

A Study on Tupperware Brand Success in The Malaysian Market - Brand And Branding

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ABSTRACT: The efforts of companies to make consumers aware of their products need strong branding strategies. Branding strategies call for correct values or product positioning in the correct market segment. Thus, most companies will consider various factors to capture their customers' loyalty such as the use of strategies to educate, enlighten and empower consumers particularly women. Creativity and innovation play important roles in Tupperware product development. They give Tupperware a competitive advantage over other manufacturers of the same or similar products. Most direct selling companies are struggling to find consistent techniques to capture sales, and Tupperware range of brands have managed to use its 65 year old strategy - home party plan.

Keywords: brand, branding, marketing strategy, competitive advantage, innovative.

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I. Introduction

It has been a lingering question in the minds of many why every plastic container is usually called 'Tupperware', even if it is not of that brand. In almost every home in Malaysia, especially to mothers, the plastic container is commonly referred to as 'Tupperware', regardless of what brand or quality. What has happened here? How did this name 'Tupperware' become a generic product name or a household name? The apparent 'misuse' of this brand name however, has given a competitive advantage to Mr. Tupper ware business.

The new revolution emerged during the world war era in 1946. While other manufacturers were focusing on war efforts, Earl Tupper, an inventor of plastics-like materials, established the Tupperware brands'. Tupper's simple yet wonderful invention had marked the revolution of new plastic versatile materials usage in replacement of traditional containers such as glass bowls and tumblers. With Wonderlier® Bowl and Bell Tumbler to replace the traditional glass and crockery, he offered his first consumer plastic products with a unique benefit of being lighter and less likely-to-break containers. For sixty-five years, Tupperware brands have established their products worldwide using their remarkable sales strategies across the globe. Tupperware sales teams were and still mainly monopolized by women who are mostly housewives. By using the 3E concept of commitment, which are Enlighten, Educate and Empower, the company has successfully lifted and change the lives of women and their families all over the world. This paper will discuss on how the Tupperware Brands came into existence and evolved, and the branding efforts in embedding the brands in the minds of targeted consumers to be a market leader in plastic containers industry.

The Brand

A good product branding campaign usually leads to successful products sale and profits to the business. Brand is defined by The American Marketing Association as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." (Kotler, 2016) Brand set as a promise between the firm and the consumer. In order to retain its' customers loyalty, a firm promises to reliably deliver its products and services together with a set of value added benefits. Tupperware brands get its name from its inventor Earl Tupper. A well-known household name products line, Tupperware products are used in the kitchen and home for food preparation, storage, containment and serving. Most of the products are initially plastic base. Tupperware believes in changing lives and instilling confidence in everyone of its sales force including its customers. Majority of the firm's customers are women and most of them enrolled to be the members and sales team.

II. The Branding

2.1 Brand Positioning

Branding is usually referred to as the process of creating a product's unique name and image in the consumers' mind through advertising campaigns, which leads to brand positioning. In marketing activity, different needs of target market is determined by brand positioning. According to Darling (2007), brand positioning is about building up a clear, distinct, and desirable perception of a product in the mind of the customers in the given market with respect to the competitors' products. By having brand positioning, organization's chances of success rate is maximized. With positioning, company is able to distinguish itself, its products and brands to exceed its competitors in serving its customers (Kalafatis, 2000).

Branding and positioning have become one of the most important aspects of business strategy. Apparently in Tupperware brands business, the branding has been well planned. Let us see the promises given by Tupperware brands products in this context. Let us see the 'promises' made by Tupperware brands products in this business context through the firm's vision, strategy, and core values.

III. The Strategic Blueprint

3.1 The Vision

Through the firm's vision i.e. "We are committed to accelerating profitable revenue growth for the benefit of all our stakeholders," it appears that its commitment in giving value added benefits through its products is very high. Most of its customers soon became its sales team once they are attached to the brand and see the benefits offered. What has the firm done right to gain customers' acceptance and loyalty? It is the firm's effort to enlighten, educate and empower women and their families, which has successfully created this brand loyalty. The benefits came in the form of membership offers, discounted price and profit sharing schemes. This is where the brand has kept its promises to its stakeholders.

3.2 The Values

The company claims to be a company founded by innovation and it does 'walk the talk' by producing innovative products with the issues of health, security and innovation in mind. Tupperware Brands is committed and very passionate about achieving. Tupperware successfully customized its products to meet a particular need in the designated country once it has decided to execute market penetration strategies. For example, Tupperware sells its Japanese Bento Box in Japan and produces Kimchi Keeper for the Korean market. As such, it extends its hand in changing lives; ignite a global community, especially women, to realize their best 'selves' through opportunity, enrichment, celebration, and above all uplifting relationships. It encourages housewives to earn reasonable income by joining its sales teams. The firm's sales teams are continuously motivated to excel through designated recognitions. As a result, it created a chain of confidence among them.

3.3 The Strategy

Tupperware products are available in nearly 100 markets around the world, offering culturally distinct and customised items. It has given promises that customers can count on the consistent quality and extraordinary design in these countries. Since its home party and direct marketing strategy have made Tupperware brands famous, let us now see what are the strategic blueprint adopted by Tupperware Brands;

3.4 Developing innovative products with great designs

No doubt, customers are crazy with Tupperware innovative designs. Some will make an effort to buy as their collective items. The creative uses of colors, safest, and hygienic materials have gained this brand its competitive advantage over other plastic containers in the market. Its continuous effort in research and development take into account the sensitivity of one's culture or practices. Thus, it can be seen that every design is unique and attractive in the market segment of a country.

In Malaysia, Tupperware products are designed to meet its humid climate and the local society's demand. For example, the one-touch airtight Tupperware containers are famous for its ability to keep food fresh and lock bacteria out for duration longer than ordinary plastic container. Another Tupperware container that is high in demand in Malaysia is the Freezer Mate collection. This container can retain food freshness in freezer without deterioration of its quality. These products are the proof of promises, which the firm has committed to deliver to its stakeholders.

3.4.1 Creating entertaining selling situations

As a wholly owned subsidiary of its parent company Tupperware Brands, Tupperware is an international distributor who carries out the whole product cycle from research and development, manufacturing plus distribution of its products. By using direct selling strategy, it hires close to 1.9 million marketers on contract basis.

Tupperware's Marketing and Distribution Model

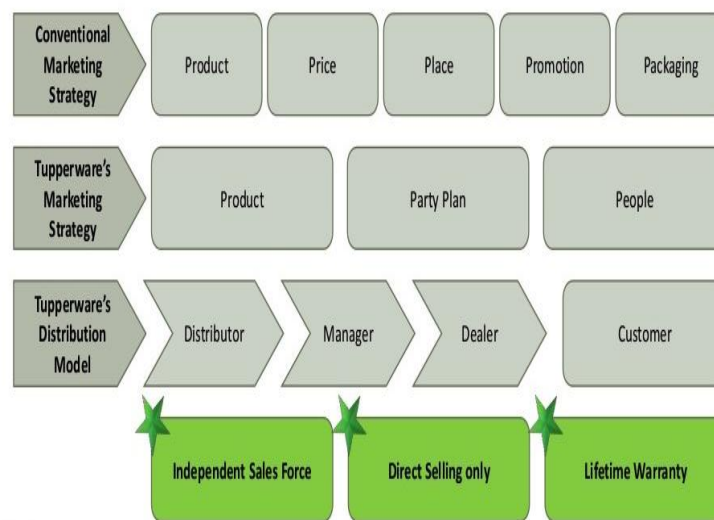


Figure1: Tupperware's Marketing and Distribution Model

Figure 1 illustrates Tupperware’s overall marketing and distribution framework. The whole marketing plan of the Tupperware business was introduced by Brownie Wise who was hired in 1946 and soon promoted as the vice president of Tupperware in 1951. After its failure in creating demand through the introduction of its products in hardware department stores, Tupperware Vice President’s, Wise introduced The Party Plan marketing strategy. This plan focuses on women as their prime sellers and consumers.

3 P's of Tupperware

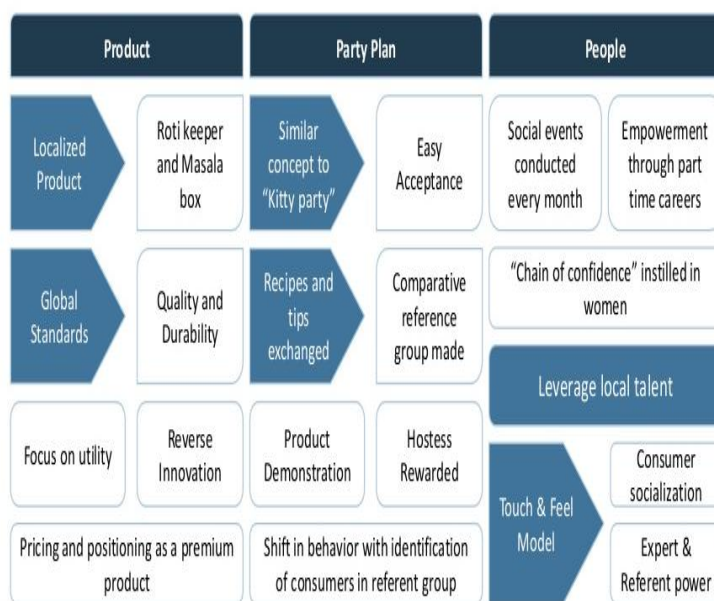


Figure2: 3P's of Tupperware

Through the Party Plan, a marketing method was designed in such a way to include the 3P’s marketing strategy which are Product, Party Plan and People. With this method, Tupperware products are introduced to consumers in the comfort of their home, using a friendly and leisurely manner. Consumers feel attached and have sense of belonging resulting in brand loyalty. It is of no wonder that Tupperware Brands have managed to expand its products range in most of the 100 countries successfully using this party plan direct selling approach. In Malaysia, the marketing arm is being recognized by having group appreciation events regularly. Those who

just join as members will be recognized in this specially event, and serves as a motivator for this new comer to find sales and meet the given target. This will leads to next point of Tupperware branding success.

3.4.2 Offering sales team compelling earnings and leadership development opportunities

Tupperware's next strategy that contributes to this product branding is awarding its sales team with a lucrative income together with the leadership development plan. Upon signing, the new member or dealer is given briefings with regards to the business activities. He or she will also be given a set of business startup toolkits to help him or her start the business. From time to time, these new marketers are called for business planning workshops, which is usually arranged for those who are serious running this business. Since Tupperware business depends highly on social bonding, it can be seen that the relationship association between the distributor and dealers is so close. Peven (1968), argued that the home party sales organizations usually use techniques similar to religious revivals to help control their independent sales force.

The planning and arrangement of this leadership development comes with attractive reward packages in Malaysia. For example, those who achieve given target as the manager and move to the distributor level, and achieved this manager's target for three (3) consecutive months will receive a fixed bonus of 500 Ringgit Malaysia for duration of six (6) months or more. For those who achieve top group sales will also receive holiday packages together with some pocket money for the holidays. Tupperware Malaysia also do awards those top sales producer with their dream car as a motivator to make more sales for the company.

3.3.4 Employing dynamics direct selling fundamentals

The most important direct selling fundamentals adopted by Tupperware in Malaysia and throughout the globe is the networking. The bigger the network the more sales it will get. An academic analysis done on Tupperware by Biggart (1989), discussed how it works, as a network direct-selling organization. Tupperware is the winner in this networking segment. Brownie Wise once showed how the power of women network was through the home party plan in selling the Tupperware products, and its has become the most reliably and successful way of direct selling approach. This method is widely being practiced in most of the direct selling businesses in Malaysia. Nowadays, the modernization of digital media has seen the social media network being adopted to match the direct selling face-to-face method. There are pros and cons to this approach of networking. This could be studied further to see the positive or/and negative impacts of social media marketing towards direct selling business.

IV. THE CONCLUSION

The discussion above have shown the success of Tupperware Malaysia branding efforts in sustaining its sales and presence in this direct selling market and plastic container business. Among the numerous direct selling companies that exist in Malaysia, Tupperware is seen to be leading the home party plan, face-to-face direct selling method used in creating sales. Continuous research and development together with the creativity in fulfilling society's needs and cultures has also helped Tupperware to strengthen its brand loyalty. Tupperware Brands never sacrifice the quality and safety in its products development. Those features make Tupperware products stand out against any other plastic container products in the market. With its motto i.e. to inspire innovation and changing lives for most women, Tupperware has made its successful presence not just in Malaysia but worldwide. The digital age has seen selling methods or marketing strategies make their 360 degree turn. With social media network, marketing can be done 24/7, which means 24 hours around the clock and seven days a week so-to-speak. Market reach of this kind of network is borderless. Customers can be reached globally regardless of where the product is. Therefore, with regards to future studies, this paper proposes a thorough study on the pros and cons of this social media marketing towards the direct selling businesses in Malaysia and throughout the world.

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