

# The needs and demands for laptop features marketing essay



Apple plays an important role in the laptop industry. Though Steve Jobs's empire maybe behind in the ranking but year after year, Apple's market share is increasing (Mintel, 2009) and has recorded a annual sales rise of 12.5 % , achieving a turnover of \$ 36. 54bn in 2009. The successful launch of iPhone , iphone with 3g technology and increasing sales of Ipod helped Apple to increase its brand equity and awareness which helps them expanding in market. Apple offers a wide variety of products from ipods, mobile phones, iphone along with Imac and the MacBooks. In the process of staying competitive, apple announced in September 2009 at a special event, Keynote, that, they plan to further reduce their margins and offer affordable computers and by that be more competitive in terms of price positioning (Apple, 2009).

In the constantly evolving PC sector the main players are HP, Acer, Dell, Lenevo and Toshiba. The companies in the highly competitive laptop industry offer best deals at best prices to the market with a wide range of innovative products to the consumers every day, thus responding to the needs and demands. Many advanced and fragile laptops have lately emerged in the market with cheaper price as well as finer design (BBC news, 2008). Apple, HP (Hewlett-Packard), Dell and other players in market have launched the series of light notebooks. But Sony proves to be a tough competitors with the launch of world lightest notebook 8", the 1. 4 pound VAIO in 2009 (Sony, 2009). To prove to be innovative HP provides innovative personalisation through Personalize with HP Skins " to reflect user's personality and lifestyle" (HP, 2009). Where Apple provides only white, grey and black laptop covers. Apple has been able to be competitive in the

market as they offer facilities quicker than competitors. Therefore, Apple manages to provide advanced technology to user which is bettered compared to its competitors..

It is necessary to define the business and update products to every single trend in the sector to supply to the inherent customer needs. Nowadays, in a constant volatile economical and social world, it is more difficult to predict, analyse and perceive consumer's attitude towards a product than ever. (Randrianasolo, 2006). With the increasing usage of laptops on university campus in classrooms, libraries etc. this seems to be an effective target for laptop companies. Apple's educational website has a wide variety of offerings for laptops and PC's with offers, discounts and services. Although, Apple laptop features need to be modified in order to suit the student's needs. Sales in this segment can prove to be a fertilizer for improving Apple's business.

The Nature of the Management Issue:

In order to sustain to the competition, it is necessary to be efficient to satisfy the customer needs and wants. The purchasing decision of MacBook can be affected by exploring the existing offerings in the market in terms of laptop and the studying factors that influence student's desire for personalising laptops, features, softwares ( for course, gaming , etc. ), portability, longer battery, as well as price . The busy students life, they need easy access to softwares, drivers etc. Students also demand for customizing or personalization of laptops according to the needs for self identity, study course, gaming, professional etc. This will help to increase the market share,

sales of Apple's laptops and create a positive image of the company in the industry.

Decision problem:

In order to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, which new strategic methods should Apple consider? Understanding how adding values and features to laptops esteemed by students can help in increasing market share.

Decision that Apple can make is:

What features and aspects can Apple change in their laptops in order to expand its laptop sales among the University students in UK?

Research Objectives or Hypothesis:

Research should support the management issue, and develop solution further. The objective is to conduct a marketing research based on problem defined, which would be:

To study the university students needs and demands for a new laptops and the extent to which the current market offerings satisfy those needs.

This research shall include studying components like:

What buyers seek in order to satisfy for the needs of university students?

To find out needs considering factors like social acceptance, lifestyles, portability or a combination of various factors.

Till what extent do current laptop offerings in market meet the demands?

Survey of what competitor's brands provide that they are more desirable.

What are the esteemed laptop features among university students?

What features to be kept on priority while designing the package? Can the features be identified in terms of RAM, ROM, LCD screens, graphic cards, Personalization of laptop and laptop covers, portability, internet options, Wi-Fi connectivity, battery life as well as services and pricing?

Do current products from Apple satisfy these demands?

What is the buying behaviour, demographic as well as psychographic of the targeted market segment?

To find out what strategies can be developed to influence the buying decisions of customers in the target market.

The value of this work:

The research shall help Apple to:

Focus on product launch that in turn will accentuate the customers to buy Apple laptops. The research can help in improving brand equity and market share. Further, helping the company to establish itself as a benchmark for the other competitor companies.

Understanding the psyche of focused group for the aspects like needs to buy a laptop, ideal laptop features, or important characteristics of Apple's laptops and whether Apple adequately meets these demands.

To draw relationship between students buying behaviour and factors that affects their purchasing decision.

The research will also be important in aspect of social value in determining factors that can be benefit to students and thereby contribute in empowering the education system.

Research Design:

The research has to be carried out through various methods in order to investigate the actors that student consider while selecting a laptop and to understand the psyche of young consumer. The understanding will further help the company to launch new products in market as per the demands. Thus, identifying and understanding the new potential market for increasing laptop sales can lead to increasing market share.

A Casual, conclusive research has to be designed to understand what the students demand and to what extent are they fulfilled.

A) Secondary Research: Literature review and industry research form a part of secondary data and are more quantitative. Evaluating and analysing this descriptive data helps to diagnose and plan the research for primary data.

Data Sourcing: Data can be sourced in various ways and varied sources as per the requirements of the mode of conduct of the research.

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Internal Secondary data: These are the sources help in getting internal records of the companies which can prove useful as they have relevant information which the research demands. Such Data can be available from the official websites of the companies can give information on the sales and figures, financial reports and statements, etc.

External Secondary Data: these sources give a wide range of information and data from which the researcher can access to the information from the selected source. These include resources like books, journals, periodicals, press reports, and sources like keynote, Verdict Research etc. These sources provide general information on the business as well as business statistics.

Intelligence sources like journals, newspapers etc. also help to acquire relevant data. This secondary data can lead us to develop an approach towards collecting primary data.

#### B) Primary Research:

Primary research will be useful to verify the student's opinion. Primary survey gives the most recent data accurate and relevant through different ways such as questionnaires, surveys, observations.

In order to collect the recent student's opinion below methods can be used:

Questionnaires.

Focus Groups discussions.

Interviews and observations : group discussions on university campus.

Surveys: telephonic surveys, mail surveys, web surveys.

Sampling design and Size: – Simple random technique: The university students having equal probability of selection (Malhotra, 2009) through interviewing and filling questionnaires. Sample size has to be targeted should be approximately 300 students from different universities, Courses and level of education (Bachelors/ Masters). In order to get balanced information it is necessary that the survey should be done across all parts of the country.

Questionnaire: The questionnaire should support the research objective in finding out student's perspective on general information and knowledge about laptops, pricing, how important are laptops, what features do student's demand for, student's opinions and suggestion on Apple MacBook. The questions per section should not exceed beyond 15 and should have multiple choices to save time and interest.

Field Work: The questionnaires, interviews and survey can be carried out in university classrooms, seminar, cafeterias, computer hubs, library, student residence halls. Emails with attached copy, questionnaires on Apples' official website and student's poll and blogs can also be helpful ways of conducting the research.

C) Collection of data and data entry. This could be done manually using a software programme.

D) Analysing and data interpretation using methods like cross-tabulation.



E) Test the reliability of the data. In order to check whether the analysis is correct cross testing of data can be done.

The company Apple can provide free services or softwares as incentives on completion of the survey.

Theoretical Underpinnings:

Brand Differentiation and Innovation Strategy :

Schmalensee, Richard (1982) in his research “ Product differentiation Advantages of Pioneering Brands “ reflects the importance of brand differentiation and innovation concept will help to understand why there is a need for adding unique value to a product in category. Increasing differentiation in products compared to competitors will help to improve the market share as well as Innovation Strategy this helps, in creating new standards though product innovation. These are competitive strategies prove advantageous in the process of creating distinctive brand.

Relation between Consumer and business:

Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A. (2007) “ A new conceptual framework for business-consumer relationships “ draws the relationship between understanding Consumer demands and buying behaviour to the Business of any company. It explains why is it necessary to build strategies and provide the consumer the demanded product in order to perform better.

3) Branding strategy- consumer buying decision:

Hamann, D., Williams Robert L. , Omar , M. (2007) in the paper ' Branding strategy and consumer high-technology product' explain how consumer buying decision factors like Price, use, quality and culture affect the branding strategy . This helps to in research design to consider these points and investigate them through University student's perspective.

#### 4) Consumer Behaviour- Social class influences:

Social factors can affect the purchasing decision of University students. In the paper " Social class influences on purchase evaluation criteria " the author Williams, T. (2002) investigates how social factors affect the consumer behaviour while buying products.

#### 5) Need for portable computing:

Studies have proved that there is change in teaching ways and students are subjected to more electronically available data. This proves that students need laptops on campus as the classroom, library and campus culture relation with students is changing. (Bazillion, 2001)

#### 6) Technology and marketing:

According to Moncrief, W. and Cravens, D. (1999) rate of change by technology affecting the buyers will increase. In order to grow and perform in the competitive market, companies need to be market driven. Hence, it is necessary to investigate the demands of the consumer so that companies can find out efficient and effective ways of reaching the market

#### Administrative Constraints:

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There might be a few limitations which might hamper the process of research and data interpretation. Few constraints can be as below:

Availability of students: Students have a busy life and lectures and project works. Hence it might be difficult.

The research demands to study the University students from different cities in UK. This will increase the problems in data collection..

The sample size will affect the reliability of data. Also, as the research demands study of students from different universities which is a difficult job. The research will have to be limited to a selection of representative universities. This can constrain in the study of overall university student in the country.

Data is collected from interviews, discussions and surveys. There can be errors while entering the data. The factors will have to be considered.

Due to some incorrect data entering can affect the accuracy of data. Also, the sample size will be an important factor that can affect the data accuracy.

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IMAGE REFERENCES:

### **Image 1:**

**Apple (2009) Which Mac are you? Apple advertising on the official website with its range of Mac's, [Online Image]. Available from [Accessed on 8 January 2010]**

### **Image 2:**

Ackerman, D. (2009) Market Share of leading companies in PC sector in Apple drops to No. 5 in laptop sales- are cheaper MacBooks the answer?. cnet News, 16 July 2009. [Online image]. Available from [Accessed on 24 December 2009].

### **Image 3:**

**iStyles ( 2009) HP provides Laptop skins: Bend it HP Mini skin , [Online image], Available from [Accessed on 8 January 2010].**

Image 4:

**Reid, R. ( 2007 ) Dell offering 1420N in different colours in Dell multicolour laptops: XPS M1330, Inspiron 1520 and 1720 [Online Image]. Available at < <http://crave.cnet.co.uk/laptops/0,39029450,49291299,00.htm>> [Accessed on 8 January 2010].**

Image 5:

Albany Law School (2008) Students in classrooms with laptops: showing growing need of laptops in student life, [Online Image]. Available from [Accessed on 8 January 2010].

Image 6:

Cooke John (2008) Relationship between Product, customer and Business, [Online Image]. Available From [Accessed on 8 January 2010].

Image 7:

Smith Amy (2008) Apple's aim – Students with apple laptops, [Online Image]. Available from < [http://www.thefloridacatholic.org/pt/2008\\_pt/2008\\_ptarticles/20080201\\_pt\\_laptop\\_initiative.php](http://www.thefloridacatholic.org/pt/2008_pt/2008_ptarticles/20080201_pt_laptop_initiative.php)> [Accessed on 9 January 2010].

Image 8:

Secondary Data (2008) Reference model for understanding sources of primary n secondary data, [Online Image] . Available from < <http://secondarydata-sugar.blogspot.com/>> [Accessed on 9 January 2010].

Image 9:

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Point Marketing Limited (2008) Identifying the target group for research sampling,[Online Image]. Available from [Accessed on 2 January 2010].

Image 10:

Vrontis, D., Thrassou, A. (2007) Framework of the classical business-consumer relationship In A new conceptual framework for business-consumer relationships. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, Vol. 25, No. 7.