

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE SEASONAL OFFERS AT MANNAR RETAIL STORES

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ABSTRACT

Seasonal marketing strategies are aimed to increase the seasonal marketing sales. Retailers expect that seasonal promotions encourage more customers and recurrence purchases. Retailers practice variety of seasonal offer marketing strategies to improve their sales with the support of marketing mixes. Even though many seasonal strategies available in the retail sector, nonsystematic promotions are done by the retailers in several places. Lack of practical oriented researches to guide the retailers, created a gap for this research. Many researchers studied the specific product or promotional strategies as empirical works. This research investigated seasonal marketing strategies adopted by the retailers, and the consumer responses towards these seasonal marketing strategies. This study compared the strategies in the literatures and the strategies adopted by the retailers in Mannar district. The samples of 25 retailers and 50 customers were chosen to partake in this qualitative study based on purposive sampling method. Findings show, that all the strategies identified from the literatures were not espoused by the retailers, diverse retailers adopt different strategies. For the diverse outlets, customers are attracted by few seasonal based marketing strategies. This study suggested that context specific marketing strategies for seasonal offers are preferred by the customers. Further this study recommends to the retailers, that seasonal strategies can be improved and implemented, those which are stated in the literatures. Further this study has managerial implementation that consumer feedback is important before introducing seasonal marketing strategies. Retailers can implement seasonal based strategies based on context specific features as well as the consumer feedback.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, Marketing Mixes, Retail Stores, Seasonal offers

Introduction

Marketing strategy is decisive for the all the market, to achieve a satisfactory market share and passable sales and returns over the business periods. Marketing department in each organisation should have proactive and reactive strategies to withstand their sales in short as well as in long run. Accordingly, the main influence of marketing strategy is cyclical offer directed towards the customers to influence their buying decisions and increase the sales volume during the short period. Kotler (1988) states that marketing strategy defined the comprehensive values by which the business unit expects to achieve its marketing objectives in a target market. Effective marketing strategies necessitate every element of the marketing mix fits together to deliver a coordinated and integrated appeal to the board customer group (White and Gray, 1996). Hylleberg (1992) pointed out that only a few authors have considered a more exact definitions for seasonal marketing strategies. he did not only describe the phenomenon, in his meaning he stated that seasonal also includes the main causes for the general seasonal variations, further he mentioned seasonality is not regular and systematic, intra year change caused by the changes in weather, the calendar and timing of decisions directly and indirectly through the production and consumption decision made by the consumers. Some researchers conducted research related to such headings in marketing strategy like as niche firms and marketing strategy, for instance Kjell Toften and Audhesh (2009) conducted an exploratory study of internationally oriented niche firms.

Paswan, Charles Binkson and Francisco Guzman (2011) examined about rationalism in marketing channels and marketing strategy. The impact of marketing strategies on profitability of small grocery firms in South Africa researched by townships in seasonality (Chilial, Herbst and Robert-Lombard (2009). Nicole Koenig and Eberhard Bischoff (2005) conducted on seasonality research, the state of the art and the price schedule required to smooth seasonal milk supply Seamus by Mc Erlean (1999). Some researches conducted research in different variables related to particular country or specific marketing strategy in the seasonal offers like as earnings flattening and the under-pricing of seasoned equity offerings (Anh Duc Ngo and Oscar Varela, 2012).

Song and Chintagunta(2003) analysed the impact of price expectations on the diffusion patterns of new high-tech products using aggregate data but do not allow for econometric sectors errors in the demand functions. Investigating

short selling and under-pricing that offer discounts are negatively related to underwriter rank definitely related to underwriter rank and positively related to return velocity and underwriter feast.

Cotter et al (2004) documents, that price stabilization is negatively associated with trading volume, offer price and return variance. Kim and Park (2005) examined the relations between earning managing and their offer prices. The marketing strategy is supposed to develop effective response to the changing environment (Hooley, 2008). Companies should understand the needs of the customers and they have to develop strategies to fulfill the needs of the target audience (Nilson, 1995). Thus, there is an empirical gap exists in what marketing strategies appropriate for seasonal offers and the effectiveness of various strategies to manner retail stores seasonal offers. Absence of such knowledge of what are the marketing strategies appropriate to the seasonal offers and current effectiveness and whether they want to improve their strategies they must fail to make attract customer attentions to their business at an opportune time and increase the revenue in a quiet period.

Unless this empirical gap is addressed, it is difficult to retain such customers with the organizations. Researchers examine this problem in this study and attempt to fill this gap, therefore the following research problem is derived for this study.

This study necessary for the marketers to determine as what the marketing strategies appropriate for seasonal offers to increase the seasonal revenue. As far as the researches know no research has been conducted so far in manner retail sector to examine whether there are marketing strategies for seasonal offers and if so, what strategies are appropriate and that effectiveness the most contributed for exploring the marketing strategies for seasonal product in Manner retail stores.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the marketing strategies for seasonal offers form literatures.
2. To identify the marketing strategies for seasonal offers implemented at the Mannar retail store.
3. To identify marketing strategies preferred by the customers in manner district.

Literature Review

Kotler states that, marketing strategy as the broad principle by which business unit expects to achieve its marketing objectives in a target market. It consists of basic decisions on total marketing expenditure, marketing mix, and marketing associations. It is an overall marketing plan aiming to achieve the customers' needs by influencing the marketing mix in relation to expected environment and competitive conditions (Kotler and Armstrong, 1994).

McCarthy(1964) defines marketing mix as the combination of a set of variables related to fulfilling customers needs. According to Doyle (2002), the marketing mix is the central task of marketing professional

As Baker states, the marketing mix is the only way to maximise customer satisfaction and it results in higher sales and market share. Spring, summer, winter and fall are more than just seasons, they are opportunities for business to thrive with each season comes unique holidays event and activities which has caused consumer to behave differently, a similar view is taken by Baron(1975), who defines seasonally as the effects occurring each year with more or less the same timing and magnitude. It should be noted that all these definitions stress that the systematic intra year movements is one of the crucial elements of seasonally and its suggested that seasonally and it is suggested that seasonally can be described as some sort of pattern in the visits which reoccur every year.

The marketing strategy is supposed to develop effective response to the changing environment (Hooley, 2008), companies should understand the needs of the customers, and they have to develop strategies to fulfil the needs of the target audiences (Nilson, 1995). Promotions generally are implemented for short term purposes like increasing sales in season (Kotler et al (2009). According to Ellison and Ellison (2009), consumers are highly price sensitive and attract towards low price retail products. According to Dennis Pitta Brandon Scherr (2009) definitions of Product strategy in season time that include the continual addition and deletion of products.

Seasonal time companies sell retail products at lowest possible prices if products are in higher quality or not (Fabio and Shankar, 2004). On the other hand, consumers expect retail products at lowest price during seasonal time without considering quality of the product. As further arguments of Bolton and Shankar (2003) that retailer starts to practice penetration pricing strategy in the seasonal time period. Because of that consumers identify the products as a low -price products and attracts towards the products in its introduction stage. As described by Bave(2004) during the seasonal time companies sell retail products at lowest possible price if products are in higher quality or not (Fabio and Shankar,

2004). On the other hand consumers expect retail product at lowest price during seasonal time without considering the quality of products. As further retailer starts to practice penetration pricing strategy in the seasonal time period (Bolton and Shankar, 2003). Because of the consumers identification the product as a low-price product and attract towards the product in its introduction stage. As described by Baye (2004) Hi Lo pricing strategy provides temporary price discounts for retail products over form over form their regular price.

Promotions are generally implemented for short term purposes like increasing sales in seasons. Promotions tools can be inclusive of coupon, Prizes, rewards, free goods, samples, premium, ect. Kotler et al (2009) disclosed that the suitable promotions tools decided by the marketers based on the customer expectations and the company target to serve the segment in order to strengthen the existing relationships. According to Keller (2008) advertising themes and appeals should reflect the objective and tasks of a promotion strategy that has been implemented. Marketing channel is a set of practises or activities necessary to transfer the ownership of goods, and to move goods form the point of production to the point of consumption and, as such which consists of all the institutions and all the marketing activities in the marketing process. A Marketing Channel is a useful tool for management (Alesander Cherney, 2008).

Methodology

A qualitative study contains of knowledge exact phenomenon or facts in the place, where actually occur (Tebelius, 1987). According to Miles & Huberman (1994) individuals' clarification of events is important in qualitative method, which aims to get a complete detailed description. For this reason, a qualitative method is used in this research where the objective is to find out a description of the seasonal marketing strategies in seasonal offers and obtain a better understanding of the subject.

Based on the research objectives and the issues to be investigated it would have been most appropriate if all retailers and customers were interviewed. However due to the time constraints and the resource limitation inherent in this study, a non-probability sample of the population was selected. Sounders et al asserts that non probability sample is most often used when adopting research to understand a specific research idea form a particular similar informant.

A non-probability sampling as described by Oppenheim (2000) is a sample in which the probability of each case being selected form the total population is not known. The sample of 25 retailers and 50 customers were chosen to partake in the qualitative study based on purposive sampling method. 25 retails were asked about their marketing strategies during the seasonal offers and they were expected to explore how they promoted their products during the seasons. Customers were asked to give their responses on the strategies implemented during the seasons. Data were recoded and transcribed and translated for coding purpose.

This study analyzed the contents through coding process. Initial coding was chosen to examine compare and search for similarities and differences throughout the data, and as Charmaz (2006) contextualize to remain open to all possible theoretical direction indicated by the readings of the data.

Findings of the study

This study identified different seasonal marketing strategies from the literatures, such as Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Location, coverage area ,Coupon, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, Radio, Newspaper, SMS alert, Displays, social media), and Sponsorship programs. Table 1 shows the seasonal marketing strategies adopted and denied by the 25 retailers in Mannar.

Table 1: Seasonal Marketing Strategies adopted, and denied by the Mannar retailers

Retail Stores	Adopted Strategies	denied Strategies
Cargill's food city	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Location, coverage area ,Coupon, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, Radio, Newspaper, SMS alert, Displays, social media), Sponsorship program	Credit term, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Channel, Lottery price, rewards

Sathosa	Packaging, Product variety, some product offers, low price, Discount, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Location, coverage area, voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, sponsorship, TV, newspaper, displays advertisement	Bundling. Include Extras, Product signage, place the product front, Allowance, Credit term, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Channel, coupon, lottery price, rewards, loyalty cards, send greetings, music and lights, advertisement (TV, radio, social media, SMS alert)
DSI	Product variety, some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, Coupon, voucher, Newspaper and displays advertisement	Bundling. Include Extras, Credit term, Payment period, Availability, Channel, (TV, Radio, SMS alert, social media), Sponsorship program, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement
Abans	Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, Channel,	Bundling. Include Extras, Product signage, and consumer bargaining price, Availability, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert, social media), sponsorship
Singer plus	Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, low price, Discount, Payment period, Allowance, Credit term, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Voucher, Free trail, music & lights, Advertisement (TV Newspaper, SMS alert, social media), sponsorship	Bundling. Include Extras, Product signage, consumer bargaining price, Availability, Rewards, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, Advertisement (radio)
Sakthi super market	Bundling. Packaging, Product variety, Some product offer, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Location, Availability. Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, Free trail, free goods, sample, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, Newspaper, social media), sponsorship	Product signage, Credit term, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Channel, Voucher, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (radio, SMS alert)
Lovers corner	Bundling. Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, Availability, Coupon, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Displays	Product signage, Credit term, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Channel, lottery price, Rewards, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert, social media), sponsorship
Family collection super market	Bundling, Packaging, Product variety Some, low price product offers, place the product front, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, Availability, Rewards, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, display Advertisement	Product signage, Credit term, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Voucher, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert, social media), sponsorship
Valvuthayam complex	Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, low price, Discount, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, Availability, Coupon, lottery price, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, Advertisement(display, social media)	Bundling. Include Extras, Packaging, Product signage, Credit term Allowance, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Channel, Rewards, Voucher, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement

		(TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Damro	Product variety, Product signage, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, Availability. Channel, Coupon, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, social media, display), sponsorship	Bundling. Include Extras. Packaging, Some product offers, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, consumer bargaining price, lottery price, Rewards, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (SMS alert)
Boys style(textile)	Product signage, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, Availability Rewards, Voucher, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling. Include Extras, Some product offers Packaging, Product variety, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price cutting, Channel Coupon, lottery price, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, display, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Indian selection(Textile)	Product signage, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area. Availability, Coupon, Free trail, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling, Some product offers ,Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price cutting, Channel, lottery price, Rewards, Voucher, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert,)sponsorship
one minute (textile)	low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, Availability, Voucher, Free trail, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price cutting, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert)
Robins(textile saree)	low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, consumer bargaining price, Location, Voucher, Free trail, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price cutting, Availability, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert)
I store (phone shop)	Product signage, low price, Discount, Allowance, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Location , coverage area, Availability Coupon, lottery price, Voucher, free goods, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (display, Newspaper, SMS alert, social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, Price cutting, consumer bargaining price, Channel, Rewards, , sample, loyalty cards, Advertisement (TV, radio),sponsorship
Rajeeth phone shop	low price, Discount, Allowance, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Location, coverage area, voucher, sample,	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, Price cutting, consumer bargaining price,

	Advertisement (SMS alert, display social media)	Availability, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, , free trail, free goods, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper), sponsorship
EI Dorado browsing	Discount, Allowance, low price, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Location, coverage area, lottery price, voucher, free goods, Advertisement (TV, Newspaper, SMS alert, display social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, Price cutting, consumer bargaining price, Availability, Channel, Coupon, Rewards, free trail, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (radio), sponsorship
Nooras fancy	low price, Discount, Allowance, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, free trail, free goods, sample, Advertisement (display social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, voucher, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Mannar deal kings(electronic shop)	low price, Product signage, Discount, Allowance, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, Availability, lottery price, free goods, Advertisement (TV, radio, display social media)	Bundling. Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Channel, Coupon, Rewards, voucher, free trail, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Mannar book house	Include Extras, Product variety, some product offers, low price, Discount, Allowance, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, Availability. Coupon, free goods, Advertisement (radio, Newspaper, display social media)	Bundling, Packaging, Product signage, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Channel, lottery price, Rewards, voucher, free trail, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV), sponsorship
Allen cycle stores	Some product offers, low price, Discount, Allowance, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, Availability, Channel, lottery price, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling. Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Product signage, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Coupon, Rewards, voucher, free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
RMJ multi corners	Some product offers, low price, Discount, Allowance, Payment period, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, free trail, free goods, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling. Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Product signage, place the product front, Credit term, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, voucher, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Jesuraja grocery store	Bundling, Include Extras, low price, Discount, Allowance, Credit term, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area,	Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, Payment period, Price off, Price

	Availability, free trail, free goods, sample, Advertisement (display, social media)	cutting, Channel, Coupon, lottery price, Rewards, voucher, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Advanced digital technology (home security product)	Product signage, low price, Discount, consumer bargaining price Allowance, Payment period, Location, coverage area, lottery price, free goods, sample, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, some product offers, place the product front, Credit term, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Channel, Coupon, Rewards, voucher, free trail, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship
Fernando hardware	Product signage, low price, Discount, Allowance, consumer bargaining price, Location, coverage area, lottery price, , free goods, sample, Advertisement (display, social media)	Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, place the product front, Credit term, Payment period, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Channel, coupon, Rewards, voucher, free trail, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, radio, Newspaper, SMS alert), sponsorship.

Conclusion

Sales promotion is a true way to upgrade sales, acquire new customers and take advantage of seasonal opportunities. Sales promotions are a short-term marketing tactic to create urgency and increase sales. Purposes of this study were to identify the marketing strategies for seasonal offers discovered from the literatures, to identify the marketing strategies adopted and denied by the retailers in Mannar District, and to find the customer replies on these, marketing strategies. This study facilitated Mananr retailers to setup their strategies based on consumer responses.

From the literatures study identified different seasonal marketing strategies, such as Bundling, Include Extras, Packaging, Product variety, Some product offers, Product signage, place the product front, low price, Discount, Allowance, Price off, Price cutting, Availability, Location, coverage area ,Coupon, Voucher, Free trail, free goods, sample, loyalty cards, send greetings, music & lights, Advertisement (TV, Radio, Newspaper, SMS alert, Displays, social media), and Sponsorship programs. Cargill's food city, customers gave most priority to the discounts, bundling, and sending greetings and information about offers through SMS. Customers of Sathosa mostly prefer discount, and voucher.

Customers gave preferences to the discount strategy in retail stores such as DSI, singer plus, Sakthi supermarket, Family collection, Valvuthayam complex, Textiles and Mannar Deal kings (Electronic shop).

DSI, Sathosa, Boys style, Mannar book house provide voucher to promote their sales, on the other hand deliver coupons via SMS, offer seasonal engagement program, Penetration pricing. Free goods offer was mostly preferred by the customers of Phone shops. The customers of Abans prefer installment payment, free offer with purchasing. Lottery program strategy preferred by the customers of Sakthi super market & Valvuthayam complex. The teenage customers in Lovers corner welcome free beauty check-up. The Allen cycle stores' customers prefer back on wheel promotion strategy. Advanced digital technology and Fernando hardware stores customer preferred the low and competitive price strategy.

Retailers use many marketing strategies to improve their sales during the seasonal time, in 4Ps of marketing retailers mostly use price and promotional strategies. Retailers determined best possible promotional and pricing tools to meet customers expectations of particular target group. Consumers are highly attracted toward event and experiences of retailers. further retailers use sales promotional, public selling, and direct marketing to promote retail products during seasonal sales. On the other hand, that, consumers were attracted to discounts, loyalty programmes, rebates, gifts, and coupon of retail stores during the seasonal times.

This study has the limitation of investigating 25 retailers and 50 customers in a district. There are many retailers who adopted varieties of seasonal offers strategies in Mannar district, further this study can be extended to other districts.

For the diverse outlets, customers are attracted by few seasonal based marketing strategies. This study suggests that context specific marketing strategies for seasonal offers are preferred by the customers. Further this study recommends to the retailers, that specially strategies can be improved and they can implement the strategies which are stated in the literatures but not adopted by them in Mannar, where the customers prefer to purchase during the seasons.

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