

Product Quality for Competitive Advantage In Marketing

Meera Singh¹

¹(Computer Department, G.H. Rasoni Institute of Engineering & Technology/ Pune University, India)

ABSTRACT: *This article focuses on the major role played by the quality of product in competitive advantage in marketing and the steps to attain the product quality. Product quality is a vital area because it decides the market share of the firm. It is also used as one of the product differentiation strategy by few leading firms. Marketing has to set the quality standards for the firm's products. Constantly verifying these standards and upgrading them as per the needs & growing sophistication of the market is a crucial task in product management. Product quality, customer satisfaction, and company profitability are intimately connected. Higher levels of quality results in higher levels of customer satisfaction. . Quality creates value and customer satisfaction. Marketers play several roles in helping their organization to define and deliver high-quality goods and services to target customers. In this article few steps are discussed which marketers should implement to contribute to total quality management and customer satisfaction for customer and company profitability. Only through continuous managing for excellent quality the firm can maintain bright product / brand image in the customer's mind in this competitive world.*

KEYWORDS: *Product Quality, TQM, Quality, Competitive Advantage, Product Differentiation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A company that satisfies most of its customer's needs most of the time is called a quality company, but we need to differentiate between conformance o quality and performance quality. The drive to produce goods that are superior in world markets has led some countries to recognize and award prizes to companies that represent the best quality practices, for example the Deming Prize in japan, The Malcolm Baldrige National Award in the United States, and the European Quality Award. Quality is the key to value generation and customer satisfaction [1]. Total quality is job of all the departments in an organization. Marketers play various roles. In helping their organizations to define and deliver high- Quality goods and services to target customers. Firstly, they bear the major responsibility for correctly identifying the customer's requirements. Secondly, they also communicate customer expectations to product designers. Thirdly, they make sure that customers have received proper instructions, training, and technical assistance in the use of the product. Fourthly they must check the customers have received proper instructions, training, and technical assistance in the use of the product. Fifthly they must stay connected with the customers after the sale to ensure that they are satisfied and remain satisfied. Lastly they must cater customer ideas for product and service improvements and convey them to the relevant departments. This will lead to contribution towards total quality management in the organization. It also increases the customer satisfaction manifold. Customer satisfaction means good word of mouth and more market share thus increase in company's profitability.

II. CREATING A PRODUCT QUALITY CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT

Product quality management has three elements which are in fact effective business tactics i.e. awareness, training and environment [2]. Firstly, an organization should build product quality awareness among their people. Thus they will not only do better job but generate ideas that will result in continuous product quality. Secondly, employees need skills. Product quality management not only emphasizes the implementation of traditional training programmes but also requires training in leadership, quality concepts and problem-solving. Lastly, an environment characterized by a product quality management for competitive advantage in marketing is one where the obstacles to quality are removed. It is an environment where it is easy for a person to do his job right. When Gera Developers decided to expand into the contractor supply business, while also cutting costs and streamlining operations in 8 sites, it replaced many full – time workers a with part-time employees who soon made up about 40% of Gera's staff. The Gera's customer satisfaction index dropped to bottom among major real estate players, 11 points behind customer- friendly competitor KoltePatil Builders. Although Khalsa stopped free lassis, sweet to taste, mini bags, and raised prices and reduced variety of sweets and eateries. As one frequent customer felt and noted, "Khalsa acts low cost without being low cost." Not surprisingly, Khalsa came in last in all top sweet marts in customer satisfaction poll. But after creating the product quality corporate environment both the companies i.e. Gera Developers and Khalsa have gained

immensely in acquiring high market share. Thus it can be clearly stated that product quality leads to competitive advantage in marketing.

III. MANAGEMENT OF PROCESS FOR PRODUCT QUALITY

Management of product quality continually returns to the idea of ‘processes’. This is because of the emphasis on designing quality into a product rather than adding it on. The organization should make sure that the design of products should take into account customer requirements. Thus it should look into quality issues from the beginning and the key performance characteristics are selected and tracked. The analysis and improvement of processes is important to implement quality benchmarks [3]. The organization should never lose sight of the fact that quality product management is a results- oriented approach. The best quality product system is worthless if it does not result in products that meet customer requirements. Quality must contribute to and be accompanied by superior operational performance- which means that an organization’s productivity and financial success is the final measure of product quality management. The organization should make sure are in place [4]. There should be thorough system of measuring and tracking quality throughout the production/ delivery processes is in place, based on key indicators. Cause and effect diagram as shown in fig.1 helps to improve processes through analysis/ simplification, benchmarking, process research, alternative technology and incorporation of customer data. The organization should define and communicate its quality requirements to employees, suppliers, including identification of key indicators. Assessment findings are used to initiate actions to improve quality of product. An organization can eliminate the quality problems through improvement in the process.

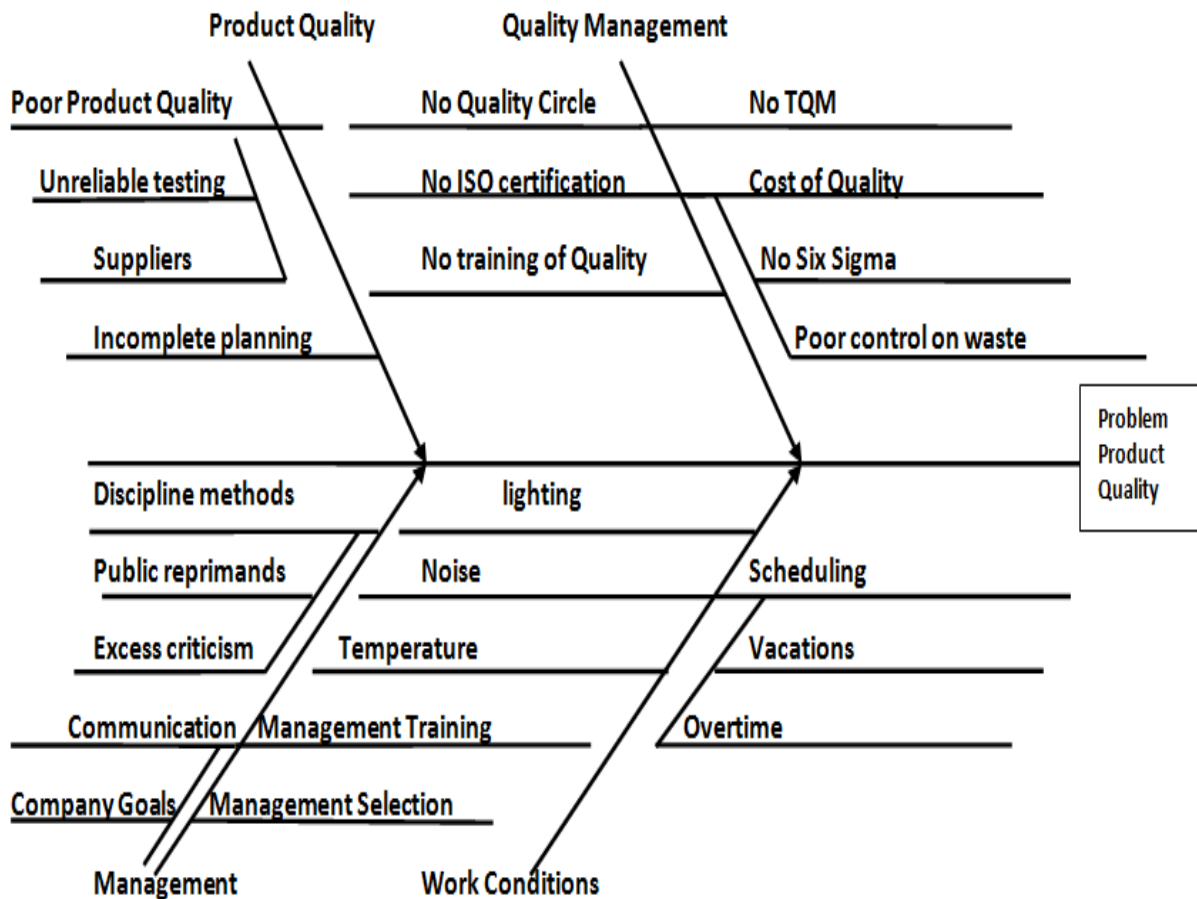


Fig.1 Cause & effect diagram

IV. MANAGING PRODUCT QUALITY FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN MARKETING

The steps to manage of product quality are very crucial stages. As because every step is inter related to each other. Thus it is necessary to implement prior step before commencing the later step. There is no single perfect method to establish the product quality. There are basically eight steps for managing the product quality for competitive advantage in marketing and all those steps are mentioned below in the fig. 3.

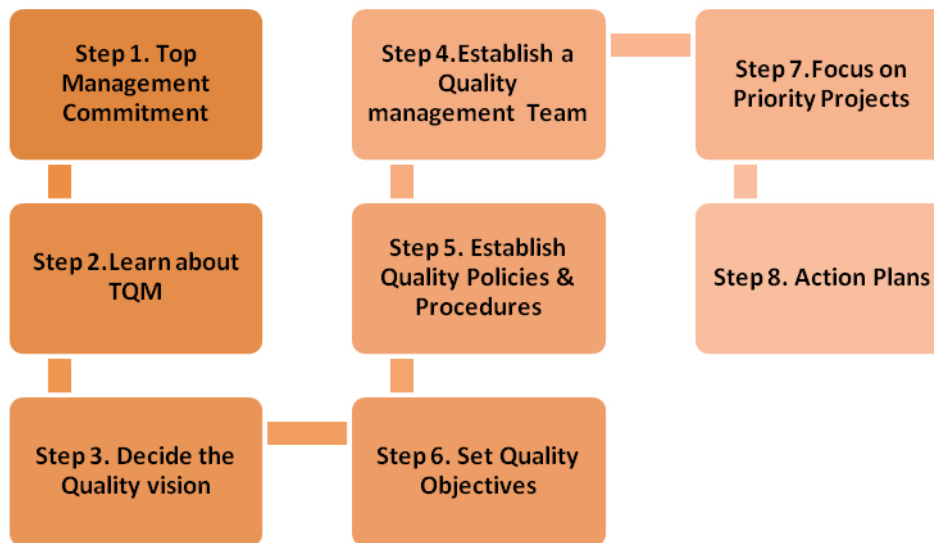


Fig.2 Eight steps to manage Product Quality

4.1. Top Management commitment

Managing product quality is possible if top management personnel are committed [5]. Commitment means to a willingness to devote resources to product quality management. The top managers should be willing to invest today in order to reap benefits later. There are no direct expenses related to managing product quality but the costs are incurred in terms of time of the employees and managers to devote in planning, training, team meetings, and other activities. Thus if the top management is committed then they should be determined to carry the effort throughout.

4.2. Learn about TQM

Seniors managers should spend time learning about TQM concepts for managing product quality for competitive advantage in marketing. It is a continuous learning process and also an ongoing aspect of the way to do business.

4.3. Decide the Quality vision

It is important that an organization should consider its quality vision carefully. It is a statement that links managers, employees, customers and suppliers. A quality vision is a statement that summarizes a firm's approach to quality. It should be short, customer oriented and focused on priorities.

4.4. Establish a Quality management Team

This group will oversee the actual implementation of product quality management in the firm. It will include chief executive, representatives from line and staff departments, employee representatives, and union officials if a union is involved. Firstly the team's agenda will be to provide training to all the team members on the product quality management concept. Then the team should do an in depth research on how to apply product quality concepts as well as what needs to be done to implement it across functional lines.

4.5. Establish Quality Policies & Procedures

The team will next examine the method to apply the quality vision. It installs a system that promotes greater customer satisfaction. The organization should not alter all the policies overnight [6]. This process will be carried out by the product quality management team over a period of time and on a priority basis.

4.6. Set Quality Objectives

All the ideas will not automatically yield results [7]. Always the organization should keep an eye on the objectives, which it wants to achieve. Objectives provide a measuring stick and it reduces unrealistic expectations. There will be a spirit of motivation. The objectives can be like for example, to increase productivity, to lower specific costs, to penetrate new markets etc.

4.7. Focus on Priority Projects

It is better to focus on the projects on the basis of priority. The priority can be set on the basis of easy projects, customer first or may be on key quality goals.

4.8. Action Plans

This step applies to policy as well as quality projects. The quality management team should plan to turn over part of its duties to teams and individuals who will address specific areas. One main task of the action plan will be spread understanding of product quality management throughout the organization.

V. ISO 9000: A MEASURE OF PRODUCT QUALITY

Launched in 1987, the ISO 9000 has now been accepted by national standards bodies of 91 countries, including India and all EU member countries [8]. Issued by one of the several national standards bodies around the globe as the hallmark of quality, ISO certificates are increasingly gaining acceptance around the globe. This specialized international agency was set up to promote development of standardization to facilitate international exchange of uniform quality goods and services. ISO certification means that a company's products are durable or free of defects. The ISO 9000 approach sets minimum standards for guaranteeing quality. Product quality management means to promote the type of practices, such as focus on internal customer to assure quality. Then there should be a systematic approach to ISO 9000 standards. The organizations which register firms to the ISO 9000 standards have seen a rapid growth of interest in the process. It is usually easier and cheaper for the firms to undergo a single ISO 9000 registration than to endure multiple quality audits by a variety of customers. It also shows the commitment of an organization for product quality management and encourages the commitment to maintain and improve it.

VI. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that to survive and thrive in today's competitive world product quality is the most important strategy. This article gives an overview that due to product quality; an organization can attain competitive advantage in marketing. Product quality management is visible signal of a firm's commitment to quality. It facilitates cost cutting, improves employee morale, and provides efficiency in production. This whole idea makes quality integral to every phase of an organizations' business. Quality in purchasing is as important as it is production similarly after sale service quality is also important for product quality management. But only planning is not enough but management plays very crucial role in product quality management. Firstly, the top level management should be a part of it and then every worker of the firm. Senior managers lead the entire quality effort; individual employees take on new responsibilities and become leaders within groups and quality improvement teams. The customer defines the quality. Measurements determine whether customer needs are being met [9]. It encourages management by fact and alerts when processes do not yield the expected results. The focus on product quality enables the firm to take a close look at the whole concept of quality thus gives it a competitive advantage in marketing.

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