

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF PUSH AND PULL PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES ON MARKET SHARE AND SALES OF COMPUTER PERIPHERALS

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Abstract. *Sales promotion strategies have the ability to change the fortune of any business. Almost all businesses across the world adopt sales promotion strategies to promote their products and to sustain in the market. The businesses that deal with computer peripherals are no exception to this. They are also dependent on such strategies to promote their products in the highly competitive market. In this context, the present study intended to investigate the effects of push and pull strategies adopted by the computer peripheral distributors on the market share and sales of their products. Accordingly, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants (n=451) who were computer peripheral distributors in Karnataka. The analysis of the data showed that push strategies such as Trade shows, Point of sale and Supply chain efficiency adopted by the distributors convinced the intermediaries in the distribution channel to sell their products to customers; thereby, increase the market share and sales of the computer peripherals. Among the pull strategies, Advertisements, Referrals, and Promo and discounts motivated the customers to seek the products of the distributor, which in turn increased its market penetration, sales, customer loyalty and repeat purchase (i.e. its market share and sales). Thus, push and pull strategies both have a significant impact on the market share and sales of computer peripherals.*

Keywords: *Sales promotion, Push strategies, Pull strategies, Market share, Sales, Computer peripherals.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The most important objective of any business entity is to sell its products and stay in the market for the longest period possible (Buil, de Chernatony & Leslie, 2010). Coupled with the increasing global competition, this key objective has forced companies to look for innovative means for selling their products. Ultimately, 'sales promotion' occupied a crucial position in business decision making. In order to sell their products companies must focus a great deal of their time and resources on sales promotional activities (Preko, 2012). Sales promotion represents the activities carried out by an

organization to improve its sales, enlarge its customer base and/ or retain its loyal customers. Blattberg and Neslin (1990) defined sales promotion as "an action-focused marketing event whose purpose is to have a direct impact on the behavior of the firm's customer." In general, sales promotion either attempts to increase a product's value or decrease its price, so that the customers prefer that offering over the rest in the market (Adeniran, Egwuonwu & Egwuonwu, 2016).

Promotional strategies adopted in marketing are of two types, namely, push and pull strategies. The strategies vary mainly based on the way in which information and products move between the customers and the companies. According to Brocato (2010), push strategies focus on marketing intermediaries such as wholesalers and retailers, rather than no customers, in order to facilitate the movement of goods from manufacturer to customers. Such strategies aim at offering the partners extra value or incentives to engage in additional marketing activities to stimulate retail sales. Pull strategies, on the other hand, are targeted at customers. They offer extra value to the customers to attract them to retail locations and stimulate immediate sales (Martín-Herrán, Sigué & Zaccour, 2010). Retailers adopt push strategies like point of purchase displays, conducting trade shows, etc. to convince customers to buy the products. Pull strategies like advertisements, word-of-mouth referrals are adopted to encourage customers to ask the intermediaries (or the retailers) for the company's products. Adopting a mix of push and pull strategies can effectively lure customers into buying a particular brand. Furthermore, such promotional activities also enable the customers to readily recognize a brand and become aware of it while making a purchase (Rizvi, Malik & Zaidi, 2012).

The technological developments made in the last two decades have significantly affected the lifestyle of people. Consequently, the market for computer peripherals witnessed a drastic growth. The market is characterized by changing customer needs, diverse products, and tough competition (Rajeswari and Selvarasu, 2015). As a result, a number of brands

have entered the market, with some still struggling to carve a niche for themselves in the market. The competing organizations are always under a constant pressure to achieve a competitive edge in the market. In order to do so, the companies largely adopt sales promotion as the marketing tool. By identifying the sales promotion strategies that have a significant impact on the market share and sales of computer peripheral distributors, the marketing team can develop such strategies to effectively promote their products. With this backdrop, the objectives of the present study can be stated as follows:

- To explore the implications of applying push strategies of sales promotion on market share and sales volume
- To study the implications of applying pull strategies of sales promotion on market share and sales volume

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Significance of sales promotional strategies

Sales promotions and advertisements have a significant impact on brand equity. For instance, the content of the advertisement itself helps in increasing brand equity, which includes brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand associations (Buil, de Chernatony & Leslie, 2010). The promotional activities though are short-lived, have a lasting impact on customers' mind and are readily remembered by the customers, which makes them an effective tool for building customer/ brand loyalty (Rizwi, Malik and Zaidi, 2012; Nazish Zehra & Sadia, 2011). Sales promotions could be either monetary or non-monetary and both of them can increase the social value of a brand (Buil, de Chernatony & Leslie, 2010).

The promotional strategies are also effective at increasing the sales volume of a company and its market share. They help in increasing customers' awareness about their products (brand awareness) which in turn influences their purchase decision and ultimately the sales volume (Ogunlami & Ogunlami, 2011). Promotional strategies like coupons, free trials, guarantees, and premiums boost the sales volume (Amusat, Adejumo & Ajiboye, 2013). With increase in sales revenue, the profitability of the firm also increases (Oyedapo Williams, Akinlabi Babatunde & Sufian Jeleel, 2012). The promotional strategies also have an impact on customer's purchase intention. For example, techniques like coupons and price reductions stimulate customer's buying intentions (Meo et al., 2014).

Studies in the past have also found that promotional strategies are used by firms as a means for market penetration (Oyedapo Williams, Akinlabi Babatunde & Sufian Jeleel, 2012). Promotional activities also help in building brand loyalty among the customers. Such initiatives aim at having a

positive impact on the customers' perception towards the brand and ultimately results in brand loyalty (Nazish Zehra, & Sadia, 2011; Oyeniyi, 2011). Therefore, promotion initiatives can be used as an effective tool for building customer loyalty as well.

Push and pull strategies for sales promotion

Push strategies like conducting trade shows help in increasing the sales of a product. Further, they also help firms to successfully launch their products, find new distributors or outlets for their products in a new territory, strengthen the organization's position in the market place through public relations and receive feedback about their products (Patten, 2001). The trade shows may not always increase the sale volume, but will help firms to effectively reach out to their customers, introduce their products, and gather information about their competitors (Yeshin, 2006). Point of sales has been adopted as an effective marketing mix for increasing the purchase shares of a brand (Hwang & Thomadsen, 2016). Showrooms, virtual as well as physical, can help firms increase demand generation and contribute to brand awareness (Bell, Gallino & Moreno, 2018; Akturk, Ketzenberg & Heim, 2018).

Advertising is an effective pull strategy that is positively associated with brand equity and brand sales (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2014; Ataman, Van Heerde and Mela, 2010). Advertisements through social media as a marketing medium has a significant impact on the purchase intention of gen Y customers and on their brand loyalty (Balakrishnan, Dahnil and Yi, 2014). Word-of-mouth referrals is yet another pull strategy that have been found to have a significant impact on sales distribution (Lee, Lee & Shin, 2011). The referrals generated by the consumers increase firms profits by boosting its sales (Kim & Kim, 2018). Price discount has been adopted by firms as an effective strategy to increase product awareness across different sales channels (Gong, Smith & Telang, 2015). Framing of sales promotions also has a significant impact on consumers' perception towards the brand/ product.

From the literature review, it can be observed that studies on the promotional strategies to be adopted in technology markets is scarce. The impact of the push and pull strategies, discussed above, on the profitability of firms is scarce in India. Studies in the past have not explored which kind of strategy (push or pull) is effective at increasing the market penetration of technology products like computer peripherals. The present study intends to bridge these knowledge gaps by testing the following hypotheses:

H1: Push strategies are positively related to market share and sales

H2: Pull strategies are positively related to market share and sales

3. METHODS

Participants

A structured questionnaire was used for collecting data from the distributors of computer peripherals (n=451) in the state of Karnataka. The profile of the participants can be studied from Table 1. Among the participants, a majority (94%) of them were retail distributors, who sold computer peripherals through their own store. Only 6% of the participants were wholesale distributors of computer peripherals. Among the wholesale distributors (n=27) of the study, 95% bought large quantities of computer peripherals and sold them to regional retailers and businesses only. The study population was highly experienced with 85% having more than 10 years of experience in the field. It was also found that among the study population, 39% of them enjoyed a revenue between 11 and 50 lakhs from their business, followed by 30% of them who enjoyed a revenue of more than 1 crore from their business. The data thus shows that computer peripherals distribution is a lucrative business. From the data, it was also inferred that computer peripheral distributorship is a business that can be run with less than 50 employees.

Table 1: Demographics information

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Type of business	Wholesale	27	6
	Retail	424	94
If wholesale, magnitude of the business	Regional	429	95.1
	National	22	4.9
Experience	1-2 years	18	4
	3-5 years	8	1.8
	6-10 years	39	8.6
	> 10 years	386	85.6
Revenue of your business	Up to 10 lakhs	104	23.1
	11 lakhs to 50 lakhs	177	39.2
	51 lakhs to 1 crore	36	8
	More than 1 crore	134	29.7
Number of people working in your distributorship	Less than 50	439	97.3
	51-100	10	2.2
	101-150	2	0.4
Total		451	100.0

Measures

A 25-item instrument was developed to measure the promotional strategies adopted by the computer peripheral distributors. The scale was developed based on the researcher's prior knowledge as well as from the knowledge gained through literature review on sales promotional strategies. The push strategies

were measured in terms of Tradeshows, Showrooms, Packaging, Point of sale and Supply chain efficiency. The pull strategies are measured in terms of Advertisements, Referrals, Customer Relationship Management, and Promo and discounts. Market share and sales is considered the main dependent variable in the study and was measured in terms of Market penetration, Repurchase, Profit, and Customer loyalty. A 15-item scale was used to measure Market share and sales. The responses to the items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree. Hierarchical regression was carried out to show the amount of variance in the market share and sales of computer peripherals that could be explained by each of the push and pull strategies considered in the study.

4. RESULTS

Push strategies as predictors of market share and sales

H1: Push strategies are positively related to market share and sales

A hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to determine which of the push strategies of sales promotion significantly predicted the market share and sales of computer peripherals distributorship business. The predictors used in the regression models are Trade show, Packaging, Point of sale, Showrooms and Supply chain efficiency. In step 1 (first model), Trade show alone was used as the predictor (F=638.48; p<0.001) and it was found that 58% variance in market share and sales can be explained by Trade show. In the second step, Packaging was introduced into the model (F=10.250; p<0.001) and it was found that 59% variance in market share and sales can be explained by both Trade show and Packaging. In the next step, Point of sale was pushed into the model (F=64.39; p<0.001) and 64% variance in market share and sales was accounted for after this step. After introducing Point of sale, it can be observed that the beta values for Packaging reduced by more than half and it was no longer statistically significant. In the next step (step 4), Showrooms was introduced into the model (F=7.38; p<0.001) and 65% variance in market share and sales was accounted for after this step. After the introduction of Showrooms, the beta values of other predictors reduced to more than half and were no longer statistically significant. Point of sale and Packaging did not make a statistically significant contribution to the regression models in either step. Supply chain efficiency was added to the model in the last step (F=40.384; p<0.001), after accounting for all the other variables in the model, and it was found that the amount of explained variance in market share and sales increased. After adding Supply chain efficiency, though the betas of Trade show and Point of sale reduced, they became

statistically significant predictors of market share and sales. Thus, it can be inferred from these results that Supply chain efficiency, Point of sale and Tradeshow are the push strategies that significantly

predict the market share and sales of computer peripherals distribution. Based on these results, H1 has been accepted.

Table 2: Push strategies as predictors of market share and sales

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
(Constant)	1.347	0.131		10.278	0.587	0.586	638.487	0.000
Trade show	0.725	0.029	0.766**	25.268				
(Constant)	1.280	0.131		9.739	0.596	0.595	10.251	0.001
Trade show	0.511	0.073	0.540**	7.041				
Packaging	0.228	0.071	0.246**	3.202				
(Constant)	0.991	0.128		7.735	0.647	0.645	64.390	0.000
Trade show	0.401	0.069	0.424**	5.789				
Packaging	0.003	0.072	0.003	0.042				
Point of sale	0.394	0.049	0.418	8.024				
(Constant)	0.957	0.128		7.484	0.653	0.650	7.385	0.007
Trade show	0.368	0.070	0.388	5.257				
Packaging	-0.078	0.078	-0.084	-1.006				
Point of sale	0.350	0.052	0.371	6.781				
Showrooms	0.167	0.061	0.180*	2.718				
(Constant)	0.837	0.124		6.751	0.682	0.678	40.384	0.000
Trade show	0.278	0.068	0.294**	4.065				
Packaging	-0.091	0.075	-0.098	-1.222				
Point of sale	0.270	0.051	0.287**	5.305				
Showrooms	-0.023	0.066	-0.025	-0.345				
Supply chain efficiency	0.395	0.062	0.413**	6.355				

**<0.001; *p<0.01

Pull strategies as predictors of market share and sales

H2: Pull strategies are positively related to market share and sales

Hierarchical regression analysis was again performed to determine whether the pull strategies of sales promotion, such as Advertisement, Referrals, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and Promo and discount improved the market share and sales of computer peripherals distributorship. These strategies were considered as the predictors in the model and market share and sales was considered as the dependent variable. In the first step, Advertisement was introduced into the model (F=596.03; p<0.001) and it was found that 57% variance in market share and sales was explained by it. In the second step, Referrals was introduced into the model (F=45.641; p<0.001) and

61% variance in market share and sales was explained by both Advertisement and Referrals. In the next step (Step 3), Customer Relationship Management was introduced into the model (F=45.641; p<0.001) and 62% variance in market share and sales was explained after this step. The beta values of Advertisements and Referrals though were reduced, their contribution to market share and sales was found to be significant. In the last step, Promo and discount was added to the model (F=23.256; p<0.001) and it was found that all the predictors together explained 64% variance in market share and sales. The beta value of CRM reduced by more than half after the addition of Promo and discount and was found to be no longer significant. Thus, it was found that among the pull strategies, Advertisement, Referrals, and Promo and discount significantly predicted the market share and sales of computer peripherals distributorship. Hence, H2 has been accepted.

Table 3: Pull strategies as predictors of market share and sales

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
(Constant)	1.474	0.130		11.308	0.570	0.569	596.036	0.000

Advertisement	0.707	0.029	0.755**	24.414				
(Constant)	1.244	0.129		9.650	0.610	0.608	45.641	0.000
Advertisement	0.462	0.046	0.494**	10.148				
Referrals	0.292	0.043	0.329**	6.756	0.625	0.622	17.713	0.000
(Constant)	1.201	0.127		9.451				
Advertisement	0.401	0.047	0.429**	8.549				
Referrals	0.180	0.050	0.202**	3.589				
Customer Relationship Management	0.185	0.044	0.219**	4.209				
(Constant)	1.075	0.127		8.482	0.644	0.640	23.256	0.000
Advertisement	0.361	0.047	0.386**	7.755				
Referrals	0.148	0.049	0.167**	3.003				
Customer Relationship Management	0.043	0.052	0.050	0.817				
Promo and discount	0.240	0.050	0.271**	4.822				

**p<0.001

5. DISCUSSION

Tradeshows were found to significantly predict the market share and sales of computer peripherals. Organizations that conduct events such as exhibitions, fairs and expositions can effectively promote their products, find prospecting and nurturing leads which can be converted into customers, gather competitive information, build brand image and explore potential partnerships (Kim & Mazumdar, 2016; Sarmiento, Farhangmehr & Simões, 2015). These benefits reaped through participating in tradeshows can increase the profits and market penetration of firms, as found in the present study.

It was also found that Packaging and Point of sale did not have much impact on the market share and sales of computer peripherals when Showroom was used to promote their products. When organizations display their products in a showroom, the customers are not really concerned about the packaging of the product and its point of sale. At showrooms, the customers can physically inspect the product and later buy them from any merchant online or at another physical store. Therefore, when showrooms are used to promote a product, packaging and point of sale have no significance in marketing the product.

When supply chain efficiency was introduced as a push marketing strategy, the showrooms and packaging did not have significant impact on market share and sales. Under this strategy, the companies know what to expect when. So, they may be able to successfully sell their product as and when required by the customers. In such cases, the customers need not be bothered about showroom experience and packaging of the product. Also, efficient supply chains will help organizations predict the needs of their customers and reduce the gap between supply and demand, which in turn improves product

availability in the market; thereby, ultimately increasing the organization's profits.

Along with supply chain efficiency, tradeshows and point of sale were also significant at predicting the market share and sales of computer peripherals. The first step of regression which shows tradeshows as a significant predictor of market share and sales is in line with earlier findings reported by Patten (2001) and contradicted the findings by Yeshin (2006). The current study also found that point of sale has an impact on the profitability, customer loyalty, repurchase and market penetration. These findings can be substantiated by those reported earlier by Hwang and Thomadsen (2016) who found that Point of sale increases the purchase shares of a brand.

The first block of regression for pull strategies (Table 3) shows that advertisements significantly predict the market share and sales volume of computer peripherals in terms of repurchase, customer loyalty, profit and market penetration. Studies like Huang and Sarigöllü (2014) and Malik et al. (2013) have also found evidence for the impact of advertisements on the market share of a brand or product and on the buying behaviour of customers. Balakrishnan, Dahnil and Yi (2014) also found evidence that advertising through social media increases the purchase intention among the Y generation. Thus, advertisements play an important role in enhancing the sales of a product.

The second block of regression (Table 3) shows that Referrals, usually word-of-mouth, play an important role in enhancing the market share and sales of computer peripherals and the last step of regression shows that Promo and discounts also have a significant impact on the market share and sales in terms of repurchase and profits. The findings can be corroborated by the findings put forth earlier by Ataman, Van Heerde and Mela (2010) who also explored and reported the positive effects of price

promotions and advertising on brand sales. The impact of promotional strategies on customers buying intention was also posited by other researchers like Rong-Da Liang, Yang, Chen and Chung (2017), and Khouja, Subramaniam and Vasudev (2020).

6. CONCLUSION

The study found that push and pull strategies have a significant impact on the market share and sales of computer peripherals. Among the push strategies, trade shows, point of sale and supply chain efficiency can significantly increase the sales, profits, customer loyalty and repeat purchase intention. In the case of pull strategies, advertisements, referrals, and promo and discounts can significantly increase the market share and sales of computer peripherals. It is recommended that computer peripheral distributors must conduct trade shows regularly to display their products and to develop connections while also improving the efficiency of their supply chain to meet customer demands. The distributors must also spend on advertisements and sales promotions for marketing their products, which will increase their market presence.

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