# "ENDING THE WAR BETWEEN SALES AND MARKETING": REVISITED

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**Abstract** - "Ending the war between Sales and Marketing (Kotler et al., 2006)", highlighted the conflict between marketing and selling. Kotler et al., discussed the problem based on how the functions evolve in an organization and how that creates differences in the way each perceives the role of the other. A decade later, this paper revisits the topic and analyses the problem adding the consumer perspective. The paper develops a framework to show that the conflict is natural as marketing is focusing on building loyalty and therefore its role focuses on changing the consumer behaviour, whereas sales which is focusing on increasing sales is satisfying current behaviour. Synchronizing sales and marketing would require the sales function to not only focus on completing current sales but also help marketing modify behaviour and build loyalty. The paper suggests a framework wherein sales force continue to satisfy the current behaviour but help marketing by modifying the service orientation, the outlets where the brand is made available and the trade schemes. This would however, require a mind-set change from market share to customer base and short term profit to long term profit.

**Keywords** - Market Orientation, Loyalty, Selling

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing and sales functions "do not get along (with each other)". While sales function feels that the marketing is "out of touch with what's really going on with customers", marketing on the other hand believes that the sales force is "myopic and do not see the value of marketing efforts" and salespersons "sell the price" as against "selling through price" (Kotler et al., 2006). "Ending the War between Sales and Marketing" (Kotler et al., 2006) highlighted the issue between marketing and selling based on how the functions evolved in organizations. Kotler et al., (2006) state that the way the two functions evolve in an organization create differences in the way each perceives the role and importance of the other. Steve (2010) also states that sales and marketing efforts are at odds' sometimes, "even at war". As a result the interface between marketing and sales is low (Christian et al., 2008) and where marketers prepare action plans and salespeople need to implement those plans (Malshe et al., 2012) without a proper "buy-in".
A decade after the article of Kotler et al., (2006), this paper revisits the conflict between marketing and sales using a different perspective. While Kotler et al., (2006) provided an intra-organizational longitudinal view (economic and cultural), this paper would provide an understanding of the conflict by looking at the interaction of the two functions with the end consumers. This paper would use a practitioners' perspective while describing the conflict and suggesting solutions.

## II. MARKETING AND SELLING

From a Practitioners' perspective,selling has a product focus and has a short term goal of achieving market share. This short term focus does not consider the brand building process and developing a loyal set of customers. On the other hand practitioners' consider marketing focusses on the consumer on a long run basis where mind share is more important than market share (Bhasin 2017).
The differing perspectives have resulted in marketing and selling seeing each other as independent activities in an organization. Arnett and Wittmann, (2014) and Rouziès and Hulland, (2014) suggest the importance of interface between sales and marketing for marketing success. Siahtiri et al., (2014) theorize that both marketing and selling capabilities are critical drivers of customer centric performance, which in turn enhances the firms' brand performance.

## III. BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK

Aithal(2009) states that "We are entering the second phase of marketing, where we will see the true meaning of the statement "Customer is the King". In today's competitive situation, companies are struggling to build consumer loyalty. Loyalty is not about repeat purchase only (Huang and Yu 1999) but about creating a positive feeling for the brand (Kim et al. 2008 and Wang 2010). Loyalty would therefore involve building a customer lifetime value (Kumar and Reinhartz 2016), commitment (Oliver, 1999) and as Natarajan and Sudha, (2016) state a "fear of purchasing and consuming another brand the consumer does not trust," despite situational influences and marketing efforts of competitors (Oliver, 1999). The cognitive process of building loyalty includes building objective beliefs of product superiority followed by a liking toward the brand (Yuping Liu and Tam, 2013). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state the customer experiences include emotional, sensorial and behavioural. So, a brand would typically pass through four stages over its life cycle, each exhibiting different types of consumer behaviour (Pingali 2010); commodity stage (picking

behavior), differentiation stage (variety seeking behavior), problem solving stage and loyalty stage(table 1).

**Table 1: Stages of Building Loyalty and current consumer behaviour**

| | Low uncertainty of untried brands | High Uncertainty of untried brands |
|---|---|---|
| **Low differences between brands** | Stage 1 *Commodity stage*. Consumers look for convenience. Purchase from a convenient place and consumers' evaluation is primarily price convenience trade off. | Stage 4 *Brand loyalty stage* Consumers build trust and become loyal to a brand. Consumers willing to search and/ or wait for the brand. |
| **High differences between brands** | Stage 2 *Differentiation stage*. Consumers try different brands as risk associated with alternate brands is low. Purchases are made from multi brand outlets and consumers' evaluation is price quantity trade-off. | Stage 3 *Product involvement stage* Consumers narrow choice to fewer brands providing better satisfaction and so "fear associated with untried brands increases". Consumers' evaluation based on quality perception and they look for credible sources of information. |

*Note: In a mature market a new brand can start in quadrant 1, 2 or 3 depending on the stage the product category is currently in.*

The process of marketing (building loyalty) would therefore require a brand to move from one stage to another (table 2). Brands in the commodity stage need to differentiate their brands (shift from stage 1 to 2) and ensure that their brands enter the consideration set. Once the brand is differentiated and consumers are in variety seeking stage, the company should increase the involvement during the purchase of the product, whereby ensuring the consumers collect and evaluate information. That is, shift the brand to problem solving stage, (Srinivas and Till 2002). This is when marketing should focus on attribute based positioning. Next the consumer decision process should be modified by shifting to emotional positioning so that the brand evaluation goes into intangibles like trust (shift the brand from stage 3 to 4). In stage 4 the company needs to maintain trust for the brandby focusing on the solution (solution based marketing).

**Table 2: Role of Marketing**

| | Low uncertainty of untried brands | High Uncertainty of untried brands |
|---|---|---|
| **Low differences between brands** | Stage 1: Introduce attribute (differentiate) and shift to stage 2 Eg: Salt: (free flow) | Stage 4: Solution based marketing Eg: Saffola (Protects the heart) |
| **High differences between brands** | Stage 2: Increase importance of attribute and shift to high uncertainty quadrant Eg: Ford Figo hatchback: (Clever Just like you) | Stage 3: Emotional based positioning Eg: Fair and Lovely. (Build confidence) |

Since building loyalty would take time and marketing is focusing on shifting the brand from one stage to another, marketing communications would therefore be different from the communication of selling which focuses on completing today's sale. In other words marketing aims to change the behavior and build loyalty, whereas selling is satisfying today's behavior. For example, when the brand is in variety seeking, marketing focusing on moving the product to high involvement category would be emphasizing on quality and ensure consumers collect information and evaluate experiences as stated by Lemon and Verhoef (2016). Selling, on the other hand, focusing on completing current sales would be satisfying variety seeking behaviour (a low involvement stage) and sales communications would be more about price discounts, trade and consumer schemes (this could explain why salespersons "are said to be myopic and they sell the price as against selling through price" as stated in Kotler et al., 2006). Again moving from problem solving to loyalty stage would require marketing communication to create a trust for a brand (reduce the need for attribute evaluations), whereas selling which has to satisfy the current problem solving behaviour would be providing attribute information to help consumers compare alternate brands, contrary to the communication of marketing. Given the differences in perspectives, the conflict

between marketing and selling is natural and companies need to synchronize the efforts of marketing and selling.

## IV. SYNCHRONIZING MARKETING AND SELLING

Based on the above discussion it is clear that marketing and selling would be having differences in their respective communications. Synchronisation should therefore focus on other selling activities like, the outlets where the brand is made available, the service orientation, the trade motivation as well as the sales force evaluation to help align sales and marketing (table 3).

**Table 3: Selling process to synchronize it with Marketing**

| | Low uncertainty of untried brands | High Uncertainty of untried brands |
|---|---|---|
| **Low differences between brands** | Stage 1: In addition to increasing availability, increase brand visibility. Increase service "at sale" and add conditional post sale. | Stage 4: Focus on Customer base. Follow up with every customer shifting to other brands. Unconditional post-sale service to minimize loss of trust. |
| **High differences between brands** | Stage 2: Ensure consumer acquires knowledge through trial and demonstration (develop shop in shop outlets). Improve product knowledge and skills of the outlets selling the brand. Develop schemes where the brand is bundled with a trusted brand. | Stage 3: Generating positive word of mouth by ensuring complete satisfaction of existing customers. Track individual customers and ensure complete service solutions. Create one stop solution outlets. |

In stage 1 (picking behaviour stage) in addition to increasing availability, sales force should increase brand visibility to ensure the brand enters the consideration set. The sales force should also increase service "at sale" to help buyers increase purchase involvement (Pingali, 2008). These activities while not conflicting with the sales communication would complement the marketing communication of stage 2 (variety seeking behaviour). In stage 2 where the consumers are looking for price-quantity benefit, the sales forces should help the consumers acquire experience attributes through trials and free samples. This could be achieved by improving product knowledge and skills of the outlets selling the brands and developing schemes where the brand is bundled with a trusted brand. These activities should be done without compromising on the brand visibility at the point of sale as the consumers behaviour is variety seeking. In stage 3 in addition to providing information to the consumers, the sales force should focus on building trust. This could be done by generating positive word of mouth by ensuring complete satisfaction of existing customers. This would require tracking individual customers and ensuring complete service solutions. Sales force should also start working at creating one stop solution outlets to support the marketing communication which would start taking about"providing complete solution". In stage 4, the sales force should ensure that there is no loss of trust and their customer base is intact. The sales force could achieve this by ensuring that no customer is dissatisfied by providing unconditional post sales service. In addition, the sales force should follow up with customers shifting to other brands and correct address any concerns causing mistrust or dissatisfaction.

## V. MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

The process of synchronizing selling with marketing would help marketing and selling functions understand the reasons for the communication gap between the two and help them contribute positively to the long term sustainability of the brand. Synchronization of communication between marketing and selling would also help manage the market power in favour of the brand. This would however require a mind-set change from market share to customer base and short term profit to long term sustainability.

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