

# Push versus Pull Marketing:

## *Overview and Analysis Introduction*

Two dominant marketing strategies exist within the corporate world: that of push and pull-based marketing. The rationale behind the model is as follows: in push-based marketing, the business 'pushes' its product or service to the consumer by raising awareness through promotional campaigns regarding the product's desirability. "Conversely, in a pull-marketing scenario, the customer 'pulls' your content or product towards themselves, because they are interested in learning more about it" (Maki 2010). However, the marketer creates that desire to 'learn more' by subtly fostering interest through an array of advertising devices, spanning from clever product placement, to blog posts, to other image-building campaigns.

### *What is push-marketing?*

Push strategies involve attempting to create or 'push' consumers to demand the product by using direct promotional activities such as rebates and discounts. The consumer's role in the buying decision-making is emphasized. The strategy usually "makes use of a company's sales force and trade promotion activities to create consumer demand for a product" where none may have existed before (Push or pull, 2010, Tutor2U). In push-marketing, the focus is on the amenities and value provided by the product or service: it is an explicit form of marketing that seeks an immediate response from the targeted audience. Most companies use push marketing during holidays, such as Memorial Day sales or Christmas 'door-buster' specials. However, some companies use push-based marketing year 'round, such as mobile phone companies and fitness clubs, which rely upon special deals to push their product. McDonald's has made use of push strategies in the past, such as promoting Big Macs and other sandwiches as part of its value-based dollar menu.

Not all push marketing is value-driven. But it is almost always targeted directly at consumers. Push marketing is often used to make a new product well-known in a short amount of time, such as when a new company enters a competitive market. An example of push marketing might be that of the promotions surrounding a new toy around Christmas time, or direct-to-consumer advertising for a new drug such as Prozac or Botox.

### *What is pull marketing?*

"In contrast, pull marketing encourages consumers to seek out a product or service by raising interest and awareness" (Push or pull, 2010, Tutor2U). Pull-marketing is a branding strategy, rather than a product-based strategy. It "largely involves the active development of a highly visible brand. This encourages customers to actively seek you out, because they believe you can fulfill their needs. Methods commonly used include media interviews, conference speaking, syndication of your content and word-of-mouth" (Maki 2010). Retailers may be asked to specifically promote a brand to create demand, as did K-Mart for its Martha Stewart house accessories: Martha's name, rather than discounts on towels and sheets, was used to draw consumers to buy the products. Manolo Blahnik, the very expensive show brand, might be another example of pull marketing: by being featured on Sex in the City, it created an image of itself as a highly desirable item for the cognoscenti. No one specific type of shoe was 'pushed' with a marketing campaign.

Pull marketing is often used in products that tap into a certain 'lifestyle' component, such as fashion, beauty, and makeup. Customers purchase an image as well as the item itself. Even Whole Foods, the organic supermarket, uses pull-based strategies. Consumers are less drawn to the (expensive) food store for specific deals or even specific items. Rather, they come seeking a certain moral 'ethos' in terms of the way the company markets its product. Push-based products, such as investment services

or hospitals, base their appeal upon trust, rather than a demonstrable, tangible item or short-term savings 'payoff.'

***The transition from push to pull:***

Almost all companies begin as 'push' companies. However, they may find that a more pull-based strategy is fruitful, once they have built some rudimentary brand awareness. A good example of a push-to-pull transition is that of the Apple Corporation. When the Mac was born, long ago in the 1980s, the company emphasized its value for the consumer in terms of its physical components: a personal computing device was a useful item to have for word-processing. Mac distinguished itself from PCs by stressing its specific, user-friendly added value as a product.

This began to shift with the introduction of the iPod. Being an Apple consumer became more about embracing a certain 'cool' ethos, rather than the improved quality of Mac products. Apple offered its more expensive products in an array of sleek, custom-colored designs. It used its famed secrecy to create hype for the introduction of new products such as the iPhone and the iPad. Its 'informational' website generated a constant product buzz of excitement amongst pro-Mac bloggers. Recently, many individuals bought the iPad with little idea of what value it could add to their personal computing experience: they simply wanted to be a part of the next 'new thing' created by Apple.

Apple's transition to pull-based marketing is exemplified in its anti-PC campaign, which personifies its main competition, the cheaper PC, as a bespectacled 'dork' in contrast to the cool, hip, and urbane Mac user. Why a PC is dorky or what is meaningful about associating a computer with a type of person is not clear, but the advertisement allows all individuals who purchase Macs to congratulate themselves for embracing a certain kind of modern, techno-friendly image.

***References***

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