

# Market segmentation, targeting, and positioning of pen products in staples



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On my second trip to Staples, I noted that writing implements are usually divided into six categories: pens, markers, pencils, highlighters, fine writing, and correction materials. Within the pen category, products are categorized based on their different features and the consumer needs that these features address. For instance, Uni-ball, Sharpie, Pentel, and Pilot's rollerball pens come in fade-proof and waterproof ink to prevent running off on paper.

Although this is a common feature of almost all basic pens that I examined, Uni-ball is particularly targeted towards people who use pens for check writing while Sharpie, Pentel, and Pilot's products are meant primarily for individuals who hate to mess up their writing with ink smears. Likewise, both Uni-ball and Pilot have pens that are distinctive for their steel styling and sleeker appearance which cater to professionals who want to extend this image to the pen they use.

Gel pens, markers, and highlighters usually had the same feature ball point and rollerball pens had, but they usually had more colorful cases than the pens. On the other hand, the most notable difference among the pens was price. Basic pens were usually priced lower than pens that had additional features or more distinctive appearances. In this aspect, BIC and Sharpie lead the mass market pen category with their lower priced pen products.

Uniball also had cheaper versions of their own product but Uniball, along with Pilot and Pentel demanded a higher premium for the additional features of their pens, such as higher ink quality, better design and style, and image. It is safe to assume that BIC and Sharpie pens are intended for individuals who bought pens for more utilitarian purposes, such as businesses, mothers, and

other people who were after the savings generated by these brands' cheaper prices and do not care much about the pen's features as long as it writes.

In the same manner, it can be surmised that Pilot, Uniball and Pentel are after individuals who are more discerning about pen quality and style because they use it a lot in their daily activities. For instance, students, teachers, writers, and artists, are more aware about the differences between a pen's design and ink differences than other people, and are more likely to look for better writing instruments.