

Amelioration of Decline Stage: As Engine of Consumable Products in a Digitized World

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Abstract

The study scrutinized amelioration of decline stage: as engine of consumable products in a digitized world. Problem situation is the inability of a firm's management to monitor its product life cycle. The specific objective examined on how to re-introduce as engine of consumable products in a digitized world among others. Research question is to what extent does a firm's management re-introduces as engine of consumable products in a digitized world among others. Research hypothesis is there is no significant relationship between a declined consumable products and re-introduction as engine of consumable products in a digitized world among others. Review of related literature looked inward at product life cycle, theory of product life cycle propounded by Vernon (1979) and empirical review. Survey research design was utilized. Area of study was relief market Obodoukwu Road, Onitsha. Population of the study was intermediaries of beverage products. The sample size was 62, but 50 copies of questionnaire were used and duly filled. Two point likert scale of questioning was adopted. The study found out that applying and embarking on promotional activities and sales promotional tools would always project a product before prospects and consumers as a product brand that would never get to decline stage. The study concluded that for a product brand to remain in the field of sales and complete effectively among competitors, the firm's management will always be conversant with the situation of product life cycle. The study recommended that the firm's management should embark on re-introduction, innovation and awareness creation among others.

Keywords: *Amelioration, Decline stage, Engine, Consumable product and Digitized world.*

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Background to the Study

Amelioration is to better a situation in order to make difficulties take a good shape. Decline stage is a situation in the product life cycle, where a product can as well be possibly withdrawn from the market. Firm's management has to be very conversant with the stage, its product is, at the cycle, in order to ameliorate when it gets to decline stage. At decline stage the tendency that the product will be withdrawn is very possible. Decline stage, is very dicey. It is dicey because there are too many competitors in the field of sales.

At this decline stage amelioration becomes an engine of consumable products in a digitized world. Engine, is envisaged as anything used to affect a purpose, any device or contrivance, an agent. A tool, a utensil or implement a person or group of people which influence a larger group, a driving force. Digitize, is comprehended to quantize a continuous or analog value, to convert it into a discrete value. The world is seen as human collective existence.

Consumable products are products that can be used or consumed by consumers in order to satisfy their needs. That is why it is pertinent to reveal the product attributes to the consumers. A product is a commodity preferred for sale; after production. A product is perceived as a need satisfying, offering by a firm. According to Skålén, and Hackley, (2011) product is the most tangible and important single component of the marketing programme. Dinnie, (2015) opined that product is the most important and basic level of the total production without it there will be no production. Products are the attributes that fulfil the customer's most basic need from the consumer's point of view (Kuratko, 2016). In the view of Boone, and Kurtz, (2013) products are the building blocks of a marketing plan. It is the engine that pulls the rest of the marketing programme. Product is one of the evidence of production in a marketing mix and usually makes up the main agenda of marketing (Dinnie, 2015).

It is very professional for firm's management to monitor its product life cycle. So many marketing activities need to be done at decline stage for the product to be re-introduced and start all over again through the product life cycle. The firm's management can embark on product innovation; by way of re-packaging the product and the product quality to make it new before the consumers. Once these marketing activities have taken care of, awareness will be created. Awareness creation will draw consumers' attention, interest, desire and action. The amelioration exercise practiced by the firm's management will be the engine that will project the firm's products in a digitized world.

Using Nido Milk product, as a focal point, these days Nido milk is not easily reached effectively by consumers. Nido Milk is hardly seen in, on, or at retail outlet shelves. From every indication, Nido milk is a good product, but the price is very exorbitant to afford.

Statement of the Problem

This study revealed that, if a product is not sold after production marketing has not taken place. That is why it is pertinent to firm's management to always monitor its product life cycle. Problem evolves when a firm's management could monitor its product life cycle to identify when its product is at decline stage. Decline stage is very dicey for every product and if care is not taken possible withdrawal of the product will take place. This is observed as product failure.

The product will fail to exist because consumers of the product will no longer have access to the product. However, the market is highly competitive. Other competitors without wasting time will take over the market and by so doing there will be a brand switch.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine amelioration of decline stage: as engine of consumable products in a digitized world. Using Nido Milk product as a study. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine on how to re-introduce as engine of consumable products in a digitized world.
2. Examine on how to innovate as engine of consumable products in a digitized world.
3. Ensure that awareness is created as engine of consumable products in a digitized world.

Research Questions

This study has these research questions to attend to; the research questions are:

1. To what extent does a firm's management re-introduce as engine of consumable products in a digitized world?
2. To what extent does a firm's management innovate as engine of consumable products in a digitized world?
3. To what extent does a firm's management create awareness as engine of consumable products in a digitized world?

Research Hypotheses

These research hypotheses have to be tested. The research hypotheses are:

HO: I. There is no significant relationship between a declined consumable products and re-introduction as engine of consumable products in a digitized world.

HO: II. There is no significant relationship between a declined consumable products and innovations as engine of consumable products in a digitized world.

HO: III. There is no significant relationship between a declined consumable products and awareness as engine of consumable products in a digitized world.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

It is very vital that every company's management monitors and manages every stage of its product life cycle, especially the decline stage. It is recorded that management of product life cycle, is an integral part of every product. By monitoring and managing every stage of product life cycle, it means that the firm's management ameliorates the product life cycle, when it gets to decline stage or possible withdrawal. The life cycle stages products are expected to go through are as follow:

i. Product Development: At this stage ideas are from the staff of the firm, suppliers, intermediaries, board of directors etc. product development involves research and development. At this stage the company's management spends a lot of fund to see the new

product through. Sales are normally zero because the product is not yet known by the target audience.

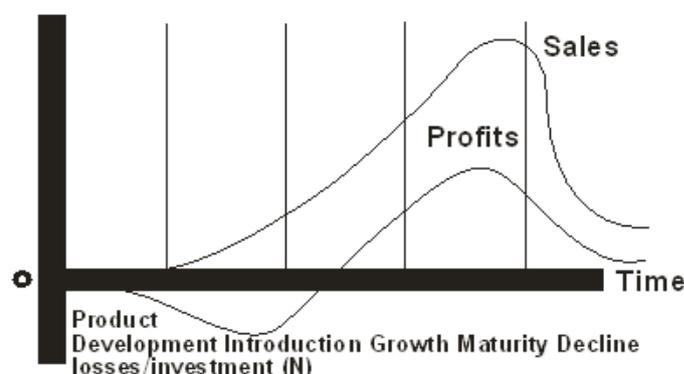
ii. Introduction: At this stage, a new product must have been created and the firm's management wants to present the product to the public. The firm will embark on promotional programs effectively to reach the target audience. The promotional tools that can be used are advertising, personal selling, publicity, public relations, sales promotion, merchandising, sponsorship and direct marketing. These promotional tools are adopted to create awareness and gain a position in the market. At this stage sales takes place gradually, profit will be expected later, more money will be fixed for marketing communication.

iii. Growth: At this stage the product has diffused, it has penetrated into the market. The ultimate consumers must have become conversant with the product. The end users may become brand loyal because they may have preferred the product brand due to its quality. The ultimate consumers will engage in referral that is by “word of mouths” many prospects will become eager to be customers and there will be a repeat purchase which actually leads to product growth.

iv. Maturity: At maturity stage many other competitors must have emerged in the market. The competitors will also engage in integrated promotional effort. Some consumers that are not loyal enough will decide to try the new product in the market in order, to know the difference. Sales and profit, already existing will be minimal. Mostly, the firm's management at this stage plans for product innovation. This innovation is to start the product life cycle all over again and will remain in business.

v. Decline: At this stage competitors take over the market. The firm's sales and profit will decline. At this stage also firm's management withdraws the product from the market because of stiff competition engages innovation. This is the reason why firm's management should monitor and manage every stage of product life cycle in order not to withdraw its product from the market.

Figure 1: Product life cycle



Source: Armstrong, G; and Kotler, P; (2013). Marketing an introduction (11th ed), prentice hall, upper saddle river, New Jersey.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of product life cycle

The theory of product life cycle was propounded by Vernon (1979). The theory explained that from the invention of a product to its demise due to lack of demand; product goes through four stages: introduction, growth, maturity and decline. The duration of these stages is not fixed. The duration of the product phases depends largely on the demand for the product in the market and to some extent, the costs of production and the revenues that the product generates. If the product remains in demand for a long period of time and the costs of product will be longer. On the other hand, if the cost of production is too high and the demand is largely limited, then the product will die sooner. Hence, it is not possible to predict the cycle's duration.

Significant of the theory of the study

The goal of managing a product's life cycle is to maximize its value and profitability at each stage. Life cycle is primarily associated with marketing theory. Decline strategies are also referred to as defensive strategies and are pursued when company's management finds itself in a vulnerable position as a result of poor management, inefficiency and in effectiveness.

Empirical Review

Ohazulike; (2018) carried out a study on influence of product packaging on customer's choice of consumable products in Nigeria. The objective is to examine influence of product packaging on customer's choice of consumable products in Nigeria. The problem is that some manufacturing firm's do not prominently exhibit adequate information on the package. The study adopted view theory. Survey research design was applied. The population was consumers of products packaged with plastic materials in Igbariam Town. The sample size was one hundred and sixty (160). Method utilized was distribution of questionnaires. The study found out that a well packaged product will protect the product content against adverse weather and on transit against damage by heavy objects, at least to an extent. The study recommended that National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and control (NAFDAC) should conduct symposium for manufacturing firms and make strict warning to place adequate information on product packages. The study concluded by directing the end users of product to always insist on information written on the product package and to be mindful of how to make use or dispose of the product wrapper afterwards.

Dudu and Agwu; (2014) conducted a study on a review of the effect of pricing strategies on the purchase of consumer goods. The study adopted descriptive and historical, relied heavily and solely on secondary instruments as sources of data. The study found out that customers will pay more for a product if they believe it is commensurate with the value they place on the product which may be as a result of extra benefits derived or enjoyed from consumption of the product. The study concluded that proper pricing strategies or a blend of strategies also increase demand. The study recommends that as much as firm's should focus on communicating value to customers through prices, firm's should also be on the watch for competitor's prices and examine how much it affects purchase of their products.

Ricko, Hartoyo and Megawati; (2017) carried out a study on the impact of product quality, services quality and customer loyalty program perception and retail customer attitude. The study was descriptive analysis, analysis by ANOVA and also inferential analysis by using structural equation model (SEM). The study found out by indicating that from the factors that influence the attitudes of retail customers of the three variables tested, only one dominant factor which influences the attitude of retail customers, which is the perception of the product quality. The study concluded by showing that the perception of product quality also affects sales volume significantly, the greater the perception of the quality of cement product, the greater the volume of sales generated by the retail customer. The study recommended that it could also be a suggestion for cement producers in terms of consistency of maintaining and improving the quality of cement products and give perception of the quality of cement product more intensively.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted survey research design. Survey research design reveals how amelioration of decline stage can be an engine of consumable product in a digitized world. It proves that a product at decline stage can equally start its cycle all over again.

Area of the study

This study was carried out in relief market Obodoukwu Road Onitsha. This beverage market is situated at Obodoukwu road by Onitsha – Owerri road in Anambra State.

Population of the study

Population of the study was intermediaries of beverage products in this highly esteemed market. The intermediaries consulted were sixty two (62) in the relief market at Obodoukwu road, Onitsha. Source: Field survey, 2020.

Sampling Plan

Sample plan, consists of sample designs, which refer to the different ways, a researcher draw samples from any given population according to Nnamdi (1991). Sampling plan comprises of sample unit, sample size, sample method and sample procedure. The sample unit concerns the intermediaries in relief market Obodoukwu road, Onitsha. The sample size of the study was sixty two (62). Out of 62, fifty (50) respondents duly filled their copies of questionnaire and the copies were used for the study. Method applied was the distribution of questionnaire. The procedure utilized was non-probability sampling and the type applied was the convenience or accidental sampling procedure.

Data Presentation and Analysis

On the collection of the copies of questionnaire, it was reckoned that fifty (50) copies were to be in a useful form.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	07	14
Male	43	86
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey, April, 2020.

From the data extracted, seven (07) female respondents were intermediaries and the percentage was (14%). While forty three (43) male respondents were intermediaries and the percentage was (86%).

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	05	10
25-34	17	34
35-44	15	30
45-54	10	20
55-64	03	06
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey, April, 2020.

Eighteen (18) to twenty four (24) years were five (05) respondents which resulted to (10%). Twenty five (25) to thirty four (34) years were seventeen (17) respondents which amounted to (34%). Thirty five (35) to forty four (44) years were fifteen (15) respondents which were (30%). Forty five (45) to fifty four (54) years were ten (10) respondents which were (20%). Fifty five (55) to Sixty four (64) years were three (03) and the percentage was (06%).

Table 3: Level of Education of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	02	04
Primary	08	16
Post primary	27	54
Tertiary	13	26
Total	50	100

Source: Field survey, April, 2020.

The data divulged that two (02) respondents had no formal education and the percentage was (04%). Eight (08) respondents obtained primary education which resulted to (16%). Twenty seven (27) respondents bagged post primary education and the percentage was (54). While thirteen (13) had tertiary education and the percentage was (26%).

Table 4: Analysis of Attitude Questions

S/N	Question	Agree	Disagree
1	Does firm's management of Nido Milk product frequently engage on promotional programs?	08 (16%)	42 (84%)
2	Does firm's management of Nido Milk product utilize any promotional tools?	05 (10%)	45 (90%)
3	Does firm's management pay more attention to its firm's products than Nido Milk product?	48 (96%)	02 (04%)
4	Does firm's management issue promotional items to intermediaries of the firm?	34 (68%)	16 (32%)
5	Does the firm's management in any way re-introduce Nido milk product?	09 (18%)	41 (82%)
6	Does the firm's management in any way innovates Nido Milk product?	03 (06%)	47 (94%)
7	Does the firm's management in any way create awareness?	05 (10%)	45 (90%)

Analysis of Likert Question

1. The researcher obliged to know the respondent's opinion in relief market, Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), Eight (08) agree that firm's management of Nido Milk product frequently engage on promotional programmes; which resulted to (16%). While forty two (42) disagree that firm's management of Nido Milk product frequently engage on promotional programmes and the percentage was (84%).
2. The researcher required to know the respondents opinion in relief market, Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), five (05) agree that firm's management of Nido Milk product utilize any promotional tool, which was (10%). Which forty five (45) disagree that firm's management of Nido Milk product utilize any promotional tools, which resulted to (90%).
3. The researcher sought to know the respondents opinion in relief market, Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), forty eight (48) agree that firm's management pay more attention to its firm's product than Nido Milk product. Out of fifty (50), forty eight (48) agree which was (96%). While two (02) disagree which resulted to (04%).
4. The researcher demanded to know the respondents opinion in relief market Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), thirty four (34) agree that firm's management issue promotional items to intermediaries of the firm's, which was (68%). While sixteen (16) respondents disagree that firm's management issue promotional items to intermediaries of the firm, which was (34%).
5. The researcher sought to know the respondents opinion in relief market Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), nine (09) agree that firm's management in any way re-introduce Nido Milk product, which was (18%). Forty one (41) respondents disagree that firm's management in any way re-introduce Nido Milk product, which was (82%).

6. The researcher enquired to know the respondents opinion in relief market Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), three (03) respondents agree that firm's management in any way innovate Nido Milk product which resulted to (06%). While forty seven (47) respondents disagree that firm's management in any way that firm's management in any way innovate Nido Milk product and the percentage was (94%).
7. The researcher enquired to know the respondents opinion in relief market Onitsha. Out of fifty (50), five (05) agree that firm's management in any way create awareness and the percentage was (10%). While forty five (45) respondents disagree that firm's management in any way create awareness and the percentage was (90%).

Findings

The study showcased that pertinent and excellent decision made by a firm's management by applying and embarking on promotional activities and sales promotional tools would always project a product, before prospects and consumers, as a product brand that would never get to decline stage.

However, the firm's management will solely depend on integrating the promotional activities and sales promotional tools. Once, the product brand is at the verge of decline stage, by application of integration of promotional activities and sales promotional tools the product brand will be re-introduced. Once, the product brand is innovated by applying integrated promotional activities and sales promotional tools, product brand will begin the product life cycle all over again. By embarking on integrated promotional activities and promotional tools; the firm's management is creating awareness to prospects and consumers.

Conclusion

The study concluded that for a product brand to remain in the field of sales and compete effectively among competitors; the firm's management will always be conversant with the situation of product life cycle. This goes to explain that the firm's manager will be eager to ameliorate once the product brand wants to get into decline stage.

The study, divulges that firm's manager will be willing and able to re-introduce, innovate and create awareness. By so doing the product brand will not be declined or eventually be possibly withdrawn.

Recommendations

The study recommended that these facts should be applied. The facts are:

1. The firm's management should embark on re-introduction, innovation and awareness creation.
2. The study also recommended that the firm's management should embark on integration of promotional activities such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, sponsorship and merchandising, resellers support and direct marketing.
3. The study as well recommended that the firm's management should embark on integration of sales promotional tools, such as point of purchase items, premium, price off or rebate, free samples combination offer, coupon, contest and sweepstakes.

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