Appraising Marketing Culture Practices in an Organization:  
A case study of seven-up plc

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ABSTRACT

There are controversies over whether organization culture should receive better attention than marketing culture. Creating a marketing culture goes far beyond branding and creating an external identity for a firm. It is an expression of the firm’s beliefs and style of doing business. This study therefore sought to assess the compliance of organizations to marketing culture using Seven-Up PLC as a case study. Survey research design was employed in generate the required primary data by soliciting responses from a purposively selected sample of 92 salesmen and sales assistants. The data was analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistical methods. The results of the analysis of data showed that Seven Up PLC has a strong support and compliance to their marketing culture. The study therefore concludes that the firm that has the best marketing culture is the firm that is most likely to thrive in the market place. The study recommends that cultural elements must constantly be reviewed in marketing to complement organizational culture and all areas of culture should receive management support.

INTRODUCTION

Successful companies have been noted to give increasing attention on consumer retention, company position that is, the image of the company in the eyes of the public which are closely linked to marketing culture. (Zostantience and VaicileNaite (2010), Zostantience and Urbansimese (2002), Homburg and Pflessser (2000), Narver and Slater (1990) Kohli and Janoshi (1990) Webster (1993,1995).

According to Martha Sullivan (2001), when you look at the results of consumer surveys, you find that most consumers are satisfied with the products produced by various companies. There is an expectation that a reputable company will deliver above average product at a relative cost compared with similar companies. If expertise, quality of service and cost are relatively equal, then consumers often have to select a firm based on “chemistry,” or their response to your company’s marketing culture. One of the tools of modern scientific research directions on effectiveness of marketing is marketing culture.

Marketing culture gives the company competitive advantage in the market because it is not only used to promote the products and services of the organization but as a means of expressing the way of life and communication of the values of the organization to the consumersMartha Sullivan (2001). Though initial attention was placed on organization culture while sidelining the concept of marketing culture, Organizational culture has been described as the behavior within the organization while marketing culture asthe component of the organizational culture. Marketing culture comprises of a set of dominant values, norms and behavior which characterize the individuals of the organization through its interaction with the market actors.

This answers the question why the recent interest in marketing culture? Organization culture is described as the values, rules, experiences acquired by members of the organization while marketing culture is organizational culture redefined with marketing orientation (Zostantience and VaicileNaite (2010). Culture is an important source for internal and external organization. With the passage of time, market behavior is getting so much difficult day by day. As globalization is increasing, economic conditions are getting changed, members of firms increases, profits of an organization increase and increase in profits shows directly the link with marketing culture (Frost, 2000).
Also, we noted that organization culture is oriented to the internal business practices while marketing culture is oriented towards both the internal and external business practices. Thus, we can deduce from here that marketing culture is broader than organizational culture (Zostautienė and Urbansimėse, 2002). This explains why this write-up picks more focus on:

- To assess the compliance of organization to marketing culture
- The uniqueness of marketing culture of organization using seven-up bottling company as a case study

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

In modern competitive environment, companies are trying to get a competitive advantage in its business offerings; therefore management literature is full of successful business practice and its strategic offers, so that companies can achieve success in modern competitive market. New intercourses between company and its consumer goods and the consumer preservation get bigger meaning than competition itself. The consumer preservation and company’s position in the market are closely linked with marketing culture (Webster, 1993; Webster 1995; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Homburg & Pflesser, 2000; Žostautienė & Urbanskienė, 2002). With this point of view marketing culture development is the most important and modern scientific research directions which are oriented to social and economic progress and promotion.

In order to survive in the market, fast environment changes enforce companies to appeal to marketing actively. Science of marketing is broader analyzed, but companies place less importance of marketing culture. Little attention to marketing culture, which comes through its appropriate elements, can cause inharmonious company’s activity, which determines less profit. Sustained profitability depends on marketing culture which makes it important for organizations to comply with marketing culture.

**CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF MARKETING CULTURE**

There are several different definitions of marketing culture or market-oriented culture in the literature, and the most significant of them are the works written by the scientists (Narver & Slater, 1990; Webster, 1993, Webster, 1995; Žostautienės & Urbanskienės, 2002, etc.). Marketing culture is defined differently, as the company’s unwritten behavior and rules wherein the behavioral norms of employees are presented; or as the significance of the expression of the marketing functions in all company’s operation areas; or as a particular method whereby marketing activity is implemented in the company (Webster, 1995). This definition looks at marketing culture from the perspective of organizational employees to be marketing oriented.

Marketing culture has also been described as a culture full of illustrations and symbols, carefully developed and used to define, support and strengthen products and symbols (Seabrook, 2002). The attainment of consistent superior performance is largely contingent upon ability of the business to create a sustainable competitive edge (Appiah-Adu et al., 2000). Marketing culture is the organizational variable that most effectively and efficiency creates the essential behavior for the development of superior value for consumers (Narver & Slater, 1990; Appiah-Adu et al., 2000). Marketing culture is defined as market oriented culture (Conrad & Brown, 1997). According to other authors’ analysis, the theory, which states that marketing culture is market oriented culture, is right, but most of scientific (Narver & Slater, 1990; Webster, 1993; Harrison & Shaw, 2002; Žostautienė & Urbanskienė, 2002; Harrison & Shaw, 2004, etc.) agree, that marketing culture is broader conception.

Marketing culture existence/ nonexistence in business directly affects the business results, while sustained profitability is an assumption for good business results. The conceptual definitions of marketing culture as defined by management scientist are diverse, Zostantience and Urbansimese (2002). Marketing can be seen as instilling a marketing mindset that is, a state of mind for all departments of the awareness of the core values, goals and core offerings (products, services, consumer satisfaction etc) and the perceived value that will enjoyed or experience by the customers.

A considerable amount of literature has written on culture and consumer behavior, culture and advertising, as well as culture and market orientation (de Mooij, 2004). Hofstede (1991) stated that culture is the “collective mental programming of people in an environment. Marketing culture is said
to be successful by being consistent, in sending clear signals about their priorities, values and beliefs. Once culture is established and accepted, they become a strong leadership tool to communicate the leader’s beliefs and values to organizational members.

A “marketing culture” is an expression of the values of an organization. It is the experience that clients have when they work with you and it goes beyond your image or brand. On an external level, your culture is reflected in the style of your lobby, the “look and feel” of your marketing materials, and the content of your website. You can control the messages you want to convey to clients, but those messages should match the experience a client will have with everyone in your firm, from the receptionist to the managing partner. The marketing department may drive the development of a firm’s culture, but the care and maintenance of the culture become the responsibility of everyone in the firm (Sullivan 2001).

Marketing culture is analyzed as an organization culture component, emphasizing marketing culture specificity through the unclosing marketing culture elements (Deshpande & Webster, 1989; Webster, 1995, etc.). Marketing culture, composed of values, norms, means and behaviors, operates on sustained profitability, which criteria are: consumer philosophy, strategic orientation, adequate marketing information, operational efficiency, integrated marketing organization and it in turn have direct influence on reaching marketing goals, which are: market share growth, sales growth, business profitability.

Thus market-oriented culture is a pragmatic, action-oriented translation of the marketing concept, which emphasizes the importance of the customer not just within the marketing organization but throughout the firm as well (Harris 1998, Hooley et al. 1999, Webster 1995). Numerous studies followed-up to the concept, focusing on the definition as well as its assessment of the concept of market-orientation, and its effects on firm performance (Lafferty & Hult 2001, Narver & Slater 1990, 1998, Slater & Narver 1994).

Market-oriented culture is a group culture designed to create higher customer value by executing the required actions with the most efficient and effective means available, thereby maintaining a high level of firm performance (Narver & Slater 1990). Therefore, market-oriented firms seek ways to provide added value to the customer while simultaneously lowering the cost of the said product or service. Existing studies have previously shown significant positive effects upon firm performance by market-orientation. However, departing from such previous studies, the current study classified market-oriented culture not as a set of actions but a constituent of group culture within a firm, and assumes that the interactions among the elements are not linear but dynamic. Other studies emphasized the importance of customer service orientation as an organization wide commitment which require organizational arrangements (Bowen & Schneider 1989) and organizational climate supportive of excellent customer service (Schneider 1980).

Sustained profitability is especially useful in each company’s activity, because it makes assumptions that it is important for company’s stability, growth in long-term profit, increased consumer’s satisfaction and competitive advantage (Kotler, 1977; Webster, 1995). One of the many responsibilities confronting leaders is the creation and maintenance of organizational characteristics that reward and encourage collective efforts. The marketing culture and its compliance by organization stands out as one of the components that are important to sustaining performance, and competitive advantage, and a good reason for becoming a great company.

The reason for ethical failure in many organizations is the fact that while leaders concede of culture as a powerful tool that can create and sustain performance, only few leaders give it the attention it deserves. The cause of ethical failure in many organizations can be traced to organizational failure of leadership active promotion of ethical ideals and practices that is the marketing culture.

For organizations to achieve more sustained profitability management should start with building a marketing culture and practice development culture within a firm, which means everyone in the firm understands that he or she has an active role in marketing and practice development, and understands what the role entails. Firms may have their rainmakers— the employees who could go into a revolving door alone and come out arm with a new customer, but in today’s competitive marketplace, one or two rainmakers going after the same prospective customers that you want. The firms that want
to grow and thrive must be turned into marketing machines that is to have a culture that understands and supports a marketing effort.

Based on previous literature, we can hypothesize that marketing culture positively affects the sustained profitability of the organization (Martha Sullivan, 2001). Scientists who made research of marketing culture (Webster, 1995; Appiah-Adu & Singh, 1997; Appiah-Adu & Singh, 1999; Appiah-Adu et al., 2000, etc.) state, that marketing culture can be evaluated through: service quality, interpersonal relationships, the selling task, organization, internal communications, and innovativeness, however these dimensions emphasize only the internal values of marketing culture, whereas marketing culture should be estimated also through the exogenous factors (Žostautienė & Urbanskienė, 2002).

Marketing culture implementation in the company determines economic benefit: sales growth, new products success, also an advantage to the activities of the company: organizational commitment, espri de corps (Matsuno et al., 2005), consumer's satisfaction, loyalty (Žostautienė, 2002), profitability (return on investments) (Appiah & Singh, 1999) and competitive advantage (Žostautienė, Urbanskienė, 2002). Loyal consumers can enhance company’s profitability through reduction of selling expenditures, higher price tolerance and less operational expenditures (Reichheld, 1996).

According to Bruce W. Marcus, marketing culture can also be seen in the organization as;
1. It helps to understand and recognize the role that marketing plays in firm management and development
2. It helps to understand and respect the professionalism of the marketing professional and the marketing staff.
3. It aids in recognizing the relationship between what they do and the needs of the market that is the consumers.
4. Marketing culture makes the employees understands and accepts their role in the marketing process.
5. It helps to understand that time spent on marketing is an investment in the future of the firm and is not simply non billable hours.
6. Management and employee participate enthusiastically in specific activities not by the marketing department only.
7. Ultimately, marketing culture helps to see that the firm is managed by people who understand and enthusiastically support the marketing efforts of the organization.

In a firm that has a strong marketing culture, getting the customer is only half the battle. The other half is keeping the customer. One of the most important strategies of achieving sustained profitability as a goal by an organization is through customer retention.

There are of course, some necessary things that need to be done through the marketing culture of the organization. Through marketing culture, sophisticated marketers as well as the members of the firm have a strong handle on who the customers are, what their company does, what its needs and goals are, and how to address those needs in the marketing approaches. It helps to know the knowledge and the kind of relationship that allows total involvement in the customers’ concern as staying in touch with customers is not a casual matter. Today’s business is too dynamic and things change constantly. At the same time, your competitors aren’t resting from pursuing the company’s customers; therefore the use of marketing culture rather than organizational culture will help to tackle the problems.

In today’s marketplace, where the customer experience is a major differentiator and competitive advantage, CMOs today find themselves at the intersection of the brand experience and their organization’s culture, exploring how inner workings translate into external engagement, says Spencer Stuart in a survey of more than 200 marketing leaders about the effect of the organizational and marketing cultures on the brand experience which at the long run affect the sustained profitability of an organization (Spencer Stuart, 2015).

“The culture of the organization that is marketing oriented is defined by the company's broader purpose and values, every touch point of the brand experience directly leads to delivering on the purpose, without compromise. Employees are always the best personification of the brand experience,
so embedding values into the culture will translate into a meaningful brand experience for consumers.” – Spencer Stuart (2015).

FACTORS THAT CAN BE INSTILLED INTO MARKETING CULTURE

Marketing culture is a relative term to describe: the overarching culture of a business relating to the attention it focuses on markets/ customers. The level of belief is that the ultimate purpose of the business is to create superior customer value, profitably. To break this down, a company’s marketing culture can be distilled into the following (Martha Sullivan 2001):

External factors: such as; customer insight, customer foresight, competitor insight, competitor foresight, peripheral vision.

Internal factors: such as; cross-functional collaboration, strategic alignment, technology and change.

Customer service. Firms should have a clearly defined policy for customer service, rather than being in a reactive mode when pressured from customers.

Management style. Who sets the tone for your firm? Is it a single person or a small group? Is there a rigid hierarchy or participation by all employees? Is everyone expected to work nights and weekends, or is lifestyle important? Management’s commitment to employees translates to loyalty and the willingness of the staff to devote more time and energy to your customers.

Diversity. It would be surprising if your firm didn’t have a policy to encourage more diversity in its hiring practices. If you are still talking about the “first” person hired in any category, then it is time for diversity education at management levels in order to promote effective marketing culture in the organization.

Compensation. In addition to salary, bonus and benefits, how do you compensate your organization? What are the expectations beyond the stated billable hour requirements? If business development is a requirement for shareholder status, attorneys must be compensated for these activities. Many firms credit a certain number of business development and pro bono hours toward associate bonuses.

Retention. What is your track record on retaining employees and retaining customers? Do employees use your firm as a resume builder or a career builder? Some firms have developed committees to study the retention problem. If you have such a committee, is it staffed by people who are willing to hear the answers? Keep in mind that money is rarely the answer to retention problems.

Employee empowerment: For most organizations, the number one marketing and public relations force is your own employees. Your company will receive good, bad, or neutral “press” depending on whether the employees are satisfied and feel a part of the company’s mission and vision. The key to eliminating the bad and neutral “press” is to empower your employees. If they feel empowered and part of the organization, they can become mini marketers for your organization. Research studies confirm that those organizations that exhibit a strong marketing culture produce superior business performance as its effects can be measured, compared and improved.

COMPONENTS OF CULTURE

Marketing culture is derivative and absorbs culture and organizational culture features. Culture acts as guidance for human behavior and creates social groups which are different from each other which react differently to their environment (Adler, 2002). Culture varies from one another and it shares four major components, these are the communication, cognitive, material and behavioral aspects.

Communication components include language and symbols. Through language, a group of people interact with one another, socially sharing their thoughts, feelings or ideas to the people with same language. Language forms the core of all cultures throughout society.

The symbols are considered as the backbone of symbolic interactions. A symbol might be considered as anything that holds a particular meaning and are recognized by the people that share the same culture. Different cultures of different people and organizations have different symbols, it is cross-culturally and it might be changed over a period of time.

The second component of culture is the cognitive element. It includes ideas, knowledge and belief, values and accounts. Ideas, knowledge and beliefs are basic nits of knowledge construction. Ideas are considered as mental representation and are used to organize stimuli. When ideas are linked together it will organize into larger systems of information which will become knowledge. Knowledge
now is considered as storage of information fact or assumption, and this knowledge can be passed down from one generation to another.

Beliefs are expressed as agreements or disagreements with worldviews: The respondents are asked if they agree with various statements, most often about what they consider true or false. Leu 

Theoretical definitions of values, such as the one proposed by Kluckhohn (1967) can be quite diffuse: “A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions”. Values serve as guidelines for social living.

Accounts can be defined as the way people use organization or their cultural language for their explanation, justification, or to rationalize, excuse, or legitimize a behavior towards themselves or to the others.

The third component of culture that is concerned about on how to act is the behavioral component. It includes, attitudes, norms which further categorizes, mores, and laws.

Norms, or ideologies, are also an important cultural phenomenon. They are often studied together with other elements of culture, as in Hofstede (1980, 2001), Inglehart and Baker (2000). Norms are considered as rules and expectations eventually set by a particular society that serves as guides to the behavior of its members. It varies in the terms of the degrees of importance and might be changed over a period of time. It is reinforced by sanctions in the forms or rewards and punishments, Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars (1996).

Mores are kinds of norms that are considered to be customary behavior patterns which can be taken from moralistic values. Artifacts refer to the symbolic elements created by organizations, such as topics, facilities, rituals, and communication styles, Homburg and Pflesser(2000)

Attitudes are studied by asking people what or whom they like or dislike. The format of the items can be quite diverse, but in all cases the responses that they elicit can be linked to the following definition of attitudes: “evaluative statements—either favorable or unfavorable— concerning objects, people, or events” (Robbins, 1998, p. 140)

The fourth component of culture is the material component. This includes materials or objects created by humans for practical use or for artistic reasons. These objects are material culture which can also serve as an expression of an individual culture. An example of the material component of culture is artifacts, when one enters an organization one observes and feels its artifacts. This category includes everything from the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports Schein, 1990.

METHODODOLOGY

The study worked on seven-up bottling company branches in Ijora and Ikeja, Lagos where we have over 120 salesmen and sales assistants in the branch. Survey research design was employed for the study and a purposively selected sample of 92 was selected using YaroYamen’s formula for deriving sample size. The marketing/sales staff was briefed during the marketing meetings on the intention of the research.

The researcher generated the required primary data using a structured questionnaire containing items measured using a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 5=strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3=Undecided, 2=Disagree and 1=strongly disagree. The components of marketing culture identified by Adler(2002) were adapted to measure the existence of marketing culture based on their importance for the research,
that is, the components of marketing culture selected are the ones that we believe are easily understandable by the respondents. To derive meaning from the data, and examine the propositions of the data, the data from the survey were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive statistical techniques (Simple percentages and frequencies) were used in arriving at conclusions made by the study.

RESULTS

The data obtained using the questionnaire were converted into numerical data on coding sheet for ease of analysis, through the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The results were arrived at by subjecting the raw data to statistical analysis, which led to inferences that were made in the study, the basis for which the summary for the study were obtained, and for which conclusions and recommendation were made. This section presents the results as they are, and goes further to discuss what their meanings are, that is, the results obtained were interpreted. The results obtained from the responses of the 92 salesmen are presented in the table below:

**TABLE 1:** To determine the compliance of seven-up bottling company’s staff with marketing culture, the following components of marketing culture were identified and analyzed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTS OF MARKETING CULTURE</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>UD (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The staff of the company comply to the chosen language of communication by marketing staff</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven-up staff has symbolic signs to interact with each other outside the company</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff believes that their product is the best and they act in that manner.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff has storage of facts and accounts of their company.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All accounts are known and managed by the sales team.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dealers of the company have the feeling of warmth from the seven-up staff.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization has a unique dress code for the salesmen with company logo.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff has a unique manner of addressing their customers. (Sales call)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The marketing philosophy is well known to all.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The management is involved in marketing issues and culture.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

We have carefully designed some elements of marketing culture and administer it to the salesmen to see the level of compliance with the marketing culture.

It was revealed in the table above (questions 1 & 2) that most of the respondents agreed that languages and symbols (which are essential components of the existence marketing culture) are extensively used by the members of the staff of Seven-Up PLC. This shows that the organizational members embrace a high level of marketing culture.

The respondents also mostly agreed that the cognitive components of marketing culture (ideas, knowledge, beliefs, values, accounts, etc.) are highly present in their organization as most of them responded positively to questions 3, 4 and 5 as shown in the table above.

Responses from the sampled salesmen also showed that the organization has a high support for their marketing culture as their responses assented to the fact that the behavioural components of marketing culture are present in their organization. It can be seen in the table above (question 6-10) that the number of salesmen that responded favourably to the statements measuring the behavioral components exceeded those that responded negatively.
These results show that Seven Up PLC has a strong support and compliance to their marketing culture.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a marketing culture goes far beyond branding and creating an external identity for a firm. It is an expression of the firm’s beliefs and style of doing business. The ultimate goal is to create a culture where employees and customers understand that their participation is important and their contributions are valued. This paper therefore concludes that we have learnt nothing with greater certainty than that the firm that has the best marketing culture is the firm most likely to thrive in the market place. Also, for the achievement of sustained profitability by the organization alongside with other goals and objectives, marketing culture should be considered rather than organizational culture as it is broader and deal with the external environment of the organization as well as its internal environment.

We have observed that Seven-Up PLC adherence to marketing culture has assisted it in being competitive and that it has carved a niche for itself in the market as a result of marketing culture practiced. We therefore recommend that cultural elements must constantly be reviewed in marketing to complement organizational culture and all areas of culture should receive management support.

REFERENCES