

THE EFFECTIVE MARKET POSITIONING OF CONVENIENCE GOODS IN BATTICALOA DISTRICT.

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INTRODUCTION.

Before 1950s companies had never heard of marketing. At that time all the firms fully concentrated only on production. They didn't see on the consumers' perspective. The competition among the firms also was very less. Number of organizations in the market also was very less and were not developed well. Much emphasis was not given to customers differing wants, expectations and preferences.

But after 1950s, customers, needs, wants, preferences and expectations grew, developed and diversified largely due to the development in technology, development in education, globalization, and development in Medias and development in transportation. Satisfying differing needs, wants, preferences and expectations of customers became vital problems for the organizations. (Kotler, 1991)

As market developed and customers' needs, wants, preferences and expectations grew and diversified; so many organizations also entered to the market to satisfy different needs, wants and preferences of customers. Entrance of these vast numbers of organizations, increased competition among the organizations and among the brands.

As consumers' needs, wants, preferences and expectations differed and diversified, the mass market has broken down in to several segments and niches, based on customers, geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral aspects. Out of the segments available in the whole market, an organization must select certain segments or whole market to serve and satisfy the needs, wants and preferences of the customers in those segments.

After selecting the segments from the mass market, organizations must attract the minds of the customers in those segments. An organization must create an image among the consumers in those segments. They have to create distinctive place and competitive advantage than their competitors do. That's what an organization must very basically and importantly concentrate on the product given to those segments. Organizations must there fore give differentiated product to each of the segments, they serve. Organizations have to satisfy and retain customers in those segments with their organization and with their product. That's what an organization must concentrate on positioning. (Kotler, 1991)

There are varieties of goods available in the market. According to Philip Kotler these products and services fall in to two broad class based on the types of consumers who use them. They are consumer products and industrial products. Here consumers' products mean products and services bought by final consumers for personnel consumption.

Marketers usually classify these products and services how consumers go about buying them. These consumers' products include convenience goods, shopping goods, specialty goods and unsought goods.

Convenience goods means, goods purchased frequently, immediately, with minimum efforts and with minimum information searching. For example it consists of soap, mosquito coils, toothbrush, washing powder, soft drinks and so on.

Each of these products can be positioned in the market using different strategies. A product has to

be differentiated from another product to be positioned well at the market. There are several strategies to differentiate a product. It basically includes product differentiation, service differentiation, personnel differentiation, channel differentiation, image differentiation, and price differentiation. (Kotler, 2003) Then this research is carried out to analyze positioning of convenience goods. Then this research study is aimed at studying the ways or variables through which convenience goods must be positioned to achieve distinctive place in the target market.

METHODOLOGY.

Sample size is 200. This research focuses on the positioning of convenience goods. As convenience goods are purchased and used by people living throughout the district, questionnaires were issued in all the divisional secretariats divisions of Batticaloa district to represent the whole district. This sample was selected from proportionate families of each divisional secretariat division to total number of families of Batticaloa district. So sample size of 200 includes proportionate families of all fourteen divisional secretariat divisions of Batticaloa District.

Questionnaires includes part I and part II. Part I includes personal information and the part II consist of research information separately for pen and mosquito coils. Research information was evaluated based on the five points Likert's scale.

To analyze the market positioning of convenience goods in Batticaloa district, convenience goods were represented by pen and Mosquito coils. Because convenience goods means goods that are moving fastly, and that are purchased with minimum time frame, with minimum effort, and with minimum information searching. These are the principles or characteristics of convenience goods too. Here as pen and Mosquito coils exhibits these principles of convenience goods, they both represent the whole set of convenience goods satisfactorily.

DATA ANALYSIS.

For this research, data collected from 200 questionnaires were analyzed using univariate analysis. Univariate analysis measures influence of the each of the differentiation variables individually on the market positioning.

Further three types of degree of influence that was derived regarding differentiation variables are shown in the following table.

Table 1 Decision rule.

Range	Degree of influence
$1 < X_i \leq 2.5$	Low influence
$2.5 < X_i \leq 3.5$	Moderate influence
$3.5 < X_i < 5$	More influence

LITERATURE REVIEW

Segmentation.

First the organizations divide the whole market in to segments. This practice is defined as market segmentation. Kotler (2001) has defined the market segmentation as follows "*Market segments consist of large identifiable groups with in a market with similar wants, purchasing power, geographical location, buying attitudes or buying habits*".

According to Kotler (2000), in his definition, with in a segment there will be similarities among the customers' values.

Target Marketing.

After segmenting the market, organizations will select the target markets based on the evaluation of those segments. According to Armstrong (2004), Rather than trying to compete in an entire market, sometimes against superior competitors, each company must identify the parts of the market that it can serve best and most profitably. This is called as target marketing.

Armstrong (2000) has defined Target market as follows. "*A set of buyers sharing a common needs or characteristics that the company decides to serve*".

Hence target market means selecting a specific segment or segments that consist of common needs or characteristics and that can be served by the organizations.

Market Positioning

After targeting the segments to be served, the product must be well placed and must achieve a distinctive value than its competitors. This is called as market positioning.

Armstrong (2004) has defined market positioning "*arranging for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive, and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers*".

From Armstrong (2004) pint of view, market positioning helps to achieve distinctive and desirable place in target customers' minds. This positioning can be reached through differentiation.

kotler(2001) has defined differentiation as follows.

"Differentiation is the act of designing a set of meaningful differences to distinguish the company's offering from competitors' offering.

According to Kotler (2001), a company can differentiate its market offering only along five dimensions. They are Product, service, personnel, channel and image.

French G.Bingham (1990) has added price differentiation also as an important tool for differentiation. Hence differentiation tools consist of altogether six sets of tools.

Table 2 Differentiation tools

Product	Services	Personnel	Channel	Image	Price
Form	Ordering case	Competence	Coverage	Symbols	
Features	Delivery	Courtesy	Expertise	Media	
Performance	Installation	Credibility	Performance	Atmosphere	
Conformance	Customer	Reliability		Events	
Durability	training	Responsiveness			
Reliability		Communication			
Reparability	Customer				
Style	consulting				
Design	Maintenance				
	& repair				
	Miscellaneous				

Source- Combination of
Kotler (2000)
And
Bingsam Jr
Raffield (1990)

According to Kotler(2000) and Bingsam and Raffield(1990), this differentiation can be attained through several variables like product, service, channel, image, personnel and price and the sub components of all the above variables through which product can be positioned at the market.

According to Kotler(2000) Product differentiation means differentiation in terms of physical product using form, features, performance quality, conformance quality, durability, reliability, reparability and design.

Service differentiation is used when physical product can not be differentiated, additional services like ordering case, delivery, installation, customer training, customer consultation, maintenance and repair and miscellaneous-Kotler (2000)

Kotler (2000) says Personnel differentiation is also made through the staff who are well trained. They are to be courtesy, competent, credible, reliable, responsiveness and communicable.

Another way to differentiate the products is through the channel. Here the differentiation is attained through the design of distribution channel and the channel selected must have the feature of coverage, expertise, and higher performance said Kotler (2000)

According to Kotler(2000), image differentiation is attained through the perception people have towards the product, brand and company.

According to Bingsam Jr and Raffield (1990), Price differentiation means differentiating the product by selling at a lower price against its competitors with the acceptable rate of quality and performance.

Even though there are several variables for differentiation, the certain product cannot be differentiated and positioned using all the variables and its sub variables. For different kinds of product, different variables will have to be used to differentiate it. That is one variable used to differentiate a certain product will not function or differentiate another product satisfactorily. Based on the nature and the characteristics of the product, different kinds of positioning tools are required. Hence marketer has to know what variable or sub variables will make it distinctive from its competitors. Then only product will achieve a place in the minds of customers and will be positioned well in the target market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS.

The influence of major differentiation variables over the positioning of convenience goods.

Table 3 Overall analysis of convenience good

Variable	Mean Values of Pen	Mean Values Mosquito coils	Convenience goods
Product	4.016	4.01	High influence
Service	3.41	3.41	Moderate influence
Channel	3.71	3.68	High influence
Image	2.89	3.13	Moderate influence
Price	3.35	3.14	Moderate influence

From the above table it is very clear that out of the five major positioning variables product variable has higher influence over the positioning of convenience goods. Because product positioning highly influences in both pen and mosquito coils. Hence from those products, it can be derived that, product positioning is more appropriate for whole convenience goods. Product positioning is highly influencing, because product variables consist of sub variables like form, feature performance, conformance, reliability and style. Whatever products are purchased, especially convenience goods, customers will mainly focus on the aspects like form, feature, performance, conformance, reliability and style. When these aspects are improved or enhanced, it automatically leads to an effective positioning to the convenience goods. It will be deeply analyzed under sub variables the product differentiation. Considering the service differentiation, as far as convenience goods are concerned, people don't expect more services from the dealer. People expect only the final products. Consumers don't expect additional services like customer consultation services, training services, transportation services, after sales services and repair services from the marketer when purchasing convenience goods like pen, mosquito coils, and tooth paste and so on. . Such services are expected when purchasing motor vehicles, equipments, long durable goods and complicated goods. That's what service differentiation plays a moderate role or moderate importance or moderate influence over positioning of convenience goods.

Channeling is a high influential factor. Because normally, dealers for certain brand of pen and mosquito coils must be available at all the locations irrespective of area and geographical differences. Further convenience goods are fastly moving, highly required and cheaper product. In addition, pen and coils are used by most likely every one nowadays. As far as convenience like pen and coils are concerned, it is purchased very often, well required product, and is purchased with in minimum time needed, with minimum information searching and with minimum effort. Due to these reasons, Customers are not ready to spend much time, much transport and effort for purchasing pen or coils. Because of these principles, it must be available very quickly, on the spot and easily. That's what convenience goods must be assigned or delivered to customer very quickly, easily and widely. That's what channel has higher influence over the positioning of convenience goods.

Some convenience goods have a good image in the market than its competing brands. But this image can't be reliable to position the products. Because this imager is also result of its past performance. The image for any brand of product can't be created immediately. Even though any convenience goods have a good image, its image can collapse immediately, if it doesn't perform well for a certain period of time. That's what image of any convenience goods is a result of its performance. That's what image has moderate influence over the positioning of convenience goods.

Price influence over the positioning of convenience goods like pen or coils is at moderate level, because price difference among the brands of certain convenience goods will differ only by smaller percentage and by a smaller amount. There will be no huge difference among the price of convenience goods.

In addition, normally customers are attached or familiarized with certain brand of convenience goods like coils, tooth past and milk powder. Then even though price increase by a smaller percentage, people won't worry about that and won't shift from that brand to another brand, as they are familiarized with those brands of product. Further most of these convenience goods are essential goods and fastly moving goods. That's what people are not worried about the price of pen. Further these goods are price less goods. In addition, people consider their performance than price. That's what, due to these reason price differentiation has moderate influence over the positioning of pen.

The influence of sub variables of product differentiation of convenience goods.

Table 4 the influence of sub variables of product differentiation of convenience goods.

Sub Variables	Mean values of pen	Mean values of mosquito coils	Convenience goods
Form Feature	3.97 3.63	3.85	High influence High influence High
Performance	4.56 3.87	3.97	influence High influence High
Conformance	4.23 3.87	4.23	influence High influence
Reliability		3.73	
style		3.95	

Even though all these product-positioning variables have high influence ($3.5 \leq X_i \leq 5$), out of these sub variables, performance has a mean value of 4.56 for pen and 4.23 for mosquito coils. Hence performance has captured higher influence over the positioning of whole convenience goods too. Because, here performance fulfils the basic things or aspects with regard to the product. In this way performance means fulfillment or accomplishment of its purposes for which it has been purchased or acquired. People always prefer the certain brand mat has higher performance. That's what performance takes highest mean value among the sub variables of product differentiation. Hence performance has a major influence over the positioning of convenience goods.

This performance means fulfillment of basic product characteristics. This performance positioning leads to customer loyalty and repeated purchasing.

All other sub variables of product differentiation will equivalently influence over the positioning of convenience goods.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis conducted individually for pen and mosquito coils, the following results can be arrived. Out of five major variables for positioning, product variables have a higher influence over the positioning of convenience goods. This product variable includes sub variables like form, features, performance, reliability, conformance, and style.

Out of this product positioning sub variables performance has highest influence over the positioning. Here performance means fulfillment the basic features or aspects with regard to the product. That's what convenience goods have to be positioned mainly through the enhancement of performance. For any convenience goods, it is essential that the product must fulfill its intended purpose satisfactorily. Then it leads to effective positioning of convenience goods.

In addition feature of convenience goods also is an important attribute under the product differentiation. Features in the sense mean provision of additional aspects that assist the fulfillment of basic function. Under the feature enhancement, additional aspects can be given for same price and timely made changes can be introduced and so on. And other product differentiation attributes like form, style, reliability and conformance also can be considered more or less equally when convenience goods are positioned.

And the channel differentiation also has a higher influence, because convenience goods are purchased with minimum effort with in minimum time frame and with out more information searching. That's what convenience goods must be widely and easily available through as many channels and outlets as possible to make it be positioned efficiently.

In addition channel's expertise, performance, behavior, goodwill also has to be modified and improved to build up a good relationship with consumers. These aspects also will improve channel and make the certain convenience goods to be positioned well.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Performance of convenience goods must be improved. For any type of convenience goods it is essential to improve its performance to satisfactorily give its basic functions or intended tasks.
2. The features of convenience goods have to be increased. In this way additional aspects that assist its basic function must be increased.
3. Timely made changes must be introduced to uplifts its features.
4. Additional things or product must be given with the existing amount of product for same price as value addition to facilitate its basic function.
5. Convenience goods must be reliable and conform its promises given in the advertisements while it is used.
6. Convenience goods have to be attractively designed. Because people don't spend much time with convenience goods. That's what if convenience goods are eye catching, it will achieve better positioning in Market.
7. Number of outlets must be increased as much as possible. Based on the nature of convenience goods and the type of consumers who use it, it must be placed well in the location or area where those consumers are meeting or living or abundant.
8. Customer relationship must be built up through me dealers so that they have to be customer friendly and reliable

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