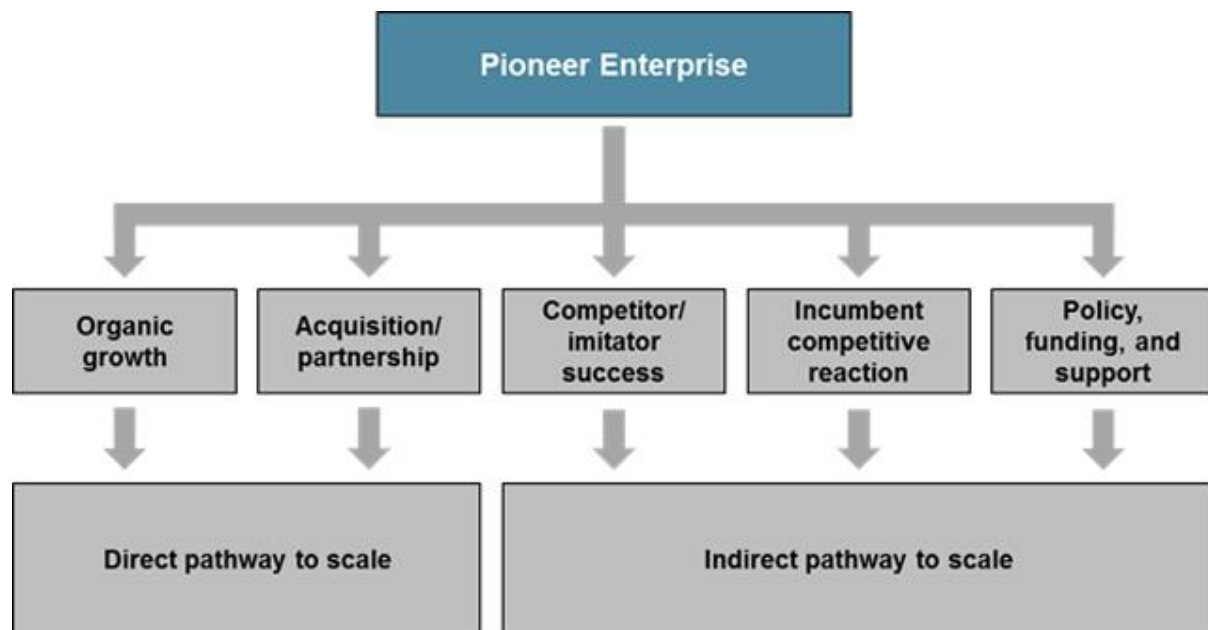


Figure 2 Pioneer Enterprise; Source: (W Yilin, 2025)

Market creation is the main features that creates new products which revolutionize the industries or create whole new ones. Whereas this enterprise focuses on High Risk and High Reward, Being early into the game also means to face unknowns, but great success could bring a dominance in the market for the long haul (Lieberman and Montgomery, 2021).

2.2. Advantages of Being a Pioneer

2.2.1. Market Leadership and Brand Recognition

Being a pioneer means to introduce a product that no one has done before while others just follow one, so become a market leader literally setting the tone of the industry (Short and Payne, 2020). The leadership identified here offers a clear competitive edge as consumers associate the brand with the pioneer (Short and Payne, 2020).

Apple was a pioneer in touchscreen smartphones for establishing industry standards for design, function and the experience of use (Mallinson, 2023).

2.2.2. First-Mover Advantage in Pricing and Market Share

First movers in the market have the advantage to set up the initial price points, the initial running costs, and the initial portion of market share (Mueller, 2022). The ability to have such an advantage will prevent competition by ones that cannot offer substantial differentiation (Mueller, 2022).

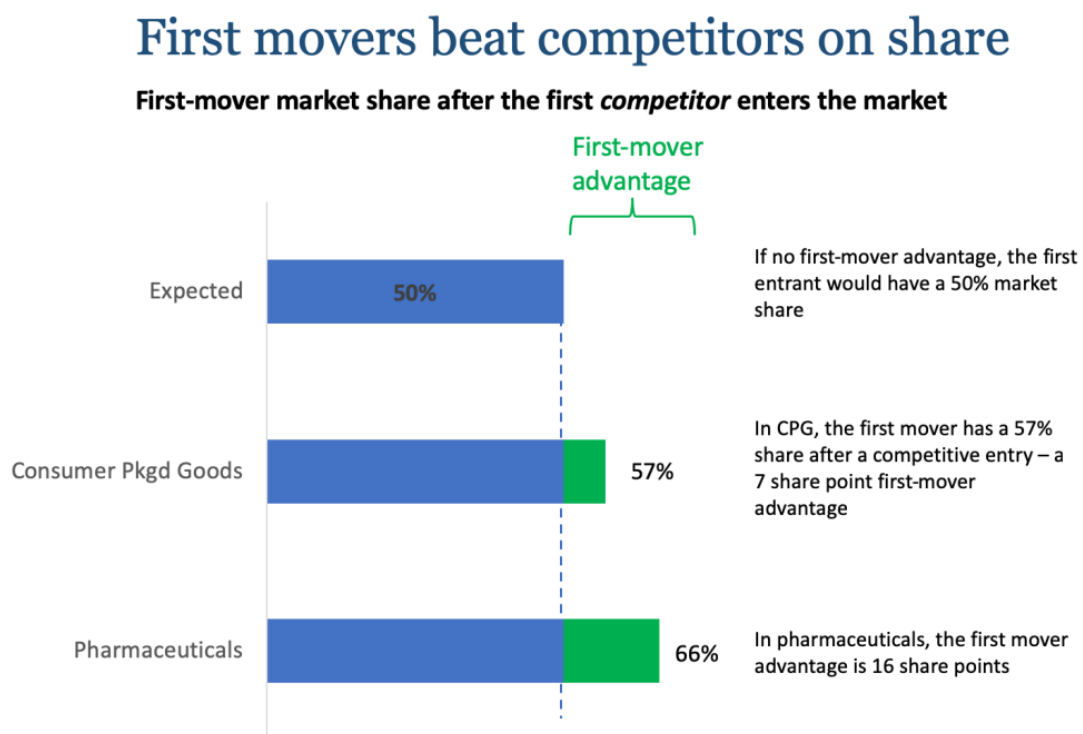


Figure 3 Pioneer Benefit in Market Share; Source: (Peterzell, 2020)

For instance-Netflix was an innovator with the subscription based streaming model, basically disrupting traditional television and DVD renting business (Vinesha Anindita, 2021).

2.2.3. Establishment of Customer Loyalty

Early adopters of new products become strongly loyal to the pioneer products first in the market, with difficulty by later entrants to win market share (Agarwal and Gort, 2021). Moreover, Tesla (Electric Vehicle) was the first to launch the EV market in the

modern era with the Roadster in 2008 and the Model S in 2012 (Thomas and Maine, 2020).

2.2.4. Opportunity to Set Industry Standards and Norms

The pioneers define industry benchmarks which later entrants have to follow. Pioneer companies set the bar in terms of standards that a technology or design has to fulfil to become a thought leader and gatekeeper in the industry (Agarwal and Gort, 2021). By developing an online shopping platform with self-related services and fast aftermarket, Amazon had been the pioneer of the e-commerce industry (Chung, 2020). One click purchasing, user reviews, and Prime benefits became industry standards that competitors were bought to copy (Chung, 2020).

3. Advantages of Being a Follower

3.1. Definition of Follower Companies

A Follower company is an organization that enters an existing market after the pioneer has introduced a new product, service, and technology in the market (Rosenbach, Pittman and Potter, 2020). Google, Samsung, and Facebook are examples of a company that has entered the market later on and didn't necessarily enter on the losing side it gave them an opportunity to leverage existing innovations to create better products (Cuthbertson, Furseth and Ezell, 2024).

Key Characteristics of follower companies:

Incremental Innovation: Incremental Innovation is being innovative on top of existing products.

Cost Efficiency: Followers spend less on R&D as they base their technologies on what has been developed earlier (Rosenbach, Pittman and Potter, 2020).

3.2. Advantages of Being a Follower

3.2.1. Learning from the Mistakes of Pioneers

In actual fact, following is about learning from mistakes. Mistakes made by other companies that become pioneers (Peterzell, 2020). Follower can see what early market trends, what the feedback of the consumer on the original product is and what

potential shortcoming of the original product can be in order to improve own offering and to buffer the expensive errors (Wunker, 2021).

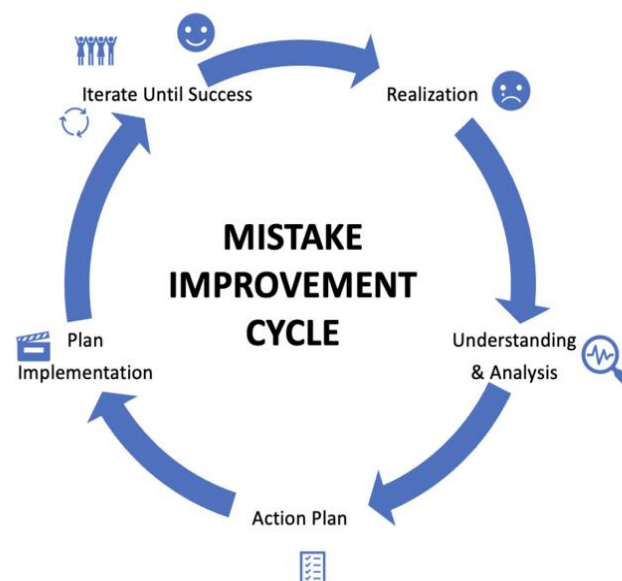


Figure 4 Mistake Improvement Cycle for Follower Companies; Source: (JB Hirst, 2025)

For example-Google has learned from its predecessors (Yahoo, AltaVista and Lycos) and became the ultimate force in online search and set the industry standard.

3.2.2. Lower Research and Development Costs

Since pioneers invest in R&D and because knowledge is created and improved upon from previous innovations, followers have an opportunity to cut down their own cost (Dreiling and Bican, 2022). In 2007 Apple introduced the first modern touchscreen smartphone with the iPhone and poured capital spending into software and hardware development (Mallinson, 2023). Samsung entered the market later, adopting an Apple approach of refined screen size, processing power and camera quality when finally coming to market (Dough, 2020).

3.2.3. Ability to Improve Upon Existing Products

In followers' case, they enter the market with refined and optimized products which follow automation that has already developed (Dreiling and Bican, 2022). Among those first social networking platforms were before Facebook, Myspace and Friendster (Cuthbertson, Furseth and Ezell, 2024).



Figure 5 Product Improvements; Source: (Des Traynor, 2023)

For instance- Facebook came into the market with an intuitive interface, and put together a better social networking experience (Cuthbertson, Furseth and Ezell, 2024).

3.2.4. Flexibility to Enter the Market at a Later Stage with Refined Strategies

This allows followers to join in the market at a right time as consumer demand is in bulk and the industry is stable (Dreiling and Bican, 2022). The timing of this is strategic so that they can launch products with better technology, a better pricing model, better marketing campaigns (Covin, Slevin and Heeley, 2020). The gaming console industry is in its history and was created by Sony and Nintendo that were pioneers of the said market and PlayStation and various Nintendo system took the world by storm (Caldwell, 2021). Xbox is another entry by Microsoft who come in later with some insights from competitors and improved processing unit (Pham, 2023).

4. Product Life Cycle Strategies

4.1. Overview of the Product Life Cycle

The product life cycle (PLC) is a crucial marketing concept that describes stages through which a product goes from its introduction to its failure (Rink and Swan, 2020).

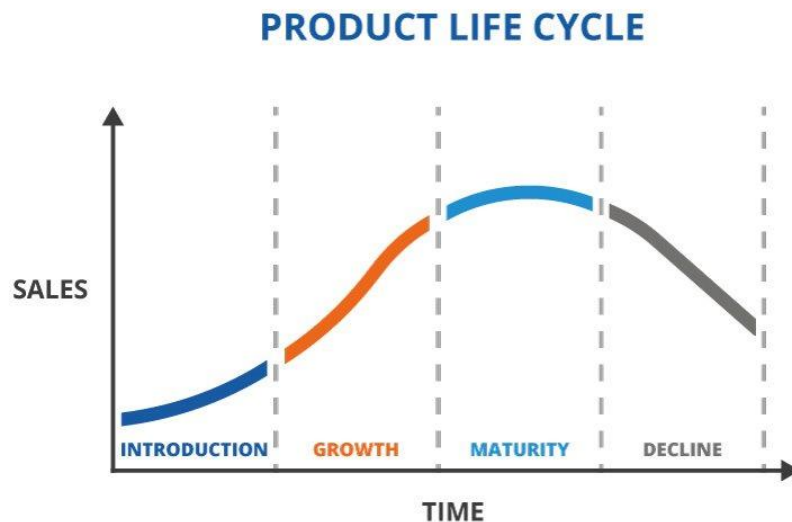


Figure 6 Product Life Cycle; Source: (M, 2021)

Introduction Stage

The first or the phase in the product life cycle is the product introduction to the market (Rink and Swan, 2020). The companies spend enormously in marketing and promotional activities so as to render consumers aware and enlighten them (Rink and Swan, 2020). Businesses adopt penetration pricing strategy to introduce early adopters.

Growth Stage

As the customer awareness gradients increase, the actual sales start scaling rapidly. Competition is going up for the companies as competitors enter the market. Instead, companies refine their marketing strategies, improve the product features and enlarge the distribution channels (Rink and Swan, 2020).

Maturity Stage

That is to say, at this stage, the product has a saturated market, sales start to slow. Competition among companies will be intense, therefore, they will differentiate their products by branding, available innovative features, and loyalty programs.

Decline Stage

As the market becomes saturated, or technological advanced, or as the consumer preferences change, sales start to decline (Rink and Swan, 2020).

4.2. Strategies for Pioneer Companies

New products are introduced by pioneer companies into the market and establish basis for industry trends and mould consumer expectations (Dreiling and Bican, 2022).

Introduction Stage: Heavy Marketing and Promotional Efforts

In the early stages of the product life cycle, called the introduction stage, risk and cost of development are high, so these companies spend heavily on selling to create demand and awareness (Dreiling and Bican, 2022). With the first iPhone, when Apple launched it in 2007, it branded itself as premium and priced itself to be a premium product to separate it from the same and make it revolutionary (Mallinson, 2023).

Key strategies	Functions
High R&D Investment	Ensure the product is innovative and according to market needs
Extensive Marketing Campaigns	Digital, Print and TV ads for informing the potential customers.
Early Adopter Engagement	Early Adopter Engagement, a strategy aimed at engaging tech savvy or trendsetter consumers in order to produce word of mouth promotion (Agarwal and Gort, 2021).
Pricing Strategies	Directed at the problem: either skimming (high initial price to gain maximum early profits) or penetration pricing (low price to attain as many adopters as possible).

Growth Stage: Expanding Distribution Channels and Enhancing Product Features

The sales grow in the growth stage, as the market becomes familiar with the product and demand increases (Agarwal and Gort, 2021).

Expanding Retail and Online Presence: Companies expand their retail presence, to achieve more outlets and boost the online presence to make their products easily reachable to potential customers (Short and Payne, 2020).

Product Improvements: This includes product improvement as it involves release of product upgrades, new features, software update and supplementary products to keep the product competitive and to cater for changing customer expectation (Short and Payne, 2020). Apple uses this strategy for their innovative products by regular software updates for iPhones, and continuous hardware improvements, which include the introduction of new features like Face ID or better camera features (Mallinson, 2023).

Strategic Partnerships: As the rise of strategic partnership, companies work together with the leading players in similar industries to fortify their position and sews benefits of utilizing complementary strengths.

Competitive Pricing Adjustments: In order to be competitive, companies set pricing strategies taking into account consumer demand, production costs and what its competitors are charging (Wunker, 2021). As Netflix grew globally and in offerings, it maintained competitive prices while expanding the content on offer and engaging the subscribers (Vinesha Anindita, 2021).

Maturity Stage: Brand Loyalty Initiatives and Product Variations

In this stage, growth of the market decreases and the competition is intensified.

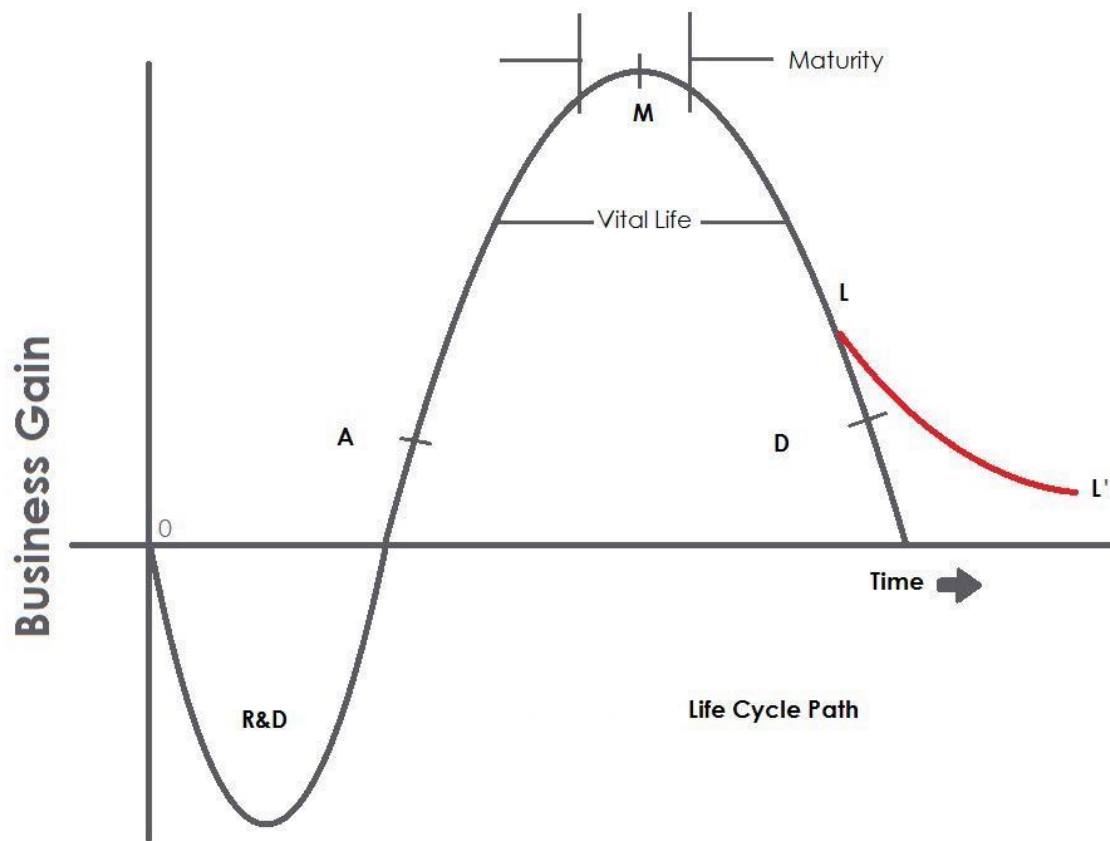


Figure 7 Maturity Stage of a Product; Source: (GreyB, 2021)

Brand Loyalty Programs: Incentives such as discounts and exclusive offers for repeat purchases or membership may be provided in the form of a Brand Loyalty Program to retain the customers and provide a steady inflow of revenue (Wunker, 2021).

Product Line Extensions: Product Line Extensions are the introduction of new variances, models or sizes of products (Wunker, 2021). Apple always releases new iPhone models (e.g. iPhone SE and iPhone Pro) to different market segment, maintains the brand's focus simultaneously (Mallinson, 2023).

Aggressive Advertising: To attract clients, the companies increase their advertising efforts to showcase their product's excellence and how it stands out from competitors (Cox, 2024). Nike's "Just Do It" campaign with its main message yet thinking up with new features and limited collection for its products so that it still maintains brand control.

Decline Stage: Decision-Making on Product Continuation or Discontinuation

It may be that the sales drop due to preference change of the consumer, technological advancement or new competitor (Cox, 2024). The product either needs to be rejuvenated or disposed of completely.

Repositioning the Product: Businesses attempt to revive an old product by looking for new applications or new markets (Cox, 2024). After the era of digital cameras, the Polaroid camera became a niche product focused on instant photography enthusiasts.

Cost Reduction Strategies: Operational or Production cost reduction strategies for business that cuts down unessential expense or optimizes operational or production processes to control costs (Cox, 2024).

Discontinuation and Focus Shift: If a product is no longer viable, businesses withdraw focus, reallocate resources, and refocus on more profitable or more innovative products or offerings (Cox, 2024).

4.3. Strategies for Follower Companies

After pioneers, follower companies come into the market and exploit existing demand and refine a product to gain a competitive advantage (Covin, Slevin and Heeley, 2020). At different PLC stages, their strategies are different.

Introduction Stage: Market Entry with Improved or Differentiated Products

In this stage, followers join a market that already exists and came up with some of the improved pioneers' offer, targeted at unmet needs of customers, possibly with competitive pricing (Rosenbach, Pittman and Potter, 2020).

Analysing Market Gaps: Identifying weaknesses in the pioneer's product and using it as a basis for improving on them to develop a better value proposition (Rosenbach, Pittman and Potter, 2020). Dyson found inefficiencies in traditional vacuum cleaners and brought the cyclonic bagless technology that could both suck better and give more convenience.

Differentiation through Features: Features designed or developed to make it better and better than others (Covin, Slevin and Heeley, 2020).

Competitive Pricing: Lowering prices below the pioneer to lure customers on a budget who want to gain profit from the market (Covin, Slevin and Heeley, 2020).

Xiaomi made smartphone industry disrupted by leveraging high spec devices with much lower price tag as compared to Samsung and Apple (Dough, 2020).

Growth Stage: Focus on Cost Leadership and Distribution Efficiency

Followers in the growth phase perfect operations to increase sales and market share.

Key Strategies	Functions
Efficient Supply Chains	Optimized manufacturing and distribution system reduce cost significantly (Covin, Slevin and Heeley, 2020).
Strategic Partnerships	Collaboration with retailers helps to expands reach. Spotify collaborate with telecom companies
Marketing Competitive Advantages	Emphasize that the product has some superior features or is just as affordable as the market pioneer (Covin, Slevin and Heeley, 2020). Zoom was a great option because it was stable enough and the platform was relatively simple to use with free tiers.

Maturity Stage: Competitive Pricing and Promotional Strategies

They have high competitions and market saturations and had to rely on the aggressive marketing, product diversification, and the reinforcement of their brand identity.

Key Strategies	Functions
Promotional Campaigns	Discounts, bundle deals, seasonal offers to generate sales and bring customers (Wunker, 2021). At times, Samsung resells its flagship Galaxy phones along with trade in discounts and promos to take down Apple (Dough, 2020).
Diversified Product Offerings	Entering into related products or accessories to complement the user's experience (Wunker, 2021). Amazon shrewdly launched Echo smart speakers and Alexa-powered exploration with thought of its electronic commercial and digital universe (Chung, 2020).

Decline Stage: Innovating or Pivoting to New Products or Services

With demand falling followers must decide to innovate, reposition, or exit the market to find new opportunities.

LATE MOVER STRATEGY

Why use Late Mover Strategy?



Figure 8 Advantages of Follower Company; Source: (Sketchbubble, 2025)

Developing Next-Generation Products: Spending assets to reinvent their product portfolio by investing in new technologies or trends that are successful replacements for ones that are aging (Wunker, 2021). Sony quit the business of portable music players (the Walkman) and moved to wireless audio solutions (noise cancelling headphones) (Caldwell, 2021).

Repositioning the Brand: Moving the focus from consumers to other stakeholders to find new markets or reviving messaging when it becomes old or irrelevant. This path of reinvention came via rebranding to appeal to adults with complex, collector-oriented sets, after the collapse of traditional toy sales (Wunker, 2021).

Conclusion

First movers enjoy first mover advantages, market recognition, brand loyalty, whereas followers benefit from market insights, better products and higher cost efficiencies. However, becoming successful takes sustained efforts during the stages of product life cycle such as innovation stage of growth process, differentiation in maturity, and adaptation stage in decline. When deciding to lead or to follow strategically, companies have to analyse market conditions and if they have the capability to follow. The ultimately right approach guarantees long term growth, competitive positioning, and business big sustainability within the ever-changing market horizon.

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