

Implementing Excellence In After Sales: Strategies And Best Practices

Elisângela Alves De Sousa¹, Herus Orsano Machado²,
Antonio Vinicius Oliveira Ferreira³, Domingos Albano Matos De Meneses⁴,
Ana Luiza Carvalho Madeiros Ferreira⁵, Michel Zahn Araújo⁶,
Anderson Lopes De Araújo⁷, Aryadynna Santos Feitosa⁸

Doctor In Marketing At The Department Of Management And Business/ Federal Institute Of Science And Technology Of Maranhão (IFMA), Brazil.

Master In Administration From The State University Of Ceará (UECE) / Federal Institute Of Science And Technology Of Maranhão (IFMA), Brazil.

Doctor In Administration And Accounting From The Capixaba Institute For Research In Accounting, Economics And Finance / Federal University Of Piauí, Brazil.

Master In Administration From The State University Of Ceará/Faculdade Metropolitana De Horizonte – Ceará – Brazil.

FUCAPE Business School – Maranhão- Brazil

Master In Administration From The University Of Amazônia (UNAMA). Administrative Director In FAAMA, Brasil

Doctor In Administration From The University Of Amazônia (UNAMA). State University Of Maranhão (UEMA), Brazil.

Master In Public Management From The Federal University Of Piauí (UFPI). State University Of Maranhão (UEMA), Brazil.

Abstract

Background: The contemporary scenario of high competitiveness requires companies to have robust strategies to win and keep consumers. After-sales emerges as an essential pillar to guarantee loyalty, going beyond simple customer satisfaction. This article explores the implementation of after-sales excellence, highlighting strategies and practices that strengthen the company-consumer relationship in a "one-to-one" model.

Historical analysis reveals how technological advances and the evolution of marketing have shaped the industry. From the mass production model of Taylor and Ford, to Japan's flexible, technological approach of the 1970s, a focus on efficiency and meeting consumer demands has become central. The introduction of marketing in the 1950s marked a new era, using tools and advertising campaigns to understand and capture the customer's spirit, ensuring loyalty and building value.

From the 1980s onwards, marketing redirected efforts towards after-sales, prioritizing a personalized and lasting relationship. Innovative strategies, such as the intensive use of technology and the creation of direct communication channels, have consolidated after-sales as an essential tool for differentiating brands in saturated markets. This study also addresses the importance of integration between sectors, such as sales and after-sales, to avoid failures in the consumption cycle.

Conclusion: History demonstrates the relevance of integrated communication between production, sales and consumption for building solid relationships with customers. This article analyzes the evolution of after-sales as a strategic tool, linked to marketing and technological advances, highlighting the importance of balancing innovation and personalization.

After-sales, strengthened by investments in information and communication technologies, such as Big Data, becomes essential to understand and meet consumer demands. However, relying exclusively on technological solutions neglects the human element, which is essential in building lasting connections.

Keywords: Excellence; After-sales; Marketing.

Date of Submission: 11-12-2024

Date of Acceptance: 21-12-2024

I. Introduction

There are great expectations, regardless of ideological hues, whether it's a consumer society, an information society, an alternative society, an environmental society or even a hyper-consumption society, about the growth in the acquisition of goods and the provision of services; at the moment, this is the picture that presents itself in the medium and long term, and companies in these sectors are moving aggressively to invest in

technological support (hardware, software and humanware), in constant improvements in the sales sector and, above all, in building a strong after-sales department.

However, the intermediate and final elements, sales, after-sales and consumer, cannot be dissociated from the primary sector. Dialogue between this tripod is essential, and a brief look at history is enough to show that when there was a lack of communication, there was a breakdown in one of the parts. It is important to understand that large-scale manufacturing was the result of various political, economic, philosophical, technological and technical orientations, above all in opposition to the interventionist and limiting model of the great European powers, especially England and France; after the initial challenging phase, which culminated in the implementation of the industrial model, many pertinent questions arose, both in the course of and in anticipation of future problems.

The 19th century was used to organize, implement and spread the bourgeois state, but there were still remnants of modern states. There was a lack of convincing answers, and they came positively in terms of the production model, starting with Frederick Winslow Taylor, through Scientific Management, the idea of increasing production versus reducing time was disseminated; focusing on the same line as Taylor, that is, on the principle of manufacturing, Henry Ford developed a model based on the production line or conveyor belt; at the end of the 1970s, Japan exported a standard based on the organizational culture of increased competitiveness, which altered the productivity methods in force, based on the intense use of technology, production on demand and flexible production.

In terms of applicability as a government policy, the answer also came with the American liberal experience between the 1920s and 1930s. This experience, the result of a mishmash of capitalism, liberal thinking and democracy, proved that the "laissez-faire" principle needed a lot of adjustment.

The Crisis of 1929 and its impacts brought the interventionist state to the fore once again through Keynesianism; however, it was given a different guise, capitalist forces could not be repressed, it was necessary to stimulate economic growth and consumption, promote employment and improve wages, in this sense, capital was a partner. Industrialization could not be curbed, the motto from then on was to create new forms of stimulus, to heat up the domestic and foreign markets and provide consumers with the income and credit needed to keep the wheels of consumption turning.

The post-World War II transformations, together with Europe's economic recovery policies, sent production, sales and consumption into a spiral of growth. The scenario was ripe for catapulting to another level, and the question at that moment was: what to do? Selling had to stop being a simple action, requiring immediate and mechanical solutions; the second global conflict brought with it technological advances in the area of communication, and many were available for civilian use, so the question of what to do had been resolved, the answer: use technology to reach customers.

The how? came almost instantaneously; the introduction of marketing and tools gave sales the necessary direction towards a path of competitiveness that involved identifying, in the case of the customer, what the consumer wanted, capturing their spirit and what niches they belonged to; throughout this period, which begins around 1950, marketing actions, through advertising campaigns, evolved qualitatively and captured the consumer, to the point of making them loyal; it was marketing fulfilling one of its functions, seeking to make the most of accessible resources.

In the sphere of commercial organizations, marketing turned its artillery on the after-sales sector; the goal, which was certainly more ambitious, was not just to have the customer satisfied with the product, service provision/contract or feeling represented by an advertising campaign; and although these are good predicaments, they are very fragile ties, which in no way prevent consumers from migrating to competitors. The situation imposed by the level of competition and marketing needs required marketing to make an effort to devise strategies that would result in a closer company-consumer relationship (one-to-one).

II. Production, Sales And Consumption

"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:9

The biblical passage applies perfectly to our content; the great name of economic liberalism, Adam Smith¹, had established that the great revolution had taken place even before the 18th century, when trade gradually expanded in Western Europe and with it, a whole range of developments were structured around it, roads, cities and traveling fairs; But it didn't stop there, its effects on individuals were more acute, the change in

¹ Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a Scottish Enlightenment economist and social philosopher and is considered the Father of Modern Economics. Available at: <https://www.todamateria.com.br/adam-smith/> Accessed on: 12 Jun. 2024

attitude, based on a new mentality, governed a man guided by his own interests, willing to break the stigmas that subjugated part of the serfs to their masters; certainly, freedom was one of the great legacies of commercial capitalism for people dedicated to this activity.

Still in this context, it is necessary to point out some bottlenecks: artisanal production, which supplied local commerce, limited the accumulation of capital, since, although part of the sale was direct, artisan-consumer, production involved a very high cost, and the most expensive input was time; the artisan dominated the entire production process and owned the tools. For those who only traded, the feudal model made it impossible to do so over a larger area, aggravated by the absence of a unified monetary system, differentiated tax collection and tolls, poor roads and a lack of security. Faced with this array of adversities, it is not difficult to measure how resilient those dedicated to trade had to be.

Fast forward to the 18th century and the Enlightenment understood that Western Europe was destined to control the production process. Trade had not lost its relevance, but dependence on other regions for the supply of goods left them in a vulnerable position. Synchronically, they sought an alliance with the monarchies in the political sphere. Later, they consolidated the ruptures, and with them the bourgeois and industrial revolutions.

Technological, scientific, technical, economic and political progress greatly altered the European view of 16th century maritime expansion. In a change of perspective, the new colonialist impulse became imperialist, tropical products and precious metals gave way to raw materials, consumer markets and suppliers of cheap labor; and regions hitherto far from the spotlight, such as Asia, Africa and Oceania, were brought into the core of exploration.

Those who fell outside this spectrum, such as Brazil, entered the scenario in a different way, under an area of influence; thus, the British intervened in Brazilian internal affairs, fiercely defending the end of slavery, not for humanitarian reasons, but for purely economic reasons, the consumer could even be an enslaved person, but a slave would never be able to be a consumer.

The great imperialist nations' disputes over world markets dictated productive advances, sales performance and access to consumption, above all in their areas of control; in other words, in a total lack of ideas and general disconnection, the Industrial Revolution came down to who could get the most territory under their lordship. At the end of the 19th century, in this turbulent environment, with a shortage of commercial strategies, a limited number of consumers, racist ideologies, an arms race and nationalism, the ultimate transformation of capitalism emerged: the union of industrial capital and banking capital resulted in financial or monopoly capitalism; This phase favored the formation of gigantic companies, called trusts, others developed in the form of holdings (associations), which held a controlling stake in other companies in the same field and acted in a coordinated manner, and finally, cartels, based on the combination of prices and division of markets. It should be noted that the desire to invest capital was part of colonialist expansion.

III. Production And Science: Revolutionizing Production Was Necessary

Paradoxically to the 19th century panorama, ideas about production models sought to organize themselves to meet the need to increase production. Frederick Winslow Taylor, an American engineer, revolutionized factories with a work management model based on the observation of workers and machines; he meticulously broke down each task, timing, standardizing movements, specializing workers, eliminating waste and optimizing, all in the name of maximum productivity and lower costs. On the other hand, the harms of this model of work management disregarded the worker and generated criticism: excessive pressure, dehumanization and repetitive actions, deteriorated the health and compromised the well-being of the worker.

In 1909, Henry Ford improved and adapted Taylor's ideals, implementing them in his car factory; Ford's merit was to consider technology/automation as an important part of the manufacturing process, thus, the assembly line, the standardization of production, the specific role of each worker, fulfilled their function in an exquisite way, to get an idea of the efficiency of this model, before the introduction of the ideas of the owner of the Ford Motor Company, a vehicle was assembled in 500 minutes, with the changes, it fell drastically to a tiny 2 minutes.

The production process is not an end in itself

The case of Ford is quite illustrative when we analyze the relationship between production, sales and consumption. The production success achieved by this company is unparalleled at that time in history. Sales were mostly directed towards Europe. With the outbreak of the great conflict between 1914 and 1918, they stagnated, but production continued at full speed; there was certainly a glimpse of an upturn after the end of the war, a fact that was not confirmed, given the economic recovery that had taken place on the old continent. Unable to deal with the exponentially growing stocks, what could be done?

The illusion of prosperity disseminated by the liberal mentality between 1920 and 1929, especially in the United States, generated a climate of euphoria without ballast. The flow of money during this period had only one direction: externally, a policy of loans was adopted for the European economies, recovering from the effects

of the war, and this capital returned to the Americans in the form of purchases of industrialized products; internally, there was an expansion of credit, putting the consumer into debt. These were short-cycle actions; within five years the main European economies had recovered and significantly reduced trade with the United States. Meanwhile, production continued, in factories and in the countryside, and the crisis of overproduction was established.

IV. Marketing And Its Tools: The Way To Overcome The Crisis

Overcoming a troubled economic climate is difficult enough, but imagine doing it in the midst of a war. The aftermath of the Second World War showed that the lessons had been learned, that the victorious forces understood the importance of creating an atmosphere of peace, and that much of the technological, knowledge and psychological progress that had once been used for destruction would now be used for development.

Once the economic issues had been resolved: employment, income and credit, the consumer society had been consolidated, based on material conquests and motivated by an ideal; companies lacked an efficient way of reaching these customers, even with the large retailers, supermarkets and department stores working to perfection. The development of communication technologies had brought a series of benefits, and their consequences had immediate effects on the commercial sector of organizations.

The introduction of marketing had changed the perception of sales, the way of knowing the consumer and capturing their needs. In the past, the company-customer relationship was very simple, with the end consumer buying directly from whoever was selling their product, which in a way ratified some of the characteristics of this model: proximity to the customer, few purchasing options, which resulted in the famous purchase out of necessity.

Marketing studies and concepts were already known in the United States, but had little applicability. From 1950 onwards, the situation changed and the potential of consumption needed to be exploited to the full. You can't confuse marketing and sales, in fact, the functions of the former go beyond the transaction of goods and services, it seeks to generate value from the coordination of several variables: market research, improvement in the formatting of a product policy, choice of distribution logistics, dissemination, preparation of promotion of its products and monitoring of commercial transactions and their results. However, if we look at different concepts of marketing, we can identify at least three elements: value, satisfying customer needs and generating profit.

Throughout this period, marketing and its instruments, from advertising campaigns to the creation of after-sales strategies, became indispensable tools not only for companies, but also for the consumer's perception of the formation of a state of consciousness that implied their appreciation.

The evolution of marketing and its relationship with the customer

The 1950s began with the ideal conditions for the introduction of marketing actions; the issue absorbed by companies and their respective marketing departments started from a basic point: after years of deprivation, consumers wanted to consume; mass marketing picked up on this idea and passed it on to production. Mass productivity worked for a short time, but the concept of competition based on discounts and promotions, or on offering the lowest price, proved ineffective in the face of such competitiveness, as it affected profits.

Of course, mass marketing wasn't just restricted to standardized production, or to reaching the largest number of consumers, it extended its procedures to mass communication, sales channels and product distribution. As time went by, several companies embarked on the same strategy, a fact that no longer met the needs of consumers; the time had come to offer a difference.

Redirecting course required a policy that would yield higher profits than the previous model; in this sense, how to solve this dilemma: increase profits while giving up on the masses. The solution found was to work with specific audiences, adapting the product to meet the needs of niches or target segments. The financial compensation would be through added value - simply put, it's everything that generates value for your product.

Note that the segmentation of the public has repercussions on communication and distribution. With the change in objectives, marketing actions are modified, and here we turn to Gordon's (1999, p. 249) concept of the phase of approximation of companies and the need to serve target segments, "mass customization can be defined as the process of providing and sustaining profitably tailor-made goods and services for customers, according to each customer's preference of form, time, place and price."

By analyzing some of the details of this concept, it can be inferred that mass customization brings with it concepts of relationship marketing. At this point, we're going to take a closer look, based on the assumption that all actions are aimed at strengthening ties with the target customer; and why the target customer? A priori, all customers are important in the context of relationship marketing, but the reality is harsher; not for nothing, it is also known as individualized marketing; using technological tools, organizations seek to gather information, consult and analyse databases on the consumption potential of each consumer; Bearing in mind that, after this stage, the next ones are focused on the customer, and will involve production, communication and distribution; note that unlike mass marketing, whose purpose is to increase the customer base, in relationship marketing, the order is to purify the base, strengthening those of greatest value to the organization, in short, some are more

significant than others.

V. After-Sales Strategies And Dissemination Of Good Practices

Marketing techniques integrated with after-sales have surprised this sector; regardless of whether it's a physical store or e-commerce, an excellent after-sales service consolidates the brand, builds customer loyalty and becomes the start of the next sale. We've listed six after-sales strategies in order to delve deeper into them. In Ancient Greece, one of the worst punishments that could be imposed on an individual was ostracism, which in practice consisted of expelling the citizen from social life or their usual practices; human beings in general were not born to be alone, relationships are part of our survival, protection and expansion of knowledge.

When organizations, going through all the processes of maturing, observations, introduction of new elements, challenges and readjustments, set out to strengthen their relationship with customers, they did so understanding that certain limits and rules need to be pre-established. Any relationship requires simple foundations for its preservation: honesty, respect, trust, sacrifices, complicity and resilience.

When we look at the origin of the word sacrifice, which comes from the Latin "sacrificium", meaning "sacred act", in this context, it is valuable and understandable; however, in a philosophical approach, sacrifice is generally understood as an act of renunciation or abnegation for the sake of a greater good. What consumer is going to sacrifice themselves for a company or remain loyal to it if it doesn't offer them a good or service that meets their needs?

For the six strategies presented, namely: follow up, upsell, cross sell, loyalty program, special date campaigns, launch information and opening really efficient service channels; there is no ordering of actions, depending on the product sold or the service contracted, all of them are sure to surprise the customer at some point.

We'll start by opening up efficient service channels; solving problems has a positive impact on the customer, the idea is to guarantee support through simple, fast and integrated service. To make them really efficient, it's imperative to have empathy, understand the customer, offer all possible means that will lead to the success of the customer's aspirations and politely anticipate situations.

Follow up, as the term itself translates, is the monitoring of a process, in this case, a purchase after it has been carried out, so it means contacting the customer after the purchase has been made. With social networks, the possibilities have increased: direct, Messenger, sending a message, making a phone call and sending an e-mail. This new contact opens up space for a range of information gathering: the customer's response to the product or service, conducting an opinion poll and reminding them of your brand are some of the benefits of this strategy. Taking advantage of the strategy of getting in touch and stirring up the customer's imagination, here's a good after-sales tip: don't wait for the need, create the need.

In times of upselling, which, by the way, is strictly forbidden, we present the upsell and cross-sell strategies, which have nothing to do with the forbidden form; both are sophisticated ways of understanding your needs and offering something extra, predicting your desires and suggesting a product. Upsell is a sales strategy that involves encouraging customers to purchase a more sophisticated or advanced version of the product; while cross sell refers to the sale of related and complementary products or services based on the customer's interest in or purchase of a product, or rather, encourages the customer to purchase additional products or services that are related to or complement the desired item, maximizing the value of the purchase and increasing the company's revenue.

Finally, two strategies that involve the psyche of consumers: loyalty programs and special dates. Few things change the mood of the customer as much as the formulation of a bonus program, discounts, offers and exclusive prices, making them special, unique and empowered. In the same vein, the psychological impact of remembering customers on special and commemorative dates reinforces the level of relationship and customer appreciation.

VI. Conclusion

History cannot be abandoned in the process of building knowledge, whatever the area, it is unequivocal in providing examples that, if used correctly, will lead us in a positive direction. When we look at the history of the relationship between production, sales and consumption, we can demonstrate with facts that the lack of communication between these sectors at certain times substantially altered the others. Obviously, the concepts, thoughts and ideas were a reflection of the challenges that arose, and were not intended to provide ready-made answers; after all, we are dealing with human relations, which are dynamic and driven by problems.

In the same vein, when Marketing was brought to the heart of the discussion, the idea was to relate it to the transformations in the production, sales and consumption process, and to show how the tools that were used to perceive and modify strategies worked for a while, showed their flaws and were replaced by new concepts; after all, it was all about the survival of companies, brand enhancement, the longevity of organizations and profit.

In an impetus for evolution, and strongly linked to advances in information and communication

technology, high investments in software, hardware and humanware, after-sales emanates from marketing strategies, as a beneficiary of this process; we must emphasize, it is valid, and it would be negligent not to make use of the technological arsenal available, however, in view of the methods and techniques presented, to rely mostly on technology, is not to value the human; we reiterate, those who have access and can hire Big Data companies: the collection, cross-checking, analysis and results are very complete, not least because the volume of information verified is unparalleled; even so, direct action with the client cannot be eliminated from this equation.

Of course, the standardization of products for the general public is a reality that will endure, but the company's deference, customer participation, constant improvements in customer service, personalization, and above all, problem-solving, create solid bonds in a relationship; and as a result, it provides organizations with solidity and appreciation of their brand.

Reference

- [1]. Gordon, Ian. Relationship Marketing: Strategies, Techniques And Technologies To Win Them Over And Keep Them Forever. São Paulo. Futura. 1999.
- [2]. Hutt, Michael D. And Speh, Thomas W. Business Marketing Management. Orlando, The Dryden Press, 1995. Chap. 12 : Managing Services For Business Markets, P. 338- 371.
- [3]. Hutt, Michael, D & Speh, Thomas, W. Business Marketing Management : A Strategic View Of Industrial And Organizational Markets. The Dryden Press, 5th Edition, Sep., 1994.
- [4]. Inglis, Paul F. Profit Is In The After-Sales. Hsm, P. 118-124, Issue: May/June, 2002.
- [5]. Johnson, Michael D. And Gustafsson, Anders. Improving Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty And Profit. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- [6]. Levitt, Theodore - The Marketing Mode. New York: Mcgraw Hill, 1969. Light, Larry. Managing Loyalty. Hsm, P. 76-84, Issue: March/April, 1998.
- [7]. Martins, José Roberto. Branding: A Manual For Creating, Evaluating And Managing Brands. São Paulo: Negócio Editora, 2000.
- [8]. Mattar, F.N. & Santos, D.G. Product Management: How To Make Your Product A Success. São Paulo: Editora Atlas, 1999 (Chap.2: Product Management Function)