

MARKETING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY MAPRO TO PROMOTE 'READY TO MIX' PRODUCTS

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Abstract:

Consumer behavior in the marketing world is very necessary to judge the success of the product. Ready-to-mix food products especially market segmentation based on food-related lifestyles can be applied to develop proper marketing strategies. Today's companies work in a war zone of rapidly changing competitors, technological advances, new laws, managed trade policies, and diminishing customer loyalty. Hence, to survive in the market, the company not only needs to maximize its profit but also needs to satisfy its customers and should try to build upon it from there. Consumer satisfaction is the ultimate aim of any business concern. Merely selling the product should not alone be the objective of the business it is more to do with customer relationships. More than that, they must concentrate on how to satisfy the consumers regarding all aspects of the product such as price, quality, utility-derived, package, etc. No sales can be effective without knowing the desires and needs of consumers. Manufacturers must collect as much information as possible from the consumers relating to their tastes and preferences towards different products and only then they can design and make products up to the expectation of the consumers.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Ready-to-mix food product, Consumers satisfaction

Introduction:

MAPRO Foods Pvt. Ltd., is a company that is into fruit processing, developing, producing, packaging and selling fruit-based confectionery products in India. The company produces jams, fruit squashes, condensed fruit pulp bars, and jellies and chews, crush distillates, and chocolates. MAPRO channelizes its products through an intense channel of its loyal suppliers, distributors and stores. MAPRO Foods was founded in the year 1959 in Panchgani, close to Mahabaleswar, Kishore Vora a businessman and a pharmacist by profession started this business due to sheer interest in this area. He then went on to develop new products such as jelly sweets, fruit cubes with fruit juice and rose syrups with rose petals – all for the first time in the country. MAPRO today is one of the businesses that believe in the organic growth of a company. His vision has been taken forward, thereby transforming the region around Mahabaleswar and Panchgani into a prosperous fruit processing zone.

MAPRO produces a number of items ranging from jams, jellies, crushes, syrups, etc. Their leading product is Rose Syrup, made from rose petals and their extracts. The manufacturing process for most of their products is similar only differing in the types of fruits used and the variations in cooking temperatures and pectin ratio.

In 1959, Kishore Vora started operations in a small room, as a home business with a mutually beneficial relationship with the farmers to make strawberry jam for product sales. This eventually led to the launch of the MAPRO brand in 1978.

State-of-the-art production

Started the first self-owned factory in 1989 and then set up state-of-the-art cold storage at Wai, in 2005, which is capable of precooling 20 MT of fresh fruits and producing chocolate. Its food park is open to all guests looking for delicious treats.

Innovation and goodness

The company has grown organically over the last five decades with sustained profitability. Known for its quality and innovation, MAPRO has been built on its founder's philosophy of developing products that are wholesome, nutritious, value-for-money, and imaginative.

Company's moto: Our people are our strength

We are here today because of our farmers, our employees and our customers, the people who let us share the most beautiful moments of their life. Starting with just 12 permanent employees in 1971, we now have around 300 employees working with us. All our employees work together like a family with their different sets of experiences to grow our business and nurture our brand. MAPRO is proud to take responsibility for its employees. The employees are recognized for their hard work and for their long service with awards. The families of the employees are a part of all celebrations and the education of their children is encouraged and supported by MAPRO. When the farmers in the area were struggling with their living, MAPRO held their hands and gave them new hope. Today these farmers have regular income and a ready market at their doorstep.

Objectives:

1. To find Marketing strategies for ready-to-mix brands of MAPRO product
2. To identify a particular season for Marketing MAPRO products.
3. To help with marketing planning and execution.
4. To study how marketing professionals do are reaching and delivering products to the target customer.

Literature review: One of the common views is that understanding consumer behavior has become a factor that has a direct impact on the overall performance of businesses (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Another view suggests that understanding consumer behavior become crucial especially due to fierce competition in the retail industry in the UK and worldwide (Lancaster et al, 2002). According to Hoyer et al. (2012), social factors impacting consumer behavior arise as a result of interactions of perspective consumers with others in various levels and circumstances. Targeting members of society perceived as opinion leaders usually proves an effective strategy when marketing products and services due to the potential of opinion leaders to influence the behavior of other members of society as consumers.

Cultural factors affecting consumer behavior are related to cross-cultural differences among consumers on local and global scales. Culture can be defined as "the ideas, customs, and social

behavior of a particular people or society” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015) and the tendency of globalization has made it compulsory for cross-cultural differences among consumers to be taken into account when formulating and communicating marketing messages.

Price represents another critically important element of marketing and four major types of pricing strategies consist of economy, penetration, skimming, and premium pricing strategies (East et al., 2013).

The place element of the marketing mix relates to point of distribution and sales of products and services. The advent of online sales channels has changed the role of the place element of the marketing mix to a considerable extent.

The promotion element of the marketing mix refers to any combination of promotion mix integrating various elements of advertising, public relations, personal selling and sales promotions to varying extents (Kotler, 2012).

Chang et al. (2005) identified store infrastructure, convenience, store service and sales activities as the four components of store image, and they all impact customer satisfaction directly. Chitty et al. (2007) also empirically proved the dominant role of brand image in predicting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Moreover, the congruence between the brand image and customers’ self-image would enhance customer satisfaction and customers’ preference for the brand.

Customer loyalty could be recognized as the extension of customer satisfaction. Earlier studies define customer loyalty as repeated purchasing behaviors in a narrow sense. Generally, customer loyalty stems from customers’ approval of a brand, which leads to their continuous purchasing behavior of the brand and thus generates profits for the company. In the brand image literature, brand image is perceived as an important driving force of customer loyalty. For the supermarket industry, a favorable store image is very helpful to foster customer loyalty. Even in the virtual context, the impact of brand image on customer loyalty remains significant, and Merrilees & Fry (2002) verified their relationship through surveys at e-commerce companies

Competitive Strategy:

Competition:

Competitors can be defined as MAPRO companies that respond to the same customer needs. Their products or services are targeted at a similar target market, and they bring similar value to the customers. The competitors can be roughly divided into two categories: direct and indirect competitors of MAPRO products. Direct competitors are the most significant ones to take into consideration as their products or services can be used to substitute those of the company. The indirect competitors offer solutions to the same customer needs but with different types of products or services. It is essential for MAPRO company to analyze the competition and choose a suitable competitive strategy. The strategy can be decided based on the company’s role in the market.



Fig. 8 competition strategies of MAPRO

Figure 8 represents the competitive strategies. Most markets have MAPRO companies that can be seen as the market leaders, meaning that they guide the market trends, such as the prices and the new inventions, and have the largest market shares. The market challengers are using aggressive techniques to compete with the market leaders and trying to gain a bigger market share, whereas the market followers are following the trends created by the market leaders, and not trying to gain big market shares. The market niche focus on small target markets that are not covered by the large companies

Competitive advantage:

A competitive advantage is a feature of MAPRO company that makes the consumers choose their offerings over those of the competitors. This feature brings more value to the customers than the competitors' features. It can be for example a more affordable price or a better solution to the customer's problem, which gives the opportunity to have higher prices than the competitors. The following criteria describe the features of a good competitive advantage:

- valuable
- distinctive
- superior
- visible
- non-imitable
- affordable
- profitable

A competitive advantage must be valuable for the target market and be different from the competitors' offerings. The customers should benefit from the advantage more than they would by choosing an alternative solution for the problem. An effective competitive advantage is visible to the customers and easy to communicate, but difficult for the competitors to imitate. Additionally, regardless of the valuable benefits, the price should be suitable for the target market. Finally, the company should be able to make a profit with the benefits.

Word-of-mouth marketing:

Word-of-mouth marketing is usually a result of a satisfied customer. It means that the customer spreads positive messages about the company or its products or services to others by oral communication, after experiencing it to be satisfying. Word-of-mouth marketing can be seen as one of the most important marketing techniques because consumers typically trust the opinions of their friends and family, and are therefore more likely to buy the company's products or services when recommended by them than because of any other type of marketing.

Competitors:

MAPRO Foods have so many competitors in different categories of products. In the fruit drink segment Kissan, Rooh Afza, Kokumraaj, Mala's, Patanjali, and Paper Boat are the tough competitors of MAPRO where Kissan is the biggest player in the market. In the Jam section Kissan, Meal time is the competitor. In the jelly segment, Alpenlibe's just jelly is a competitor. Hershey's and Funfoods are the competitors in the chocolate toppings segment. In the Gulkand category, MAPRO has very few competitors.

The marketing mix

1. Product strategy

No matter how effective the promotion and packaging, a firm will find it very difficult to market a product that fails to satisfy a consumer need. MAPRO product owes much of its success to a unique dual appeal - as a four-finger chocolate bar, (known in the confectionery trade as a countline), sold at corner shops and newsagents, but also as a two-finger MAPRO product sold in supermarkets. It is a product that has endured because of its wide appeal across age ranges and to both sexes.

2. Pricing strategy

A key advantage of maintaining a strong brand image in a competitive market is a degree of flexibility in the pricing strategy. It is a common characteristic of imperfectly competitive markets for producers to concentrate on non-price competition. When looking at the pricing strategy for Kit Kat, it can be seen from the figures that the real price has remained remarkably stable over the last sixty years.

3. Promotional strategy

Promotion offers have included free bars in the multi-bar family packs and an instant win deal with Burger King in 2005. This promotion, where over 75 million free burgers were on offer, increased sales of MAPRO product by an estimated 30 In 1998, an on-pack promotion featuring 'The Simpsons,' with the chance to win £20,000 cash, and hundreds of other prizes, increased sales of MAPRO product by a staggering

4. Distribution strategy

MAPRO product has developed distribution channels that ensure the availability of products to buy wherever and whenever the consumer wishes to purchase it. Sales of confectionery depend heavily on its availability, with market research showing that well over 60of all purchases are made on impulse. Consequently, MAPRO product tries to supply as many outlets as possible - both wholesaler and retailer channels.

Strategic change

Evolving as a company is essential for survival in constantly changing markets, and for that, a strategic change is needed. This can be an incremental or adaptive strategic change. An *incremental strategic change* is beneficial for companies that face a lot of competition. The future is uncertain, meaning that plans cannot be too strict. The incremental strategic change involves clear objectives and a mission, but the strategy for achieving those is rather broad. The progress and changes in the market are analyzed and new strategies are developed. An *adaptive strategic change* on the other hand is a more innovative approach used for companies that operate in more predictable markets. Adaptive strategic change utilizes the opportunities and threats to make fast changes in the business.

Product

According, to “a MAPRO product is a good, service or idea consisting of a bundle of tangible and intangible attributes that satisfies consumers’ needs and is received in exchange for money or something of value” (p.213). The concept of product can be broken down into consumer and business products. The traditional marketing strategy provides a pathway to ensuring that business markets their products in such a way that it addresses the specific needs of the type of customers that they are trying to reach. This means that the way products are marketed are influenced by the type of the product whether consumer or business products and their nature, that is, tangible or intangible.

Price

Schindler (2012) described the price as “that which is given in return for a MAPRO product in a commercial exchange” (p.3). One critical aspect of the description of price given by Schindler above is the phrase ‘commercial exchange’. If the transaction is not a commercial exchange, then the value given in return for the MAPRO product cannot be said to be price. Nagle (1987) postulated that the significance of price in traditional marketing strategy is not primarily concerned with creating value. Rather, it could be said to be the marketing activity involved with capturing, or “harvesting” the value created by the other marketing activities (as cited in Schindler, 2012, p.5). In addition, Kotler (n.d.) argues that price as a MAPRO traditional marketing activity is fundamentally different from others because it produces revenue while others produce costs (as cited in Schindler, 2012, p.5). This is the main significance of MAPRO product pricing in the whole concept of marketing. Where the pricing strategy of an organization is wrong, the whole system is doomed to collapse from production to marketing.

Promotion

Under MAPRO product traditional marketing strategies, the promotion strategy is perhaps the most distinguishing activity between the traditional MAPRO product. The methods of promoting products and services under the traditional marketing approach are completely different from the non-traditional because of the rapid changes in communication and technology.

“Promotion includes advertising, public relations, and marketing communications. The role of promotion is to call attention to a product or service, and build awareness of it, usually with a focus

on key benefits, with the ultimate aim of influencing purchasing decisions. Promotion exists both to inform and create awareness, and is an essential aspect of marketing in competitive markets” The traditional marketing strategy of MAPRO product to advertising, public relation and marketing communication is based on simply informing the potential customer about the product. The approach is more concern of informing as oppose to seeking out the needs and wants of customers.

Distribution

Distribution is a traditional marketing strategy of MAPRO product that is pivotal because irrespective of the effectiveness of the production process or the quality of the products that emerges from that process. All the advantages accrued from efficient process and the quality of the product is lost if the goods are not available in the market where they can be accessed by the consumers. Where there is laxity in the distribution strategy, all the gain made through effective and efficient production and promotion is lost. While the successful management of the marketing mix is critical, a business organization’s marketing approach can make or undermine the objectives of the manufacturer. The researcher investigated the significance of traditional marketing approaches for the purposes of this research through the transactional, segmentation, and relationship marketing approaches.

Data collection process:

The data collection process used by the author is a formal process and collected data through the primary data collection method. Data is collected from the customers when they tasted the free samples at sampling stalls at different locations. The process followed is given below:

- Preparation of questionnaire keeping in mind product and brand.
- Approaching customers during their visit to D-Mart and Big Bazaar.
- Taking the appropriate time to conduct the interview to get all questions answered.
- Compile the data
- Data entry in Excel sheets to bring out findings.

Data Analysis:

Primary data is collected from the customers at different locations about the MAPRO brand. A questionnaire is related to awareness of the brand, suggestions for improvement, etc. A general observation is the customers in Pune are well aware of the brand as the company is situated at Mahabaleshwar and they liked it. At a different location, the sales of products vary and the demand for the specific product also changes. It was observed that the sales of MAPRO fruit drinks at PCMC D-Mart are more than in other locations. Weekend and holidays are peak days where the customer’s walk-in is more and the sale is more.’

MAPRO product and Influence

- 1) **Advertisement (83%)**
- 2) **Attracting packaging (30%)**
- 3) **Shop display (65%)**

4) Family/friend/relative (72%)

5) Any other please specify.....

Table:

Category	Score
Advertisement	83%
Attracting Packaging	30%
Shop Display	65%
Family/Friends/Relatives	72%
Any Other Please Specify	-

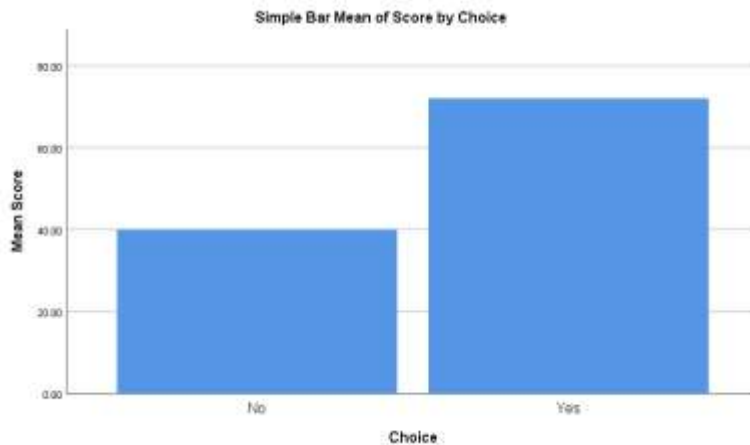
Interpretation: This graph shows the influence to buy a MAPRO product and its score. Here, axis x shows the category, and axis y shows the score of that particular category based on customer decision.

Promotional schemes and affect on choice

1) Yes (72%)

2) No (40%)

Graph:



Interpretation:

This graph shows whether the promotional scheme affects your choice or not and its score. Here, axis x shows the choice, and axis y shows the score of that particular choice based on the customer's decision.

MAPRO and flavour preference

- 1) litchi (68%), 2) rose (97%), 3) kiwi (64%), 4) kokam(38%), 5) strawberry (94%)
 6) mango (87%), 7) orange (85%)**

Table:

Flavor	Score
Litchi	68%
Rose	97%
Kiwi	64%
Kokam	38%
Strawberry	94%
Mango	87%
Orange	85%

Interpretation: This Table shows the flavor customer prefer most in MAPRO are Rose followed by strawberry

Promotional method influence on buyer of MAPRO products

- 1) Personal selling (75%)
- 2) Sampling (87%)
- 3) Direct marketing (72%)
- 4) Sales promotion (64%)



Graph:

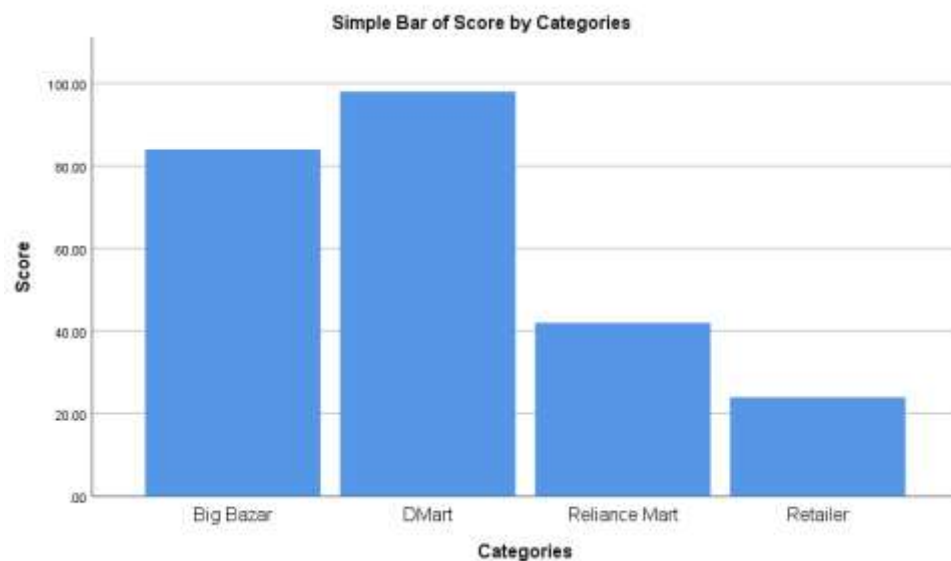
Interpretation:

This graph shows the flavor promotional method and its score. Here, axis x shows the promotional method name and axis y shows the score of that particular method.

Purchase MAPRO products

- 1) D-mart 98%)
- 2) Big bazaar(84%)
- 3) Reliance Mart (42%)
- 4) Retailer (24%)

Graph:



Interpretation:

This graph shows the where customer like to purchase the MAPRO product and its score. Here, axis x shows the categories and axis y shows the score of that particular category on customer choice.

Suggestion and Finding:

The sales Officer along with the Distributor should continuously visit Retail outlets on a regular basis to build trust amongst each other.

1. When launching new products and, they also have to come up with marketing MAPRO products and Promotional activities.
2. The most important thing MAPRO needs to do is to increase its Sales promotional activities So that it can keep holdings in its regular customers.
3. Since MAPRO doesn't have a replacement policy, the distribution network should more cautious while delivering goods to the market.
4. Distributor should continuously follow up on the entire outlet that was added to create a better relationship with them.
5. They should come up with some innovative product where competition in the market is less.
6. For becoming Pan India, they need to do some advertisement and promotional activities So that their sales can be increased.

Conclusion:

In this study influences of different marketing strategies are evaluated in the MAPRO product market and investigated the level of influences of product, price, promotion, and opinion leader strategies on the profit of the company. Product sales patterns evolve over time and the profitability

of the MAPRO company changes. The promotion strategy of the MAPRO product company is the second important factor that triggers consumers buying motivation. Decreasing prices and an increasing number of opinion leaders to collaborate with do not lead to a significant increase in the number of buyers when the product quality is under the consumers' expectations.

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