



Assessment of Strategic Marketing Practice: The Case of Ano Agro-Industry (P.L.C)

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ABSTRACT

It is obvious that the goal of any business organization is to remain in business profitably through production and sales of products /services. To achieve this goal, Business Enterprises must have effective marketing strategy, because the ultimate success or failure of a company depends on its marketing strategy. This is why companies should implement marketing strategy effectively to achieve their desired goals.

Therefore, the study was designed to assess strategic marketing practice of the Ano Agro-Industry (P.L.C), and to identify whether it was aligned with the company's marketing objectives.

The study attempted to employ Descriptive case study research design. To take the required sample, the sampling technique that the researcher used in this study was Census sampling because the researcher took all the respondents from marketing staff as a target population of the study with the belief that the respondents from the staff were aware of and concerned about strategic marketing more than other departments.

1. Introduction

In this section, Background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study and organization of the paper are discussed.

Markets are increasingly complex, turbulent, and interrelated, creating challenges for managers in understanding market structure and identifying opportunities. Rapid technological change, Internet access, global competition, the diversity of buyers' preferences in many markets, continuous monitoring to identify promising business opportunities determine if new technologies are disruptive, assess the shifting requirements of buyers, evaluate changes in positioning and guide managers' decisions about which buyers to target. Understanding the scope and structure of the entire market is necessary to develop strategy and anticipate market changes and competitive threats (Cravens and Piercy, 2006).

According to Jain (1997) the growing competition in the domestic and international markets, more demanding and assertive customers, rapid advancement in technology, and changing government policies and laws, the marketing environment has changed dramatically and is becoming more turbulent.

Jain also noted that Marketing is a major stakeholder in new product development, customer management, and value/supply chain management; and marketing strategy provides concepts and processes for gaining a competitive advantage by delivering superior value to the business's customers. Therefore, to deal with the current challenges, the businesses must have more distinctive and purposeful marketing strategies and they should be effectively implemented.

In the word of Bradley, the strategic marketing process implies deciding the marketing strategy based on a set of objectives, target market segments, positioning and policies (Bradley, 1991 cited in Mongay, 2006).

2. Objectives

1. To investigate the company's STP strategies (market segmentation, positioning, and target marketing).
2. To explore bases for market segmentation of the company.
3. To identify problems encountering the strategic marketing implementation of the industry.

3. Methodology

The methods that were employed for the study. It covers the research design, population and sampling procedures, Data sources and collection instruments, Reliability and validity of the study, and methods of data analysis.

4. 4.Results and Discussion

This section presents data analysis and interpretation part which is composed of the response of questionnaires from employees' opinions and personal interviews with marketing manager. A total (all) of 38 employees of marketing department of Ano Agro-Industry have completed and returned the questionnaire administered to them, on which the following final analysis of the study is made. Additional data were collected from the marketing manager using interview in relation to Strategic Marketing Practice of the company and these interview responses were presented and analyzed in the questionnaire analysis part as a supportive.

4.1. Respondents' Response on Market activities of the company

Table 1 shows that 50% and 18.4% of respondents respectively responded that the company has long term marketing plan. The result in the table below also indicates 28.9% of respondents agreed and most of them strongly agree (55.3 %) that the company has developed a purpose statement that clarifies for successful strategic marketing plan. About 76.3% and 23.7% of employee strongly agree and agree that the company has brief marketing mission from which strategic marketing plan flows respectively.

Moreover, according to the result shown below, most of the respondents (44.7%) responded that the company's strategic marketing was not aligned with the marketing objectives; while only 13.1% responded that it is aligned.

Table 1: The Descriptive of Numerical and Percentage Distributions of market with its activities

Activities /Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent
My company has long-term marketing plan.	Strongly agree	19	50
	Agree	7	18.4
	Neutral	2	5.3
	Disagree	9	23.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.6
The company has developed a purpose statement that clarifies the need for successful strategic marketing plan.	Strongly agree	11	28.9
	Agree	21	55.3
	Disagree	6	15.8
My company has brief Marketing mission from which strategic marketing plan flows.	Strongly agree	29	76.3
	Agree	9	23.7
The company's strategic marketing is aligned with the marketing objectives.	Strongly agree	1	2.6
	Agree	4	10.5
	Neutral	3	7.9

	Disagree	17	44.7
	Strongly disagree	13	34.2
The company's business meets customer's needs in the market place.	Strongly agree	12	31.6
	Agree	15	39.5
	Neutral	4	10.5
	Disagree	5	13.2
	Strongly disagree	2	5.3
The project of the company is addressing various social issues.	Strongly agree	18	47.4
	Agree	15	39.5
	Neutral	1	2.6
	Disagree	4	10.5

Source: Administered questionnaire, 20015

4.2 Respondents' Response in relation to situation analysis

The results, as indicated in Table 2 below, 28.9% of the respondents strongly agree and 42.1% of them agree that the company considers internal environmental factors to formulate marketing strategy. But 28.9% of them and 31.6% shows that the company didn't consider external environmental factors to formulate marketing strategy. The results also indicate around 39.5% and 26.3% responded that the company's business or market is politically acceptable. Moreover, it is also economically feasible in that majority of the respondents 23.7% strongly agree and 55.3% agreed with the idea. Likewise, 44.7% and 34.2% respondents strongly agree and agree.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the company's market/business is socially acceptable. But it is not technologically accessible as the result indicates majority of respondents, 50% and 10.5% disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Similarly, majority of respondents (68.4%) responded that the company did not conduct SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats) according to the result obtained in the following table.

Moreover, the researcher asked the Marketing Manager whether the company conducts situation analysis to formulate strategic marketing. Accordingly, there is no organized and well oriented means of collecting marketing information due to lack of sufficient capital, lack of qualified experts, and lack of technology.

Table 2: Numerical and percentage distributions of situation Analysis with its activities

Activities/Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent
My company considers internal environmental factors to formulate marketing strategy	Strongly agree	11	28.9
	Agree	16	42.1
	Disagree	5	13.2
	Strongly Disagree	6	15.8
The company identifies external environmental factors to formulate marketing strategy	Strongly agree	2	5.2
	Agree	8	21.1
	Neutral	5	13.2
	Disagree	11	28.9
	Strongly disagree	12	31.6
The company's business or market is Politically acceptable	Strongly agree	15	39.5
	Agree	10	26.3
	Neutral	2	5.3
	Disagree	7	18.4
	Strongly disagree	4	10.5
My company's business or market is Economically feasible.	Strongly agree	9	23.7
	Agree	21	55.3
	Neutral	4	10.5

	Disagree	4	10.5
The company's business or market is socially acceptable	Strongly agree	17	44.7
	Agree	13	34.2
	Neutral	5	13.2
	Disagree	3	7.9
The company's business or market is Technologically accessible	Strongly agree	4	10.5
	Agree	11	28.9
	Disagree	19	50
	Strongly disagree	4	10.5
My company conducts SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats) in devising marketing strategy	Strongly agree	5	13.2
	Agree	7	18.4
	Disagree	16	42.1
	Strongly disagree	10	26.3

4.3 Response of Respondents regarding Target customer

Regarding target customers, 47.4% and 28.9%, strongly agree and agree respectively that the company has identified customers in terms of geographic location, age group and economic situation. The result also shows that the response of 26.3% and 44.7% shows the company has targeting market segments. About 36.8% and 42.1%, the company maintains long-term success to continuously engage in target audience. About 42.1% and 23.7% the company has not effectively positioned its products and the results also shows that about 42.1% and 23.7%, the company is committed to customer's interest.

Moreover, as the researcher also got additional information from the interview with marketing manager the basis of the company's market segmentation is the geographic segmentation depending on the selective climate of the area.

Table 3: Numerical and percentage Distributions of Target customer with its activities

Activities/factors	Categories	Frequency	Percent
My company has identified its customers in terms of (geographic location, age group, or economic situation and so on).	Strongly agree	18	47.4
	Agree	11	28.9
	Disagree	5	13.2
	Strongly Disagree	4	10.5
My company is targeting market segments.	Strongly agree	10	26.3
	Agree	17	44.7
	Disagree	7	18.4
	Strongly disagree	4	10.5
The only way we can maintain long-term success is to continually engage in target audience	Strongly agree	14	36.8
	Agree	16	42.1
	Neutral	2	5.3
	Disagree	3	7.9
	Strongly disagree	3	7.9
The company has effectively positioned its products.	Strongly agree	6	15.8
	Agree	8	21.1
	Disagree	10	26.3
	Strongly disagree	14	36.8
My company is committed to its customer's interest	Strongly agree	16	42.1
	Agree	9	23.7
	Neutral	3	7.9
	Disagree	7	18.4
	Strongly disagree	3	7.9

Source: Administered Questionnaire, 2015

4.4 Response of Respondents regarding Strategic marketing Evaluation and Controlling

The results expressed in Table 13, from this result we can interpret that about 60.5% responded that the company did not control and evaluate the implementation of the marketing strategy effectively. In addition to this about 71%, there was lack of adequate measures which were put in place for monitor and/ control the progress of the strategic marketing implementation. This result also indicates that about 34.3%, the Company seeks to identify performance gaps to take advantage of opportunities/to correct existing problems.

Table 4: Numerical and percentage Distributions of Strategic Marketing Evaluation and Controlling with its Activities

Activities/Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent
My Company monitors/controls the implementation of the marketing strategy effectively	Strongly agree	3	7.9
	Agree	12	31.6
	Disagree	13	34.2
	Strongly Disagree	10	26.3
Adequate measures are put in place to monitor and/ control the progress of the strategic marketing implementation	Agree	9	23.7
	Neutral	2	5.3
	Disagree	13	34.2
	Strongly disagree	14	36.8
The Company seeks to identify performance gaps to take advantage of opportunities/to correct existing problems	Strongly agree	5	13.2
	Agree	8	21.1
	Neutral	2	5.3
	Disagree	11	28.9
	Strongly disagree	5	13.2

Source: Administered Questionnaire, 2015

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The main objective of this study is to assess strategic marketing practice of Ano Agro-Industry (P.L.C) and to achieve this objective, the study attempted to employ descriptive case study. The total of 38 employees of marketing department of Ano Agro-Industry have completed and returned the administered questionnaire, on which the following final analysis of the study is carried out.

The sample result shows that the company has long-term marketing plan which is replied by 58.4% of respondents. But the Company didn't consider the market opportunities (external opportunities) based on competitive advantages. And, about 73.7% respondents' response indicate that the employees of the company were not trained in customer service, this is great gap. Around 50% of respondents responded that the company didn't respond quickly to competitors' actions and the company also didn't collect marketing information on its competitors. The Company has not identified the categories of competition that threaten its success. This can be expressed by 57.9% respondents' response. Only 39.5% respondent's response shows that the company has pursued promotion strategies and the rest percent (majority) represents that the company has not pursued promotion.

About 21.1% there is effective communication between the company and the target audiences. There is communication gap between the company and target audiences. And, 52.6% company's target audiences know and they also believe about the company. But, 47.4% the company's target audiences didn't know and they didn't believe about the company. The result also indicates that 71% respondent's response represents that the company has not happy (satisfied clients) that it can reference in the promotion or marketing communications; whereas, 15.8% indicates the company has happy clients to reference in promotion or marketing communication.

Regarding strategic marketing evaluation and controlling, it is possible to conclude that about 60.5% shows the company fails to control and evaluate the implementation of the marketing strategy effectively. This can be confirmed by respondents' response of 71% that shows there is lack of adequate measures which are put in place to monitor and control the progress of the strategic marketing implementation of the company. In general, even though the strategic marketing is practiced in the company, there are some problems that the company faced while implementing it. These were: Infrastructure problems, Economic problems, Intensive competition in the market, Seasonality of consumption, and cost of awareness creation for the customers.

5.1. Recommendation

Having reviewed the overall assessment of strategic marketing practice of the Ano Agro Industry, the researcher suggested the following points for the company based on the findings obtained in this study.

1. The company should pay enough attention to the importance of situational analysis; specially, external environmental factors because they are the influential factors that must be put into consideration for the formulation of marketing strategy in today's turbulent environment.
2. Since marketing strategy is a guide to marketing actions and decisions, the company should align it with marketing objectives of the company so that it achieves its goal.
3. The structure of pricing including discounts and product options that differentiate the company from competition should be applicable to be price leader.
4. In promotion/ marketing communications, as results show there is no effective communication between the company and target customers. Therefore, the company should have effective communication and avoid such gaps.
5. For distribution strategy, the company should use the selective distribution strategy in order to deliver their products to target customers; use multi-channels of distribution and the branches of the company should be established at different areas so that it becomes possible to increase sales at branches.
6. Regarding strategic marketing implementation, the company has to use various tactics for implementing marketing strategies. To do so, the company and/employees should know the root cause of the problems encounter the company during implementation phase so as to tackle these problems.

The study did not geographically extend to different parts of the country. Even though strategic marketing practice consists of broad concepts and issues which is applicable in similar manner to other Factories/Industries, this research focuses only on Assessment of strategic marketing practice of Ano Agro Industry; Because of time and financial constraints, it did not extend to other Industries for Comparative study. Therefore, further researches will be needed in different areas and/ industries to gain better understanding.

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