



**THE IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING AS A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL
FOR MICRO AND SMALL COMPANIES.**

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abstract

The inclusion of the marketing plan in the management of companies is a way to keep it oriented to the market, which will allow it to connect more with customers and will bring a favorable return, regardless of its industry or its size. However, micro and small companies have an inert attitude towards marketing planning, as culturally microentrepreneurs believe that this tool is only for large corporations and others are based on strategies, but do not have a plan. This research aimed to contribute to the growth and development of small organizations. Thus, this study aimed to present the importance of marketing as a strategic management tool for micro and small companies based on theoretical contributions.

Key words:Marketing Planning. Strategic management. Microenterprises.

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1. Introduction

The current moment is one of innovations, opportunities and challenges for companies. It is time for transformation, exasperated competition and demanding clientele and this is a reflection of a very competitive environment. In view of this event, it becomes indispensable to search for strategies and tools as a management aid, however the marketing planning becomes adequate, resolute and guiding the companies' actions, regardless of their size or their segment. After all, organizations that find themselves focused on the market and direct their strategies to meet customer needs will have a greater chance of success.

According to Kotler and Keller (2006), planning strategically means being in harmony with the market, aiming at adapting the company to the various opportunities that appear, always evaluating the available resources and the pursued objectives. For Cobra (1985), marketing planning allows organizations to react quickly to turbulence in the environment and to better exploit market opportunities, often giving them the opportunity to develop new strategies. In this sense, the general objective of this study is to present the importance of marketing as a strategic management tool for micro and small companies that throughout the article will be identified by the acronym MPEs. For this, this research goes through the following specific objectives: to identify marketing as a management tool;

The importance of this study for organizations is the opportunity to see how marketing planning can be used as a management tool, leveraging it in the market. With the expansion of competition, the use of marketing and its interests must be established as a way of acquiring competitive advantage, adapting it to the reality of the company. In short, business organizations use this tool to add value to their offered product or service. According to the literature, marketing has the role of making selling and / or offering services easier. With a well-designed approach to its compounds, management can become easier. Although the topic is discussed among most managers, few still know how to develop a harmonious approach to its aspects.

Studying marketing planning in small companies is very topical, both for its importance and for the high number of MSEs in the national economy. These are major drivers in terms of job creation, source of income, among others. Micro and small companies have a prominent role in the country. In 2001, MSEs represented 23.2% of the Gross Domestic Product. In 2011, this percentage increased to 27%. In absolute figures at the time,

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this meant an increase from R \$ 144 billion in 2001 to R \$ 599 billion in 2011. With this, the survival of MSEs became important for the country's economic development. However, surveys show that in 2010, 58% of small businesses ended their activities before completing five years (SEBRAE, 2011a; 2015b; PORTAL BRASIL, 2012).

This is a research of an applied nature that for Collis and Hussey (2005), this type of research aims at the application of their discoveries in the solution of a problem. Classified as a bibliographic research that, according to Gil (1999), this technique seeks to find the primary and secondary sources and the technological scientific materials necessary for carrying out scientific or technical-scientific work. Finally, this article will allow micro and small companies to research the material and rethink both their strategies and their marketing planning, thus raising growth and development in the market.

2 Marketing as a Strategic Management tool

According to Gimenez and Mintzberg (1996), [...] within the intense literature on strategy, there is no universally accepted definition. For them, the strategy is an integrated and coordinated set of commitments and actions that aims to explore essential competencies and achieve a competitive advantage. Therefore, such definitions move towards the establishment of premeditated actions, that is, planned to achieve a certain objective, whether it be an advantage or a political constitution.

According to Cobra (1995, p.16), "to strategically plan is to create conditions for organizations to decide quickly in the face of opportunities and threats, optimizing the competitive advantages in relation to the competitive environment in which they operate". Therefore, administrative management needs a strategy for the continuous search for customer satisfaction. The needs of the clientele are constantly changing, so the organization needs to anticipate these changes in order to have competitive advantages.

For Cobra (2005), strategic planning is an administrative action that aims to predict the future environment and the challenges that an organization must face, defining the crucial decisions for strategic direction. Most research focuses on what the strategy is, but little is known about how to choose a specific strategy, as well as the actions necessary to carry it out.

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The authors Peter and Donnelly (1986), warn that by integrating strategic management and marketing, fundamentals are pointed out that guide strategies, based on the needs and desires of consumers and the objectives of the organization. These fundamentals are related to the study of prices, promotion of ideas, products and services.

Marketing tends to understand the customer's needs and expectations in order to satisfy him, as well as adapt to the changes that occur in the market. Kotler (1998), conceptualizes marketing as analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs that aim to provide voluntary exchanges of values or utilities with the target market, with the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. Therefore, marketing takes place before any sale, involves planning and is a management process. The marketing objectives in an organization is to ensure survival and serve the market effectively, making the company achieve its objectives and the results expected by users. For Fernandes and Berton (2005), the objectives are: to increase profit margin, market share and customer satisfaction.

Developing a strategy within this whole context must detail the market that the company will focus on, but for this it is necessary that those involved in this process direct enthusiasm and commitment in the segments considered to be more advantageous in relation to the competition, because in this way, says Kotler (1998), it is possible to develop a marketing strategy for each chosen segment.

A company needs a strategy so as not to make the mistake of performing the same activities as its competitors, as these must at least have relevant differences. For Porter (1986), a company that has a robust strategy, that is, that has strengths that differentiate it from its competitors' strategy, is what characterizes it to have strategy. According to Kotler (1998) for marketing strategies to be really effective, in the sense of bringing a competitive differential, they must be designed in a way that adapts to the needs of consumers and faces those of competitors.

3 Market Research and Analysis

Knowing that strategic marketing actions are related to the 4 P's. McCarthy (1966 apud Kotler, 1998) formulated and popularized the concept of the 4 P's to characterize the

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mix, or marketing mix: product, price, square (distribution) and promotion. P's represent the four basic variables that make up a company's operating strategy in the market. From a buyer's point of view, each tool in the marketing mix is designed to deliver a benefit to the consumer. Kotler (1998), suggested that the 4 P's of the salespeople correspond to the 4 C's of the consumers: consumer needs and desires, cost to the consumer, convenience and communication. Thus, companies that seek to differentiate their practices from their competitors, seeking to meet consumer needs in an economical, convenient,

Marketing research is capable of “designing and implementing successful marketing programs”, according to Malhotra (2006, p. 36), and will provide managers with relevant information that can be used to formulate effective marketing strategies. There are several definitions for marketing research, but Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 98) consider it “as the elaboration, collection, analysis and editing of systematic reports of data and relevant findings about a specific marketing situation faced by a company ”.

Market analysis is an investigation that can be done before making an action plan and allows management to minimize the risks of entering the statistics of companies that declare bankruptcy before they are two years old. To conduct a survey, you should examine the websites of competitors, government agencies, trade associations and public or private research institutes; commercial and scientific journals; product communities; chat rooms; or even posing as a “mysterious buyer”. In this way, the administrator will learn about the market and create a marketing strategy to attract more customers than the competition.

4 Marketing in Micro and Small Business Management - MSEs

Currently, in the intense environment of change, the only certainty in the business world is that companies that do not have a defined marketing plan, "shoot" all over the place, in an unfocused way, causing waste of time and resources (human and financial). In this sense, marketing planning is able to manage and create strategies with more security for organizations. MSEs in Brazil have great difficulty in carrying out a marketing strategy, in addition, these companies usually lack people with the skills to do it.

Longenecker (1997, p. 42), cites the limited financial conditions of small companies, however, believes that the causes of failures are “related to the quality of management, including the lack of business knowledge, lack of experience in the business and the lack of

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management experience ”. For Pinto (2007), management is a very complex act, encompassing a set of concepts and practices that allow the company to operationalize its activities.

According to Longenecker (1997, p. 419), it is important to be aware that as the small business grows “its management task becomes more complex, and its management methods must become more sophisticated”. In this way, according to SAVIANI (1994, p. 72) “working looking towards tomorrow and its consequent economic, social, commercial and technical changes needs to be a constant”.

According to Ribeiro (1998 p. 157), marketing presupposes being connected, in tune with the client, with the market, with the business and with the changes that occur. For the author, the fact that it is a small company should not be used as an excuse for an unprofessional posture in the market. And he complements “professionalism has nothing to do with size, but with posture”. Marketing requires effort and continuous willingness to improve. If it were easy everyone would do it.

In competition, each corporation seeks strategic differentials to stand out in the market. In the view of Rocha and Christensen (1999, p.15), “the company is constantly threatened with losing its position due to: changes in the environment; changes in consumer behavior and / or changes in the actions of competitors ”. Thus, it is essential to use marketing as a management tool. For Pinto (2007, p. 59), once the company wants to compete with strategies, “it needs to understand competitive behavior as an interactive system composed of competitors, customers, people, resources and financial capital”.

It is extremely important to identify and research the competition, in order to monitor your expansion plans in terms of tactics, objectives, strengths and weaknesses. In competition, each company acts and reacts differently. Some act in the market, others react quickly, stronger than others. There is no way to predict how the competition will react, it is necessary to be attentive to market signals. Kotler and Armstrong (1998, p. 409), consider that, “companies gain a competitive advantage when planning offers that satisfy the mosttarget consumer needs than competitors' offers. ”

For Kloter and Armstrong (1998, p. 23), "in small companies, managers think that only large corporations need formal planning". However, formalized planning will bring more

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benefits to companies, whether large, micro and small, new or already established in the market. The authors refer to planning as a way of encouraging management “to think ahead in a systematic way, forces the company to sharpen its objectives and policies, leads to better coordination of efforts and clearer performance standards”.

The authors Kotler and Keller (2006), indicate that marketing plans are becoming more focused on customers and competitors, assuming the dimension of a continuous process capable of responding to rapid changes in market conditions. Regardless of the form, the important thing is to put the marketing plan into practice in the companies, monitor its evolution, take corrective actions if necessary and promote the company's growth in a planned way.

Table 1 shows the model adapted from Longenecker (1997), which recommends the sections that should compose the marketing plan:

Table 1: Marketing plan actions.

Market analysis: includes the description of customer profiles in the target market and, also, can include a sales forecast (optimistic and pessimistic).
Competition analysis: one cannot ignore the reality of competition, so they must be studied carefully.
Marketing strategy: marketing strategies that must be addressed in the marketing plan: product, promotional plans, distribution and price.

Table 1: Sections of a Marketing plan.

Source: Adapted from (LONGENECKER, 1997).

The marketing plan is a tool that serves as a guide for the company, capable of leveraging it in the market, without a more or less adequate standard for each sector. However, there is only the need to adapt each model according to the premises and characteristics of the company. For Campomar and Ikeda (2006, p.127), the marketing plan must consist of the following parts: I) Situation analysis - internal and external analysis, weaknesses and strengths, threats and opportunities; II) Objectives; III) Action program; IV) Control.

In Rocha and Christensen's (1999, p.277) view, the “marketing plan aims to provide answers to three major strategic questions: I. What is our current position with regard to

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customers and markets? II. What position do we want to occupy in the future with respect to these customers and markets? III. How can we move from the current situation to the desired situation? ”.

It is undeniable that the market is not as it was before. And for Kotler and Keller (2006 p. 11), "he is radically different, due to important and sometimes interconnected social forces that created behaviors, opportunities and challenges". We are in time to disseminate information quickly, extremely demanding customers, more prepared companies, among other factors. In such a way, marketing needs to follow this maturity by discovering modern ways to approach customers.

5 Final Considerations

As stated by Ribeiro (1998, p. 9), “the company can be small, the entrepreneur cannot”. Based on this assumption, micro and small businesses are important for the country, since they generate employment and income. However, MSEs see marketing in a simplistic way and believe that doing so boils down to doing commercials, distributing brochures or having a website. Seeing marketing in this way, in addition to wasting resources, over time, can result in the failure of an enterprise. Marketing is not a guarantee of success, but including it as a management tool will facilitate the company's survival in the market and decrease the chances of error.

The current scenario of extreme competition absolutely influences the survival and development of organizations. There are fantastic, organized and responsible micro and small companies, but they do not take advantage of the possibilities of marketing and do not have strategies to increase their clientele. MSEs lack new management tools, in order to differentiate themselves from competitors in terms of innovation, but for this to happen, it is necessary to use marketing strategies more effectively. The marketing plan becomes a tool capable of guiding the company and deciding precise actions and strategies, both in loyalty and in prospecting for new customers, after all the value chain of any company must have its clientele as its most important point .

It should also be noted that the use of marketing as a strategic management tool can be feasible for companies of any size, it is enough to appropriate it to the reality of each one. Of

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course, the company's systemic vision is essential for the effectiveness of this tool. There is no point in having a marketing plan if it does not match the reality of the company, or if the strategies are unfeasible and do not reach the target audience. To have an effect, it is necessary to substantiate the plan, control all the strategies and actions developed and adjust it when necessary.

Finally, this article presented at the Leonardo da Vinci University Center to obtain the title of specialist in strategic administration, becomes a wide space for management studies, deepening the theme of the importance of marketing as a strategic management tool for micro and small companies and the extent to which adequate planning and tactics can positively impact the company, promoting its growth, development and business survival.

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