Addison Schultz

Formula for Disaster

Marketing Management

The first thing to come to mind when it comes to mind when thinking about baby formula could be thoughts such as helpful, or alternative. But what most people fail to realize is that baby formula, can be a *Formula for Disaster*. In watching the short documentary, the horrifying effects, and the spread of misinformation is clearly highlighted, showing the real life damage it can cause. The market described in the case was a place I am familiar with, which is the Philippines. The vast majority of women from the Philippines don’t realize the complications associated with baby formula, and believe information willingly, regardless of its truth. I liked this video a lot, especially because I am half Filipino. I was recently in the Philippines as well, and some of the scenes in the video are still real, and just as bad as it seems. Some brands that are associated with misinforming the general public include Lactum, Bona, and larger brands such as Nestle. The market was created in a surge to capitalize on poor mothers, the formulas being cheaper than better, healthier alternatives, which may not be so readily available to busy mothers. The target is clear, and the big name companies realize the potential in this everlasting market. Mothers who cannot afford time or money to correctly feed their infants, are almost always willing to pay the price. The ethical issues are clear. When a company is able to force its market into purchasing something, something that they willingly know is unable to be replaced, is where the ethical line starts to form. These big name companies realize that they are the only option, and they also realize the damage they are causing. The ethicality of the situation is boiled down to money, which is number one on the businesses’ plan.

As a marketer, I believe that this situation can be looked at with different lenses. We have two obvious angles, one being from the marketer’s side, and one being the consumer’s side. From the marketer’s perspective, they are helping the consumer by providing them a cheap alternative, for those who are unable to afford something more expensive. Where the downfall lies, is within the formula and chemicals actually used. From the consumer’s view, they are being sold harmful products, which the company knows about, but won’t afford to fix. In my opinion, I think the marketers were acting unethically. Part of the problem lies within the formulas being produced, and the price they can be sold at to make a profit, which cannot always be controlled. However, the majority of the problem lies within the marketer’s knowledge of the harmful substance, yet their ability and willingness to advertise it as safe. Something different I would have done, would be providing the formula, but also informing the consumer on the risks, but also other alternatives available. If I were to do something different, I would not misinform the consumer of the so-called “benefits” that powdered milk provides. Companies market their products as “healthier”, or that they have the ability to make their children smarter, or even stronger.

The problem lies within the tactics behind the marketing, behind the company, and behind the ethics of the businesses taking advantage of their current situation. As a marketer, a key goal is to optimize business, optimize profits, and optimize the customer experience, but what the baby formula companies in the Philippines are doing, is taking advantage of all three of the categories above.

References

Huang, Yanzhong. “The 2008 Milk Scandal Revisited.” Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 16 July 2014, www.forbes.com/sites/yanzhonghuang/2014/07/16/the-2008-milk-scandal-revisited/#29189a1d4105. Accessed 15 Aug. 2017.

lionsofgoodTV. “Formula for Disaster: UNICEF documentary (FULL VIDEO).” YouTube, YouTube, 14 June 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PBtb-UDhEc&feature=youtu.be. Accessed 15 Aug. 2017.