

MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF ENTERPRISES TO INCREASE CUSTOMER VALUE

Alicja Katarzyna KRZEPICKA

SGH Warsaw School of Economics; akrzep@sgh.waw.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-0056-248X

Purpose: The purpose of the article is to present, based on source materials and market observations, what marketing activities companies implement to increase customer value. This is because today having a product or service desired by customers does not guarantee success. Marketing practitioners must identify the right media and messages through which to convey to customers what they want to know about them. Mass marketing practitioners especially need to identify well a target market that is both worthy of entry (from the point of view of sales volume and profits) and vulnerable (from the point of view of communication).

Design/methodology/approach: The purpose of the article was realized based on the analysis of literature sources and market observations.

Findings: Good customer relations are a company's most important potential. An important task is to identify profitable customers and use them effectively. For future development, it is important to establish in the company such a way of determining customer value that takes into account all relevant factors from the point of view of customer value.

Practical implications: The topics described in the article can be a source of valuable inspiration for companies interested in building customer value through appropriate selection and alignment of marketing activities.

Originality/value: The author draws attention to current and important issues occurring in the process of building customer value.

Keywords: marketing, marketing activities, value, customer, customer value.

Category of the paper: Theoretical article.

1. Introduction

The value of a customer to a company is the financial benefit it can receive as a result of the company-customer relationship. However, this benefit should be reciprocal, meaning that for the money spent, the customer should receive satisfaction from the purchase of the product or service. Manufacturers and sellers in today's market are determined to vie for every customer, using increasingly sophisticated methods of acquiring them. Competition for the buyer is also becoming more and more sophisticated, the analysis of consumer behavior more and more

detailed due to the fact that it is in the plane of marketing activities that companies see opportunities for success in the competitive market. The change in the orientation of the activities of many enterprises today is aimed at increasing the importance of the customer and directing all activities towards him in order to ensure maximum satisfaction. Today, the needs, tastes and desires of customers largely determine not only the offers of enterprises, but also the choice of marketing activities in line with customer expectations. Having a product or service desired by customers, contrary to appearances, is not a guarantee of success today. It is up to the marketing practitioner to identify the appropriate media and messages through which to convey to the customer what they want to hear about them. Nowadays, in addition to presenting the right offer and price through selected distribution channels or hiring qualified personnel, it is also important to implement modern marketing activities to promote the company and meet the growing expectations of customers.

2. The essence and determinants of customer value growth in the enterprise

Today's market is constantly changing due to evolving consumer needs. Obtaining and maintaining a competitive advantage depends largely on the value package offered to customers. Value, according to Doyle, is increasing the effectiveness of customer satisfaction (Doyle, 2003). It is the sum of all the benefits a consumer expects from a product and a reflection of the effectiveness of satisfying his needs with a product or service. The concept of value delivered to the customer, as defined by Kotler, says that the value delivered to the customer is the difference between the total value of the product to the customer and the cost to the customer of obtaining it. Closer to the consumer, the definition of value is framed as the consumer's assessment of the utility of a certain product based on the perception of what is received, relative to what is Niven (Zeithaml, 1998, pp. 3-7). The total value of a product to a customer is the sum of the benefits the customer expects from a product or service (Kotler, 1994).

Customer value consists of, among other things (Düssel, 2009, p. 264):

- the current turnover and income it brings to the company,
- the potential for turnover and revenue it can generate in the future (most important!),
- growth potential,
- opportunity to cooperate,
- the client as a provider of references (reference potential),
- the customer as an informant (e.g., about product, service and process innovations),

- customer's deductible (what portion of its demand will the customer cover with our products?),
- internal synergy potential.

If the value of customers is built by the value delivered to them, then the basis of a marketing value strategy must be adequate knowledge of customers, understood not so much as average, average trends in their behavior, but as knowledge of individual customers, the conditions in which they live and work. This knowledge must be obtained directly from the customers themselves, processed appropriately into decisions, and must be available to employees involved in building and executing customer value growth strategies. The more individualized this knowledge is, the better the company's chances of tailoring marketing activities to customers' preferences and expectations. Gathering customer data and information is critical. With current technological capabilities, it is also not a major problem for most companies, while the challenge may be to take care of the "cleanliness" of databases and to update knowledge and get rid of unnecessary knowledge in order to have the clearest picture of the customer.

Haeckel and co-authors, on the other hand, point out three basic principles in building customer value through experience, these are (Lovelock, Wirtz, 2004, pp. 344-345):

- 1) connectivity and compatibility of experiences - the key issue is compatibility between the scope and intensity of experiences, e.g. the hotel's corridor and entrance should represent a similar quality of furnishings as the decor of guest rooms - they should be neither better nor worse decorated than they are, as this can cause dissonance and adversely affect the overall perception of the stay. Positive experiences also combine across related services, enhancing the overall image effect;
- 2) the use of material and human factors in enhancing the functionality of products and services - all components of the offer together shape the total perception of the buyer, so they should be analyzed in terms of the type of consumer impressions created, e.g.: elements of the environment, personnel behavior. This point should also include the use of the latest technologies in building customer experiences;
- 3) building an emotional connection with the customer - a sensory-driven experience generates an emotional response, which is the basis for building long-term bonds. Emotional engagement, however, is not based solely on the sensory stimulation that is attractive to the customer, but can result from other mentally inspiring features of the offering (e.g. culture, charismatic leaders, brand secrets, rituals, communities).

Communication is also an important aspect. Communication has two tasks to fulfill: first, to get the word out about the actions being taken to increase value and ensure that they are understood within the company; and second, to build motivation for implementation stemming from the belief that good, appropriate actions will contribute to the success of the company (Starovic, 2004, p. 123).

In summary, turning customer information into concrete actions can be metaphorically compared to a trodden path, i.e. taking such a path to satisfy customer needs that customers themselves "trodden" - they choose as the one that is the shortest or easiest for them.

3. Traditional versus modern marketing activities of enterprises

In the past, managers managing products, particularly relevant to the customer, could rely on mass marketing to reach a broad target market. Mass media advertising techniques have been well-educated and precise since the early days of television. In today's market, however, marketing practitioners have new problems, which are (Soberman, 2001):

- the fragmentation of the media means that they cannot rely on the mass media to deliver news to a wider audience. Instead, it is necessary to use several complementary channels;
- the cost of producing creative content is high, and approaches suitable for use on television networks do not work well on alternative channels (or media);
- - normal television and radio are still important, but alternative channels such as interactive television and the World Wide Web are becoming increasingly important in reaching a significant group of customers (88.4% of Poland's population are Internet users) (Raport, 2023).

In addition, a more heterogeneous market means that customers will increasingly demand more personalized products, created specifically for them, which will also have important implications for marketing practitioners, who will have to take greater care in their ability to gather information to reach smaller segments, on the one hand, and on the other hand, ensure that they use the information skillfully to match their offers as precisely as possible to identified customer needs. Often, too, greater media fragmentation means changing the rules to which niche product manufacturers and mass marketing practitioners are accustomed. The role of marketing in the management of a business is very important, manifested in many steps including the creation of customer values, target audience groups, when implementing marketing activities or checking the end result, which is the sale of a product or service. Nowadays, in addition to presenting an appropriate offer and price through selected distribution channels or hiring qualified personnel, it is also important to implement modern marketing activities to promote the company. One of the most frequently used marketing activities by enterprises today is Internet marketing, building an image on the web strengthens not only the position of the enterprise against the competition, but is an important channel for communicating with consumers. The presence of the enterprise on the web can occur by having a website, where the offer is presented, the price list, the values offered, the possibility of quick contact with the customer in real time.

Another prospect for promotion is a presence on social media, that is, on social networks such as Facebook, X (Twitter) or Instagram. Presented content on such social networks is aimed at arousing the audience's interest in new promotions, product photos or showing the possibility of using the product. Presence in social media also allows to get to know the target group better and finalize the offer so that the consumer is satisfied. An increasingly common phenomenon is also the promotion of products with the involvement of influencers, through advertising on social media. Influencers promote products or services by showing the advantages that the product or service has and encourage purchase. E-marketing also includes activities such as graphic ads, e-mail marketing, by sending newsletters, promotional offers by e-mail and search engine positioning. Another marketing activity is product placement, otherwise known as product placement, it can be assumed that this is a method of promotion involving the placement on a commercial basis in a film, play, television program or other audiovisual or print media of a product or situation presenting a certain pattern of consumer behavior (Czarnecki, 2003, p. 22). Creating a positive image also has a major impact on branding of both the product and the company is realized by the so-called CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) concept. The concept distinguishes standards such as: responsibility, transparency, ethics, respect for the rights of stakeholders, respect for the law, respect for international standards of business conduct, respect for human rights. This concept is implemented by many enterprises, especially those whose goal is to take care of the quality of life of society, taking care of the local community. A marketing activity that uses CSR is financial support through sponsorship of sports or cultural events. Another activity is the use of loyalty marketing, which is designed to build a lasting relationship between the seller and the customer. Loyalty marketing can be regarded as a comprehensive approach that concentrates all marketing-relevant activities in a single business management model; it is a systemic approach that directs the entire enterprise towards the customer (Schuller, Fuchs, 2005, pp. 10, 33). A loyal customer is something special for any manufacturing or service company, because they know the product, its value, and are eager to reach out or come back again. The bond formed with the customer creates a habit, a positive feeling at the thought of the product or service. Loyalty programs include discounts, free products, the ability to collect stamps/points for each purchase, loyalty cards but also offering services available only to certain customers (special rules for guaranteeing reservations, for example). If a company wants to build a long-term relationship with a customer, it must plan a given loyalty program in great detail and follow the rules and regulations. For example, the study "Loyalty programs as a part of company's marketing strategy" prepared at Mendel University in Brno includes a catalog of benefits resulting from the introduction of loyalty programs. These are (Mrkosová, Dufek, Majer, 2011, pp. 199-204):

- building trust and strengthening good relations with existing customers,
- attracting new customers who might not otherwise show interest in the products offered,
- increasing customers' motivation to make more purchases,

- strengthening market position,
- increasing awareness of the company among customers,
- increasing the frequency of purchases.

The goal of applied marketing activities in any industry is first and foremost to focus on the customer. Enterprises, through marketing activities, create their own value, create their own ideal and strive to realize the goal of the business through promoted content. Attracting attention and encouraging people to buy a product or use a service increases the number of customers, while also increasing the value of the business. For value creation, communication with the market is essential. Marketing activities are also aimed at communicating with the customer, creating a kind of bond, a group of regular customers who will use the services of a particular hotel company again.

In an era when companies are constantly searching for more and more effective marketing instruments, visual merchandising represents a special way of communicating with the customer, especially with regard to the retail enterprise. The uniqueness of this instrument lies in the association of two perspectives: operational, creating the uniqueness and uniqueness of the place of direct contact between the customer and the environment of the purchasing process, i.e. the interior of the store, the salesperson and the commercial offer, and strategic, where it is used in building the image as a permanent element of the company's competitive strategy.

4. Value offered to customers in today's marketplace

Values vary. Value is the unique combination of benefits received by target buyers, including quality, price, on-time delivery and pre- and post-sale services (Martelo-Landroguez, Barroso-Castro, Cepeda, 2015, pp. 467-481). A modern enterprise should build its own unique customer value map, including a set and order of priorities. Due to easy access to knowledge, customer capital has become more involved in the exchange process. Kent Monroe, on the other hand, defined customer value as the relationship between the quality or perceived benefits in a product and the perceived sacrifice of buyers paying a given price (Asgarpoura, Hamid, Sulaiman, pp. 632-640). The self-awareness of customers has a huge impact on the value for the enterprise, so properly identifying customer needs and quickly following their changes allows you to adapt to market requirements and gives you the opportunity to fight the competition (Adamska, Kucińska-Landwójtowicz, 2018). Defining markets and understanding customer value categories must be treated as a development opportunity for the enterprise. This is the most important, and most difficult, stage in building customer value and enterprise-wide strategy. Too often, companies have equated this process with ideas for a new product, new technology or organizational solutions, that is, starting this process "from the end" and then seeking customers for these products. As a result, this led to the failure of about 90 percent of

new product or technology ideas. Assessing market opportunities should be conducted from a level of understanding of customers' needs that is derived from their goals, objectives and the results they want to achieve. This approach, in turn, makes it possible to distinguish two areas of opportunity: opportunities for new values (benefits) for the customer that will solve their problem (new sources of revenue and profit), and opportunities to reduce costs incurred in such areas of the company's activities that lead to inadequate or excessive service to customers (values not used by customers, e.g., too much saturation of product functions). Skillful selection of marketing activities, their variety and customization is the key to reaching the target customer segment. A well-chosen marketing campaign, using modern tools, allows not only to gain the trust of the customer, which is very important for the brand, but consequently will translate into its choice in the purchasing process.

It is worth noting that any offer can be expressed as a set of organizational, economic, social and technical benefits received by the customer, as well as the company. In addition, customer value is a relative category, as it is always evaluated under specific conditions against alternative offers. Operational decisions therefore require each time a new definition, estimation and presentation to customers, in such a way that they understand how this value can help enable them to achieve their goals, and why it has advantages over the competition.

5. Summary

The market success of an enterprise depends on a number of factors, which every enterprise should recognize and take into account in key decisions regarding not only production but also the marketing activities used. Market success is a term with a large scale of gradability, for some companies success is the absence of significant failures in the business, for others the introduction of innovations and the continuous effort to increase the value of the company. This is a very subjective scale, and it is difficult to say unequivocally whether for company A the same achievement will be a success for company B (Lachiewicz, 2013, p. 149). Market success is often associated with satisfactory economic performance, an increase in market value or an increase in profits. However, it is worth remembering that this is not the only determinant of success. Nowadays, every entrepreneur, regardless of the industry, must face up to doing business in an environment of dynamic changes and fierce competition, and this undoubtedly requires the application of increasing creativity in the use of marketing activities and their proper selection to the target group of customers. Companies should follow the needs of their customers, such as to prevent them from moving to competitors.

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