Marketing Strategies Comparison

Sheila E. O’Kane

AET/552

September 29, 2014

Dennis Morrow, Ph.D.
Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to compare the marketing strategy of three organizations in the same industry. The following compares three adult learning institutions, University of Phoenix, Brandman University, and DeVry University. Each school's use of market segmentation, market differentiation, and market positioning is examined. The paper concludes with a comparison of each school's value proposition and an evaluation of the ability of each organization to meet customer expectation.
Marketing Strategies Comparison

Three leading organizations in the field of higher education are the University of Phoenix, Brandman University, and DeVry University. The challenge for each institution is to find ways to attract students. They need to communicate a message that is attractive and offers unique value to the customer. The key to each organization's success lies in their marketing strategy. According to Business Dictionary (2014), a marketing strategy combines all marketing goals into one comprehensive plan and is drawn from market research and focuses on producing the right product mix that will sustain the business. The comparison of these institutions provides excellent examples of organizations with sound marketing strategies.

Effects of Segmentation, Differentiation, and Positioning

Key areas of consideration during the development of a marketing strategy are determining the target market or markets; defining what make the product of service unique and then deciding how influence consumer perception of the product.

Segmentation

Determining the target market involves segmentation. According to Investopedia (2014) market segmentation, divides prospective buyers into groups that have common needs and who will respond similarly to a marketing action. Segmentation allows companies to target consumers who will find value in the product or service being presented. There are three general criteria that are uses to identify different segments of the market.

1. Homogeneity (common needs within segment)
2. Distinction (unique from other groups)
3. Reaction (similar response to market)
It is clear when visiting the website for each of the three schools that segmentation plays a role in their marketing strategy. All three universities target individuals concerned with obtaining education for the purpose of either starting a career or advancing a career they are already in.

The “Brandman University: About: (2014) website delivers the message that they provide quality education that is consistent with the needs of adult students with busy lives. Brandman’s mission statement reinforces this message. “The mission of Brandman University is to provide students with a dynamic education based on excellence and flexibility that creates lasting value and relevance for evolving careers (Brandman University: Our Mission, 2014). This is clear indication that Brandman segmented the market according to common needs of the individuals within the group. The common needs are quality education, schedule flexibility, and career relevance.

The clues to University of Phoenix’s segmentation of the market are also found on their website. “University of Phoenix provides access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the productivity of their organizations and provide leadership and service to their communities” (University of Phoenix: Mission and Purpose, 2014).

DeVry University’s statement that they provide “an education that prepares you for the real challenges you’ll face in the workplace” (DeVry University: Why DeVry?, 2014), is a clear message aimed at the career minded adult learner.
**Differentiation**

Differentiation is a marketing strategy “in which several market niches or populations segments are targeted with different products for each niche or segment” (Differentiated Marketing, 2014). “A differentiated marketing strategy is when a company creates campaigns that appeal to at least two market segments or target groups” (Newton, n.d.). Both University of Phoenix and Brandman University have utilized differentiated marketing strategies in targeting the military with products and services that appeal to both active duty military, veterans and their spouses. Brandman University even has ground campus facilities on several military bases.

**Positioning**

The Business Dictionary (2014) defines market positioning as efforts to influence consumer perception of a brand or product relative to the perception consumers have of competing brands or products. It is clear that all three schools make a concerted effort to position their programs as to gain an advantage over their competitors.

A good example of positioning is found on the University of Phoenix website. Phrases such as “University of Phoenix helped pioneer many of the conveniences that student now enjoy” (University Of Phoenix: About University of Phoenix", 2014). This statement is clearly crafted to create the perception that University of Phoenix is better than the competition.

Brandman positions its programs and service as superior because they “understand the unique needs of adult students” (Brandman University: About Us, 2014). Their overall message is that because they “understand” they are able to help students succeed. The implication is that other schools are not as good at helping students succeed as Brandman is.
DeVry University positions its programs as being “intensely focused on the career success of students” (DeVry University: Why DeVry?, 2014). The message that they convey is that they are separated from the crowd because they are focused on their consumer’s careers.

**Value Proposition**

According to "KISSmetrics: The Few Sentences You Need to Dominate Your Market" (2013), the value proposition is “a believable collection of the most persuasive reasons people should notice you and take the action you’re asking for”. The following are examples of the value propositions for each organization.

**Brandman University Value Proposition**

1. “Serving the unique needs of adult students by providing access to a quality education consistent with the needs of their busy lives” (Brandman University: About.2014).

2. At Brandman, we know how to help students succeed (Brandman University: About.2014).

**University of Phoenix Value Proposition**

University of Phoenix provides access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the productivity of their organizations and provide leadership and service to their communities.( University Of Phoenix: Mission And Purpose, 2014).

**DeVry University Value Proposition**


2. Exceptional care and attention, (DeVry University: Why DeVry?, 2014).


Meeting Customer Expectations

All three schools have present value that is attractive to students. The reputation that these institutions have cultivated is an indication of the success of their marketing strategy. Each school delivers what they promise. Through positioning they elicit realistic customer expectations that they are able to meet and in some cases exceed. This is a proven formula for success.

Conclusion

An important element of an organizations success is their marketing strategy. Selecting the right target market through segmentation is vital. Differentiation provides an avenue for organizations to provide product or services to multiple niche markets. Through positioning marketers influence the perceptions of the consumer and create distinction between their product of service and that of their competitors. The value proposition also helps to distinguish businesses and their products and services from others. This is the promise of value that an organization makes to the customer. The three institutions examined are excellent examples of businesses that have gotten the marketing formula right.
References


https://www.brandman.edu/about/our-mission


http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/differentiated-marketing.html

KISSmetrics: The Few Sentences You Need to Dominate Your Market. (2013). Retrieved from
https://blog.kissmetrics.com/dominate-your-market/

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/market-positioning.html

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/marketing-strategy.html

http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/marketsegmentation.asp

Newton, C. (n.d.). Chron: Difference Between Differentiated Marketing Strategy and
Concentrated Marketing Strategy. Retrieved from

University of Phoenix: Mission and Purpose. (2014). Retrieved from
http://www.phoenix.edu/about_us/about_university_of_phoenix/mission_and_purpose.html