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Prologue: Marketing in the Modern Age

Selay Ilgaz Sümer

1. Introduction

The most important way of businesses to succeed in their activities is to follow their environment carefully and try to integrate innovations in their bodies. In short, businesses must adopt the latest developments to maintain their existence under fierce competitive environment.

Marketing is one of the business functions that must keep up with these developments. In recent years, significant improvements have been made in the marketing efforts of the businesses. They have started to plan their marketing activities within the framework of different perspectives and techniques.

In recent years, the concept of value began to take place in the center of the marketing activities. Today, value is important almost for all businesses. There are different ways of creating value in marketing. In other words, the value that will be offered to consumers as a business can be evaluated in a wide range starting from the presale stages of the product to the after-sale periods. Therefore, the way of creating value can include using technology, empowering employees, etc. However, it is a fact that the basic condition of providing value in marketing is to make strategic marketing planning value-oriented.

Digital age and its implications also influenced the firms' marketing activities. The transition to the digital age has made it necessary to make significant changes in many aspects from the design stage of the products to the sales stage and even after-sale services. Consumers of the digital age have started to act consciously and have information about products as well as sales forces. With the introduction of digitalization, physical stores are gradually being replaced by virtual organizations. Electronic commerce has been adopted by many businesses as an effective way of marketing their goods and services.

The transition to the digital age also had an impact on the sales management activities. In other words, the presence of the digital environment has both created a variety of challenges for businesses and sales forces and also has facilitated sales forces activities. Especially in recent years sales forces, who strive to operate in a more value-oriented manner, have further increased their consulting roles. It is understood that the main task of the sales forces is not only to sell but also to provide information on various topics such as product and price comparisons to the consumers. This necessitates more careful selection and orientation of sales forces. It should be also noted that sales visits are now more effective by means of technological tools. In short, thanks to technological tools, the visual presentation of products is made more effectively than before. This facilitates the persuasion of consumers in the selling stage.

2. Sales management in modern marketing

One of the prerequisites for success in an intense competitive environment is the effective planning of sales management activities. In this context, sales management activities should be planned considering the micro- and macro-environment of the businesses.

In recent years various changes and developments have significantly affected marketing activities of the businesses. Forces affecting sales management can be grouped as behavioral, technological, and managerial forces. Behavioral forces are related with the dynamism of consumer behavior. Technological forces cover the effects of technological innovations on sales management. Managerial forces include managerial efforts to increase the effectiveness of sales management-related activities [1]. These forces have made it necessary to consider certain points in the planning of sales management activities. Some of them can be listed as follows [2]:

- Powerful customers
- Global customers
- Variety in marketing channels
- Increased importance of services

As a result of the changes in sales management activities, the role of sales forces has started to change. Sales forces that were previously only the people who take the order of the customers have now become the relationship manager of the businesses [3]. As a result, the responsibilities and duties undertaken by the sales forces within the organization have increased.

3. Process of sales management

Sales management can be defined as “all activities, processes, and decisions involved in managing the sales function in an organization” [4]. Sales management-related activities play an important role in the successful implementation of the strategies developed by the businesses [5]. The activities related to the sales management process consist of three major stages which are formulating the sales program, implementing the sales program, and evaluation and control. Sales management process is given in **Figure 1**.

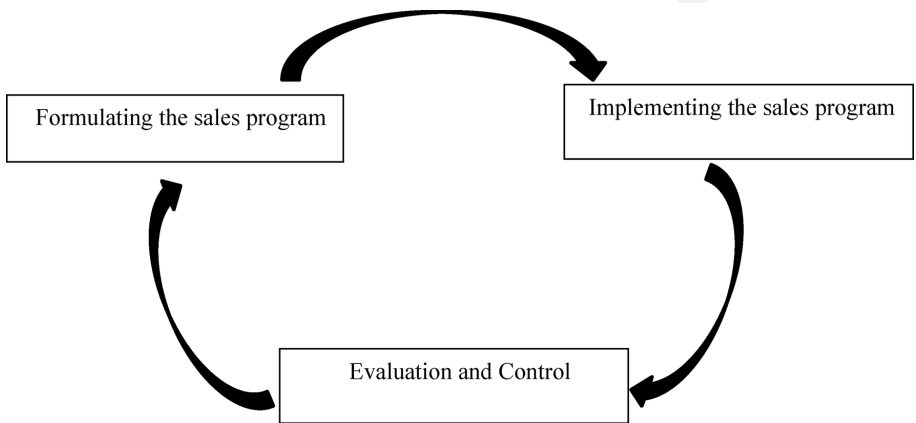


Figure 1.
Process of sales management [4].


The first stage of the sales management is formulating the sales program activities. At this stage, it is necessary to make plans in terms of business environment, potential customers, demand and quota estimation, and determination of sales territories. The second stage covers the activities related with the implementation of the sales program. Stage 2 involves the motivation of sales forces to actualize the sales program. At this stage, issues such as role perceptions, aptitude, skill level, and motivation gain importance. In the third stage, an overall evaluation and control of the sales program and sales forces is performed. According to the results to be obtained at this stage, various changes can be made in the sales program of the business [4].

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