

Voice newspaper marketing strategy essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



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Title: Evaluating the Marketing Strategy of the St. Lucia Voice Newspaper

Module 1: Marketing Management Course: Master of Business Administration

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Voice Newspaper is a product of the Voice Publishing Company Limited of St.

Lucia which was established in 1885. The Voice is the oldest and leading

newspaper in St. Lucia and is commonly referred to as the “ Nations

Newspaper. ” It has the widest circulation and readership on the island but

compared to other international newspapers, the Voice is a relatively small

print-medium operation. With a staff compliment of fifty-five (55), including

its marketing, editorial, production, distribution, and clerical teams it is not

difficult to imagine the scope and size of the business. Although the Voice is

the leading newspaper, it is not a daily newspaper.

Instead it has three weekly publications which are distributed on Tuesdays,

Thursdays, and Saturdays (main issue). The paper focuses almost entirely on

local issues, with brief features on regional and international events.

Entertainment, Sports, Business, and Classified Ads columns are prominent

featured segments of the paper. It is necessary to highlight the status of the

Voice which is the basis for my assignment mainly to show that it doesn't

have the operating capacity like large conglomerates in Europe and America.

The Voice doesn't have a tailored marketing strategy and most of the conventional marketing strategies are far removed from its daily operations. As a result, it is difficult for me to make proper analysis and evaluation using the marketing theories and concepts that were introduced in the module. Therefore, in my attempts to effectively meet the objectives of this assignment, I propose to introduce the marketing practices of the Voice while simultaneously evaluating these processes against best practices. .

Armstrong and Kotler (2000 p5) defines marketing is “ a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others. Marketing therefore, is an instrument used by businesses to strategically understand the environment they operate in and placing themselves to meet customers need. According to the Web article Marketing Strategy (2003), it is believed that an ideal market strategy should consist of “ constituent parts based on a thorough and objective understanding of the current situation. ” which includes: the scope of the business, marketing objective, target segments and positioning, and the market mix. Generally the vision and mission statements are the guiding principles which define the scope of the business.

Central to this is an understanding of all aspects of the business which contributes to a holistic strategy. Therefore, the customer group that is served comes to focus; Knowledge of their needs and wants and how they can receive the benefits that they are seeking; the type of technology, innovation, and use of Human Resource the business use to provide that

benefit to them are all important issues surrounding the scope of a business. Businesses can have an array of marketing objectives depending on the products and or services that they offer.

Armstrong and Kotler (2000 p290), suggest that the most common examples of a marketing objectives are “ survival, current profit maximization, market share leadership, and product-quality leadership. ” Market Entry and Increased Awareness are other examples of marketing objectives. There are many factors that influence a business’ marketing objective.

For example, a business that has found itself in a cash-strapped position would be inclined to make ‘ current profit maximization’ its foremost marketing objective. Like most other businesses, the foremost marketing objective of the Voice is to increase profitability. Mindful of the current global economic situation and in response to my first question regarding the Voice’s marketing objective, Mr. Thomas Gordon (Marketing Manager), indicated that the main focus was to “ stay afloat. ” He quickly added, “ To remain profitable, increase readership and to a lesser extent maintain the leadership position. ” Target segments and positioning are areas of marketing that speaks of the specific customer groups or segments that the company is targeting and its position in these segments. Kotler and Keller (2000 p240) describes a market segment as “ a group of customers who share a similar set of needs and wants.

In the case of the Voice Publishing Company, the market in which it operates is very narrow and segmentation is not a viable marketing option. It shares a marketplace with five other competitors vying for readership (eligible

readers) which accounts for roughly 70, 000 derived from a local population of 164, 000 (Source: St. Lucia Population Census Report 2005).

Take for instance the outcome if consideration is given to a specific target group like Businesspersons, Women, or the Unemployed; readership would decline significantly and the Voice would then have to raise prices. Given his relatively competitive market It practices mass marketing – whereby “ it engages in mass production, mass distribution, and mass promotion of the product (Voice news paper) for all buyers” (Kotler and Keller 2006 p240). However, it has a strong promotional strategy which targets younger readers. The Voice can be classified as having a moderate to strong position in the marketplace. Although documented evidence was not available as reference, the marketing manager indicated that the Voice commands 71% of market share and reaches 50, 000 of the population’s eligible readers or 30% of the total population. Presumable the core of any business’s marketing strategy is its marketing mix. The marketing mix consists of marketing tools that are part of the controllable factors that a business can manipulate to achieve competitive advantage.

More commonly known as the 4Ps Mc Carthy classifies them as: product, price, place, and promotion, (Kotler and Keller 2006 p19). Other theorist has added another component ‘ people’ and making a relevant description as the 5Ps. Established in 1885, the Voice remained the only formal source of news reporting in St. Lucia for many years. The product therefore, has both historical and symbolic significance. Much emphasis is placed on providing a top-quality, dependable, and unbiased newspaper.

A non-political, conservative approach is used to deliver reliable news with a focus on preserving the nation's history for future generations. Well over 50% of the population is under the age of 30 (Department of Statistics 2006); And strategically, the Voice has focus its most ambitious promotional strategy at the youth. The “Yo (youth-oriented) Magazine” is a supplementary distributed free with the weekend issues of the Voice. Designed to attract younger readers first to “Yo” and subsequently to make a transition to the Voice, the promotion has had much success since its inception. Other well established promotional strategies including corporate sponsorship, etc.

continue to be utilized. Timely circulation is a critical marketing tool for the Voice. Since news items are limited and competitors share the same stories, non-loyal customers may purchase any paper solely base on availability.

Therefore all attempts must be made to reduce this occurrence. Circulation Officers are mandated to distribute the Voice to 115 locations Island wide on a timely basis. The Voice has a distribution ratio of 9500 weekends, and 3000 each for Tuesdays and Thursdays issues.

However, it is estimated that each copy has on average 5 secondary readers. Pricing is strategically set based on the Voice's commitment to offer a fair price to its customers. Additionally, consideration is given to customer's disposable income, and opportunity cost in relation to the current economic reality and high unemployment.

In marketing terms, a competitive pricing method is used to set prices based on the prices that competitors charge for similar products, (Armstrong and Kotler p304). See table 1 in the appendix for the pricing structure. The use of information is crucial for the development of any marketing strategy; it is simply impossible to plan for something that one has no information about.

The company must carefully examine the internal and external environment it operates in and be able to use the information to identify strengths, threats, weaknesses, and opportunities. Mr. Gordon admits that the company has not conducted a formal SWOT analysis in recent times but is quite aware of the major threats and challenges faced by the Voice. Management relies on the Department of Statistics and its circulation Officers for information which influences the marketing strategy. The Statistics Department provides information on demographics, rate of unemployment, disposable income, economic growth, and population by area; information management utilizes to help with its distribution of the Voice.

Information sourced from the department was instrumental in the development of the YO Magazine. Furthermore, feedback from distributors and customers are fed to the Circulation Officers on a regular basis. This information is in turn used to improve product quality and to meet the needs of the customers. The Voice has fallen short on its sole reliance on the Circulation Officers and the Statistics Department for the collection of information. There are several other avenues available to it for the purpose of information gathering. It is recommended that a proper SWOT analysis be

conducted because: 1. It enables you to put shorter-term plans together to consolidate strengths and address weaknesses. .

It usually calls for more research, analysis and idea generation about the environmental factors, the threats and the opportunities (RDI, 2009a). In an attempt to pick his mind regarding a SWOT for the Voice, Mr. Gordon, in a nutshell made the following revelations: Strengths: Longevity, relationship with customer and historic value of the paper. Weaknesses: Complacency, lack of core competences. Opportunities: Potential customers from “Yo” Magazine and the Internet. Threats: Government policies, regulation and new technology. In developing its marketing strategy, the Voice had to incorporate the global context. Yet, significant emphasis has not been placed on it due to the limited impact that it has on the development cycle of the newspaper at this time.

The greatest impact that the global context can have on the Voice is the economic cost of producing the paper. Prices of commodities like raw material would significantly affect the production cost and could be serious negative on the paper. Other issues like legislation and tariff can have a lesser impact on circulation and distribution. However if the Voice uses the online method to penetrate global markets, it is less likely that these obstacles may affect them.

The voice will have to follow new trends in the market and lack of innovation can seriously affect them if the rate of change on the global market is too fast for it to keep up with. The Voice has recognized the benefits of e-business and is moving in the direction of being fully integrated as an e-

business. Extracts of notes from (RDI, 2009b) describes an e-business as an “ organization that is transforming its interactions with customers, suppliers, strategic partners, and employees by exploiting web technologies, and extending its market reach to improve performance.

” The Voice is steadfast in embracing e-business strategies in its marketing. In developing the Voice as a true e-business, management has taken many approaches aimed at achieving this goal. The introduction of web-base access to limited contents of the Voice and the initiation of online subscription are starting points of the process. More so, the business uses web technologies in the conduct of its daily activities.

For example, management increasingly uses the Internet in accessing, reviewing, and purchasing raw materials and equipment from its suppliers. Orders are made online and are paid for, monitored and cleared out of customs charge electronically. Additionally, it is used to interact with both suppliers and customers. It facilitates the easy submission of classified ads, news items, and other information that customers wish to forward to the Voice. The benefits derived from an e-business operation are most noteworthy. Among the leading benefits is “ efficiency and cost savings” which redound to competitive advantage in the marketplace. For example, online subscription of the Voice totally eliminates the time and cost that would normally be associated with shipping the paper to another destination. E-business procedures benefit a company also by: ? Improving product quality; easier access to more equipment and raw materials.

? Reaching new customers and suppliers; websites link millions of people worldwide. ? Enhancing customers and suppliers relationships; cheaper means of communication facilitates more frequent contacts between parties. Organizational capability is vital for competitive advantage but is limited at the Voice.

The Editorial staff lacks the core skills (training and qualification) needed to promote core competences for improved effectiveness, profitability and market advantage. The cadre of Journalists is semi-skilled notable with on-the-job or trial and error experience. Management has attributed this to the lack of local training institutions, the exorbitant cost of overseas training, and the unavailability of funding to assist staff in accessing the necessary training. An opportunity is lost because Journalists do not have the skills to report on a variety of subjects. Staffing limitations reduces the ability to conduct nationwide coverage of news and events.

This also hampers the opportunity to convert the Voice to a daily publication. Many persons in the print media are still optimistic about the future of newspapers in the 21st century. Especially from the Voice's point of view, "we are optimistic especially given our geographic and marketing environment. Significant change in technology and innovation seen as the main threats but will take at least two decades before it affects our operations," – Thomas Gordon, Marketing Manager of the Voice. Research shows that newspapers remain the preferred choice for advertising (see bookmarked website). Whether this is true or not, there still will be great potential for advertising if newspapers are distributed solely online. However

newspapers must find innovative ways to remain attractive and to meet the ever so changing needs of customers.

According to comments made by Porter (2009) blog column, four main reasons why print is a dying format for news is: ? Content; less variety from one paper to the next which is also available free online. ? Readers; Difficulty in maintaining strong circulation base. Subscribers are less motivated. ? Advertisers: availability of more effective and cheaper ways to reach customers. ? Format; advocates for going green, lobbying for decrease in use of inks, paper and electricity used for print format. Acknowledgement Thanks to the management and staff of the Voice Publishing Company, St.

Lucia. Special thanks especially to Mr. Thomas Gordon, Sales and Marketing Manager, for his kind assistance in providing me with some invaluable information which was crucial in completing this assignment.

Appendix Table1: Comparison between the Voice and Star Newspapers |
 STAR (FOLLOWER) | VOICE (LEADER) | | WEEKLY DISTRIBUTION | 7000 |
 15500 | | AVERAGE NO. PAGES | 25 | 35 | | | \$2. 00,\$1. 50
 Weekend/Weekday issues | | COST |\$2.

0 all issues | | | WEB-BASE(INTERNET) | YES | YES | | WEEKLY ISSUES | 3 | 3 |
 | LOCAL NEWS | Yes | Yes | | REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL | Yes | Yes | |
 ENTERTAINMENT | Yes | Yes | | SPORTS | Yes | Yes | | POLITICS | yes | yes |

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