

A REAL MARKETING CASE STUDY 4PS VS. 4CS

Years ago when I worked in Hong Kong, I was given an opportunity to take on the challenging role of marketing at Wing On Travel – an innovative Hong Kong Based Tourism company which became a market leader in tour operations and went to be listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

My story is about how I strategically turned the 4P's marketing concept into practical actions at the first stage of marketing 'Project for Wing on Travel' and enhanced the results by transforming the 4Cs.

As marketers, the 4P's are cut deeply into our mind from day one of our education in Marketing studies. However, the 4 C's of marketing, which consist of Consumer wants and needs, Cost, Convenience and Communication, are arguably much more valuable to the marketing mix than the 4P's. The 4C's of marketing focus not only on marketing and selling a product, but also on communication with the target audience to maintain long term relationship.

Evidence of successful implantation of the 4P's

Wing On Travel knew it had successfully managed to dilute the original and now obsolete brand image when it's increase in customers significantly grew after just one television commercial. Wing On Travel invited young people and artists to be the "face of Wing On Travel" as spoke people in a television commercial. It was evident that the customers subconsciously connected to the commercial slogan "Travel When You Are Young".

Wing On Travel that implanted a strategy of offering free round trip transfers between home and airport in luxury Mercedes cars for customers who joined the long haul tours. By joining forces with its' subsidiary transportation company who had more than 200 Mercedes cars and operating transfer business in the city, Wing On travel took an absolute and unique advantage to block its competitors. Feedback showed, customers appreciate the real value-added service.

Wing On Travel then went on a further marketing strategy venture and developed and offered unique travel products for customers to meet their different expectations. Some examples are:

- Family Travel Series (Love Your Kids).
- Rejuvenation & Beauty Dress Shopping.
- Gourmet Tour Travelling with 5 Star Chefs.
- Luxury Celebrity Cruise Series.
- Swim with the Dolphins and the like.

Enhancing the marketing strategy from 4Ps to 4Cs

The first C stands for Customer and this means that Management has to identify the needs and wants of its customers. To meet this objection, on a different day per week, Senior Managers visited different branch offices to engage with customers and secure direct customer information.

When it came to the second C (Cost), I introduced one "Third Party Contribution strategy" to solicit promotional funds or incentives from our service suppliers such as airlines, hotels, tourism boards and land operators. Their contribution had greatly reduced the burden of costs of promotional spending and at the same time provided a chance for Wing On travel to use 'saved up bullets' to tackle their rivals in other areas.

In addressing the third C (Convenience), the online booking at the time was only in a development stage. On top of that, Wing on was also in the process of opening 38 branches so we took an innovative and untried approach and the company introduced a 24 hours call centre to receive enquires and bookings from customers. Wing On Travel was the first travel agent in Hong Kong to take the lead to launch an at-call 24-hour convenience service to its customers.

Keeping in close contact, developing and maintaining long term relationships with the customers is always very important. In order to communicate (the Fourth C) effectively with customers, a social club "Wing On Travel Prestige Club" was established. The club organised seminars, product presentation, focus groups and a lot of travel related activities for club members.

In my opinion, regardless if 4Ps or 4Cs, a marketer needs to be open-minded.

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