

Importance of marketing in an era of accelerating change

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Joe is a BBA student majoring in accounting in UCU. He once said, “Marketing is irrelevant, a waste of time for business students and a sign of misallocation of university resources; besides, very few students opt for it. It should be removed from the university programs and be replaced with a new accounting course, whose benefits are direct and clear. ” Using relevant examples, briefly discuss Joe’s statement clearly indicating the importance of marketing in an era of accelerating change.

Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association, as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organization goals (Lamb et al 2004: 6). This definition of marketing reveals some of the various reasons the study of marketing relevant in today’s world and why Joe is misguided to think that it is a waste of time and resources to teach marketing in UCU. In fact, Kotler and Keller (2006: 4) insist that the financial success of a company depends on its marketing ability.

Finance, operations, accounting and other business functions will not really matter if there is no sufficient demand for products and services so that the company can make a profit. Even market leaders like Microsoft, Intel and Nike recognize the value of marketing and cannot afford to relax. The following is how marketing affects us as individuals and its importance in our increasingly global society: Marketing is essential for the organization growth: marketing contributes directly to the fundamental objectives of a business which are survival, profits and growth.

Marketing activities include assessing the wants and satisfactions of present and potential customers, designing and managing product offerings, determining prices and price policies, developing distribution strategies and communicating with present and potential customers (Lamb et al 2004: 18). A cyber cafe that recently opened in Mukono called FastWeb is increasing its market share very fast because of its marketing techniques.

It has products that cater to every individual such as monthly fees that entitle people to free internet access and a reward system that gives the customer one hour free internet access after accumulating four coupons. With the stiff competition in the hotel industry because of the Common Wealth Heads of Government Meeting, hotels have to constantly remind the public of the facilities available like conference halls. Commonwealth Resort Munyonyo was chosen to hold the International Criminal Court conference from 31st May to 11th June 2010 because of their reputation.

Therefore businesses must sell products to survive and grow and marketing activities help sell their products. Financial resources generated from the sales can be used to develop innovative products. These new products in turn, allow a firm to better satisfy customer's changing needs, which in turn enables a firm to generate more profits (Pride and Ferrell 2003: 18). Marketing fuels our national and global economy: profits from marketing products contribute to the development of new products and technology.

Advances in technology, along with falling political and economic barriers and universal desire for a higher standard of living, have resulted in products and services that give customers greater choice among products (Solomon

and Stuart 1997: 8). This in turn satisfies customer's needs, fuller employment, increases incomes and raises standards thus promoting economic growth. Nokia and Sony Eriksson made phones more function for the young by incorporating music mp3 players through XpressMusic and Walkman respectively. BlackBerry was also developed to cater to the businessman's need for organization and unlimited storage space.

Marketing offers outstanding career opportunities: marketing offers interesting and challenging career opportunities in areas such as personal selling, market research, advertising, retailing, distribution management, product management, product development, wholesaling, storage and packaging (Lamb et al 2004: 18). In addition, many individuals working for non-profit organizations engage in marketing activities to promote political, educational, cultural, church, civic and charitable activities (Pride and Ferrell 2003: 21).

For instance, marketing strategies used by born again churches in Uganda include the invitation of prominent preachers from developed countries who perform miracles. The churches concerned put adverts in newspapers, on leaflets, big posters and various radio and television stations. The preachers boost the name of the church and this consequently makes the people boost its numbers and the income. Therefore, whether a person earns a living through marketing activities or performs them voluntarily for a non-profit group, marketing knowledge and skills are valuable personal and professional assets.

Marketing knowledge enhances consumer awareness: The money we spend on goods and services pays for marketing costs like market research, product development, packaging, transportation, storage and sales. Studying marketing will help us become better informed customers. You will be better prepared to demand satisfaction when the goods and services you buy do not meet the standards promised by the manufacturer or marketer (Lamb et al 2004: 19). For example, the computer company Acer has developed a laptop called Acer Timeline whose battery lasts up to 8 hours.

If such a laptop is bought from a dealer on Kampala Road but does not work that way, then the consumer can take it back and demand warranty. Studying marketing therefore helps us to assess the products value and flaws more effectively (Pride and Ferrell 2003: 20). Marketing adds value to products and services for customers: in this era of increasing competition, it is important to create value for products otherwise customers will not buy. If they do buy, they will not come back if there is no value. Rhino Ltd makes gumboots with added value of different colours as well as with reflectors.

Kellogg's also increases the value of cereals through its various brands of SpecialK for women, RaisinBran for the health conscience and CocoPops for children. Ugandans are also spoiled for choice with BlueBand breadspread that is low in cholesterol and BlueBand cooking because of the marketing efforts of East African Industries (Kibera and Waruingi 1998: 6). In fact, new technology especially computers and telecommunications help marketers understand and satisfy more customers than ever before (Pride and Ferrell 2003: 20).

Toll-free numbers like customer care hotlines allow customers to give feedback about their experiences with a company's products. This information helps marketers refine and improve their products to better satisfy customer's needs which in turn enhances society's quality of life. Marketing helps build customer relationships: according to the Customer Service Institute, it costs five times as much to acquire a new customer than it does to service an existing one. Furthermore, customers tell twice as many people about a bad experience over a good one.

The American Marketing Association affirms this by stating that for an average company, 65% of its business comes from its presently satisfied customers (Komunda 2008: 7). This means that a company needs to maintain the relationship with the current customers in order to lower marketing costs and sales costs and increase sales for example through loyalty programs. Supermarkets like Capital Shoppers, Shoprite and Uchumi all have customer cards that give shoppers points each time they shop. As these points accumulate, one can buy other items for free.

Socially responsible marketing can promote the welfare of customers and society: marketing techniques have the ability to convey messages that change societal behavior in a positive way. For instance, Uganda AIDS Commission has run marketing campaigns to help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS through its 'Get off the Sexual Network' and 'Go Red for Fidelity' campaigns. In fact, the success of our economic system depends on marketers whose values promote trust and cooperative relationships in which customers are treated with respect.

The public is increasingly insisting that social responsibility and ethical concerns be considered in planning and implementing marketing strategies (Pride and Ferrell 2003: 21). For example, Stanbic Bank teamed up with Habitat for Humanity, an NGO that builds homes for the low income/poverty stricken family, to build Stanbic Village in Mukono. It improved the image of the bank as one that cares for the community. However, there are certain criticisms of marketing because, whether intentionally or not, some marketers do violate their bond of trust with their customers.

Marketers create artificial needs by convincing consumers to buy things that they do not really need or want. Coca cola may urge people to take Sprite to deal with thirst through the slogan 'Sprite your thirst', instead of water. Bars like that at Golf Course Hotel supply free peanuts to stimulate thirst while making them appear as customer service. ii. Marketing teaches people to value people for what they own, rather than who they are. Goods are linked to desirable social attributes so we learn we can be popular or happy only if we buy those products.

Nokia's slogan 'It's more than a phone, it's who you are' can make people strive to buy expensive phones to elevate their social status. iii. Marketing promises miracles and consumers are led to believe that products have magical properties. Maybelline, a cosmetic company, lures many women by its catchy slogan, 'Maybe she is born with it; maybe it's Maybelline'. It creates the impression that using the product will make them so beautiful it is almost natural. Conclusion: Despite these criticisms, the importance of marketing remains profound.

Joe should realize that an important reason for studying marketing is that it affects almost every aspect of daily life; even a CV is part of a marketing campaign to sell oneself to the employer. Another reason for studying marketing is that you as the consumer pay for the cost of marketing activities. It is also worthwhile not to follow Joe's recommendation but to leave marketing as a course as it has exciting and rewarding careers. Furthermore, marketing plays a big part in economic growth and development.

Most importantly, marketing is important to the success of every organization. A company that can't successfully sell its products does not need accountants, financial managers, production managers, personnel managers or computer programmers (Perreault and McCarthy 2002: 7). Marketing concepts and techniques also apply to non-profit organizations. If Joe did not know about UCU or the products offered, or if they did not interest him, he would probably be in another university.