



Consumer Behavior Audit - EOTECH

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INTRODUCTION

EOTECH has positioned themselves to be considered a high quality and high performing firearm accessory brand. As the political and social landscapes change in the United States, EOTECH has an opportunity to gain market share over competitors in the industry. Understanding who the consumer is today and how to properly market to a future growing segment will help grow in a positive direction. This can be accomplished by creating a new promotional strategy to influence customer acquisition, enhance brand image and brand longevity in the evolving consumer market.

COMPANY BACKGROUND AND SITUATION

EOTECH was founded in 1995 as a spinoff from the Ann Arbor non-profit Environmental Research Institute of Michigan (ERIM). ERIM was a military and environmental research arm of the University of Michigan funded by the State of Michigan. ERIM was focused on developing remote sensing, radar and holography systems with the intent of creating technology to support Michigan's technology economy.

In 2005, after EOTECH had won the United States Special Operations Command contract for optics, they were acquired by L3 Communications (now L3Harris Technology), a multi-billion-dollar international defense contractor based in New York. Being the only commercial division within L3Harris's portfolio, this division was divested and purchased by a Michigan-based private equity group in 2020. EOTECH continues to design, develop and manufacture products in the United States for commercial and defense markets.

EOTECH has deep roots in being a premium supplier of electro-optics for Military and Law Enforcement around the world. Despite having tremendous success in acquiring long-term government contracts, the primary source of revenue for the organization is the U.S. Commercial market (M. Cockman, personal communication, December 10, 2022). Commercial success for EOTECH kicked off as a co-branding effort between EOTECH and Bushnell. EOTECH leveraged the strong Bushnell brand and ended up winning multiple industry awards allowing the company to gain public recognition.

Around the same decade EOTECH started gaining commercial sales success with the Holographic Weapon Sight, the popularity of Modern Sporting Rifles (MSR) started to increase significantly within the United States (Plumer, 2013). Being one of the pioneers of creating a unique and effective close quarters sight (CQS), EOTECH rode the success of the booming MSR market.

Commercial sales success of EOTECH is directly correlated to consumer firearm purchases in the United States. As many firearms do not come bundled with optics, this is a core component that must be purchased separately - and in addition - to the firearm. Optics are paramount to increasing accuracy, speed and

effectiveness when using these types of firearms. In a typical purchase cycle, consumers will first invest in a firearm purchase decision followed by an optic purchase to be mounted on the firearm.

Continued growth and successes of the company are correlated to societal changes as it relates to firearm ownership (or lack thereof) and ongoing pressure from political and social initiatives to restrict production and increase regulations on firearm sales. Despite these threats to the industry, firearm ownership has increased significantly among minority groups creating an educational and representation gap in current marketing efforts among brands in the industry. Creating marketing campaigns that aid in solving these problems will help EOTECH grow customer acquisition in a growing segment of the market.

Firearm accessories such as premium optics are key components for institutional (Military & Law Enforcement) and consumer markets (Sport Shooting, Hunting, Self-Defense, Hobby). Because consumer sales are the primary revenue source and growth opportunity for firearm accessory sales, the analysis and key recommendations will focus on the United States consumer market specifically relating to Sport Shooting, Hunting, Self-Defense and Hobbyists.

MARKET SEGMENTATION

The demographics for firearm accessories are correlated with firearm industry demographics. Roughly 48% of gun owners are white men, 24% white women, 24% men of color and 16% women of color (Kaur, 2022). In recent years, there has been an increase in firearm purchases by females. The motive behind this increase in volume is linked to personal safety in an uncertain political and social environment (Branigin, 2022). The number of women in shooting sports has also grown at twice the rate of male shooters in the past decade. This demographic shift is an opportunity to adjust marketing messaging aimed at future women shooters (WP Company, n.d.).

Professor's suggestion: for the subheadings in the Market Segmentation section, your submission would be better organized by placing your discussions under general subheadings such as "External Influences on Consumers"; "Internal Influences on Consumers"; "Situational Influences"; and "Decision Process Influences" or similar subheadings. This would enable you to speak comprehensively – yet more concisely – about the items relevant to the market segmentation aspects of the Consumer Behavior Audit. The same logic applies to the other topics addressed in this assignment.

Subcultures

Important values to consumers in this industry are freedom, safety and preserving culture.

Consistent

A subculture that has consistent value systems within the industry are typically white males. This subculture accounts for 48% of the consumers in the market (Kaur, 2022). Since this consumer is the majority, the predominant values expressed in this industry are going to be created by this subculture. For firearm owners, freedom can be directly related to the right to bear arms. Around 75% of firearm owners say that firearms are key to their freedom (Kaur, 2022). This subculture also places a high value on personal safety. 88% of firearm purchases are made for safety reasons (Kaur, 2022).

Inconsistent

Firearm accessory purchases correlate closely to the firearm industry demographics. However, due to the social stigma and increasing gun violence in minority-dense populations, purchases of firearm accessories are less common. (Chibbaro, 2018), (Pew, 2017). These subcultures are more likely to know a person or have been a victim of gun violence in some way compared to the majority subculture of firearm owners (Edmund, 2022), (Killian, 2022), (Pew, 2017). Due to the negative perception of firearm ownership, even when it comes to hunting and sport shooting, women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ groups may not have the same definition of the value of freedom and strength in the same way that the majority subculture does.

Geographic Consumption

Regional consumption of firearms consists of 32% in the Midwest, 36% in the South, 31% in the West and 16% in the Northeast (Pew Research , 2017). This can also be broken down more by identifying the geographical areas including Urban, Suburban, and Rural. Figure 1.1 breaks down different uses for a firearm and the percentage of firearms owners that participate based on geographical areas. This consumption difference can be related to the social, political and value systems for these areas.

Suburban

Suburban areas are likely to have higher education, incomes and less crime. Since 28% of this population owns a firearm and has a higher income, they may be more likely to purchase firearm accessories if they can realize the product's value (Pew Research, 2017). This demographic is more likely to have the financial ability to take hunting trips, support a sport shooting hobby or purchase high technology safety equipment.

Urban

Urban areas are much more likely to purchase firearms for protection over any other use (Pew Research, 2017). Only 19% of Urban residents own a firearm, making the likelihood of a purchase for a firearm accessory much lower than other demographic areas. Urban areas are likely to experience higher crime rates. Over 40% of all rapes, sexual assaults, and aggravated assaults occurred in Urban areas in 2015. Additionally, 48% of all robberies occurred in Urban areas (NDTHECIARPC, n.d.). Consumers with a higher disposable income in this area may also purchase a firearm for hunting and sport shooting. Urban consumers who own

firearms are more likely to purchase accessories and partake in the community and status related to their consumption.

Rural

Rural areas constitute 20-25% less income than people in urban areas and less likely that people can afford higher education. In a rural area where consumers are less likely to have high disposable incomes, they are still more likely to purchase guns and accessories for hunting compared to any other community. At least 46% of people living in rural areas own a firearm (Pew Research, 2017). This is the highest among all demographics. Consumers living in rural environments typically have more space to hunt and shoot. Rural income levels are starting to trend towards similar levels as Urban areas (Thiede, 2017). This shift may change the consumption patterns of firearms and accessories to be focused on protection over entertainment as well as a decrease in accessories due to the decreased amount of disposable income to make an accessory purchase.

Household Consumption

The consumption of this product changes based on household cycles and the views on the appropriate time to own a firearm. Households with children may change their consumption patterns based on viewpoints of having children and firearm safety concerns. Adults have the option to not purchase, remove these from the home, secure it, or to educate their children appropriately. Households that have higher household expenses are also more likely to have lower consumption because of the lack of disposable income. Adult members of the household will typically be involved in the original purchase decision of a firearm. The purchase process may involve the user of the product as well as any member that is financially tied to the user. Since this is a high price point product, the purchase decision will typically include a mutual agreement on the capital expense.

Ability to Purchase

The majority of EOTECH products are priced between \$600 and \$2,000 dollars. In 2021, the real median household income was \$70,784 dollars with an average of \$3,700 dollars being put toward entertainment (this includes shooting for hunting and sport), (Semega et al., 2022), (U.S. Bureau, 2022). EOTECH products are considered appropriate for consumers who have high incomes with extra disposable income. EOTECH products are sold at a higher price point and considered a high-end luxury product. Financially speaking, it would be unlikely for consumers with low incomes to purchase EOTECH products without a savings plan.

Consumers purchasing for sport typically use equipment that provides a competitive advantage. The demographic for consumer shooting sports is more likely to have higher income levels than other consumers in the marketplace. Consumers purchasing for hunting have a wider range of options to include entry-level and higher-quality accessories. For lower income consumers, they may choose to purchase a lower quality accessory and are less likely to save for a higher quality accessory purchase. For consumers purchasing for

self-defense, may or may not opt for higher-quality products based on their purchasing power, education, and perception of price signaling quality. It is less likely for consumers with lower incomes to purchase EOTECH products in this category.

Consumer Roles

Currently in the United States there is a debate on the appropriate roles or type of people that should be able to purchase, use or support households with firearms and firearm accessories. With 93 school shootings occurring in the United States between 2020 and 2021, the perception of this industry has become associated with negative bias. This is evidenced by 71% of Americans reporting that gun laws should be stricter (Langmaid, 2022), (Most Americans, n.d.). This creates a continuing conversation of the appropriate way to market, sell and use firearms and accessories.

Consumer Needs and Motives

Different needs for firearm accessories are based on the reason for the use of a firearm. EOTECH products cover a wide range of applications and can achieve multiple needs from different consumers that are shopping within the price point of EOTECH products.

Need for Performance

Consumers using firearm accessories for active hunting and sport will most likely be a more informed consumer. This consumer will have a need to increase their performance in their activity and will seek out products that do that. This creates a motive to research and purchase products like EOTECH. Since EOTECH products are innovative technology that performs at a higher level EOTECH products should satisfy the consumers' needs.

Need for Status

EOTECH products are some of the highest-quality manufactured optics in the industry. Due to the high-performance of their products, many high-profile military groups purchase these products for professional use creating a halo effect. Consumers that are making a purchase decision may be motivated by the need to “have the best” to match the kit used by these professionals. Using EOTECH accessories could signify to others in the community a person's financial status, skill set in the sport and knowledge of the industry.

Need for Safety

Due to political uncertainty and the unstable environment in the United States since 2020, 40% of firearm sales were first-time gun owners. Specifically, **given** the issue of African American shootings in America, more people of color purchased firearms for safety than ever before (Diaz, 2021). This motive to purchase firearms created an increase in minority firearm ownership. This will push the industry to become more inclusive to properly increase market share with new consumer personas and use cases. As new users become more

informed on firearm products, they may then be motivated to purchase accessories that give them an increased sense of safety and confidence in their shooting abilities.

Consumer Self-Concepts and Emotions

Firearms and firearm accessories are a functional lifestyle product. Consumers have similar personalities and self-concepts that tie into various brand affinities. Most consumers consider their firearm part of their extended self in which they define themselves in part by their possessions (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020), (Pew Research, 2017). Considering the products sold by EOTECH, the main lifestyles consumers will have been shooting for sport, hunting, safety and country. A consumer that is purchasing for sport purposes will more likely be concerned with products that provide a competitive advantage that are directly related to the type of shooting they do in competitions. Hunters may be more concerned with products that aid in the harvesting of animals in different lighting and weather. Self-defense consumers may be more concerned about the product being easy to use, safe and reliable. Between safety, hunting and shooting for sport, each consumer group will have different evaluative criteria to make a purchase decision. Criteria will be based on what product features are most important to improve their skill set in their chosen activity. Less informed consumers may focus more on price and ease of use. Since consumers can be easily persuaded to consider other evaluative criteria that is highlighted by an advertisement it is important to draw the consumer's attention to criteria other than price when it comes to EOTECH products (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

PRODUCT

EOTECH produces high-end niche products within the optics segment. The company is slowly expanding into various product categories offering a more diverse portfolio. The Holographic Weapon Sight is their flagship product line. In addition, they manufacture other optics including magnifiers, long-range scopes and specialty products including night vision and thermal optics (EOTECH, n.d.).

The products produced by EOTECH are manufactured with the professional user in mind and the features are focused on functionality and performance. Product variations exist and are tied to feature sets and use cases such as different reticle patterns, night vision functionality, magnifier compatibility, long-range, short-range and battery preference.

Because products are designed and manufactured for the professional user, consumers will benefit from the added cost and engineering that goes into the development, testing and manufacturing of these products. Consumers are typically willing to spend more if they know the products are designed to be used as intended without the risk of failure.

PRODUCT POSITION

The general semantic memory structure for EOTECH is a script memory structure. A script memory structure

is a memory of how an action sequence should occur (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Since EOTECH sells accessories for specific products (in this case, firearms), a script structure is used to ensure that their consumers can shop effectively. On EOTECH's website, the navigation takes you directly to the type of product that you are looking for. Most of the customers that purchase direct from EOTECH usually have prior knowledge about firearms. With a few exceptions on features and price points, consumers typically know what they want when shopping direct through the company.

EOTECH is looking to position themselves as a company that provides high-performance weapon accessories at a premium price while delivering world-class service. EOTECH products are priced accordingly as they ensure that the quality of the product resembles the price. These products are considered aspirational products to most consumers. Since EOTECH has a specific target market, the competition within the market can get more intense. EOTECH will want to position themselves in the consumer's minds whenever they think of high-quality weapon accessories presenting themselves with authority and professionalism (EOTECH, 2020). Product evaluation and consideration involve attribute selection such as price of the product, use case, battery type, accessory addons, night vision compatibility and color.

PRICING

Consumer Income

On average, consumers that currently purchase from EOTECH for hunting have an income of \$80,000/yearly, sport shooters at \$65,000/yearly and for personal protection at \$75,000/yearly (EOTECH, 2020). This means many consumers are considered to be middle-class (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Since the average American makes \$70,784 dollars a year and spends on average \$3,700 dollars a year on entertainment. Consumers at EOTECH fit with the average income and spending of Americans (Semega et al., 2022), (U.S. Bureau, 2022). Consumers that fit in the lower income rural or urban communities may only have sufficient income to support core needs. This makes EOTECH an aspirational purchase for these consumers. This consumer may save for a future purchase, follow influencers in the community or attend firearm conventions where they can interact with the community. Consumers that are purchasing EOTECH without the financial funds to do so may be looked at by others as participating in conspicuous consumption to receive credibility in the community. Since consumption of these products can be purchased online as well as in store, the use of credit cards and financing is a common way for consumers to purchase. This allows consumers who may not currently be able to afford EOTECH products purchase them to reach a desired status.

Price Perception

Consumers often relate price to quality. Having a higher price point can make consumers perceive that the product is a higher quality product (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Lowering the price may signal to consumers that the products are no longer of the same quality and can change the perceived value of the product or company. Consumers will sometimes take temporary price reductions as an indicator of lower quality as well (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Temporary price reductions used properly may have the ability to attract consumers who may not be able to purchase due to price. When it comes to selling through big-box chains like Cabela's and Bass Pro Shop, there is an ability to reduce prices without harming EOTECH brand

perception. Price reductions for first time purchasers, signing up for an account with the store and holiday sales can all affect the price of EOTECH products without being connected to the quality of the brand. Price reductions would be related to the big box store itself rather than EOTECH and allows for a larger consumer base to be able to purchase products. EOTECH should take advantage of using these discounts to increase their consumer base without connecting a perception of lower quality to the overall brand.

Role of Price

The role of price varies greatly based on the model and product type. Consumers who purchase for sport or hunting are more likely educated in their purchasing decision and understand the price per value of different products. Consumers in this section can rationalize a higher price point without being persuaded by marketing of lower quality or lower priced products. These consumers are also purchasing based on sport or hobby and more easily relate price to benefit vs. consumers who are not. Customers purchasing out of fear for their safety may or may not be willing to spend more on products based on their disposable income, education, and their perception of price signaling quality. If a consumer is new to the industry, they may be less educated or not have a strong motivation to acquire new information. This can affect a consumer's willingness to purchase products at high price points because they are unable to see the price per value of the product.

Household Price Evaluation

Households with two or more members may have an impact on the ability for the user to evaluate the product value. Households with higher education and incomes are more likely to make sensible product purchase decisions as well as consider the price and value proposition of a product (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). In multi-member households, a specific member may influence the decision based on price per value of the product. This may lead to a difficult purchase decision as the other household member may not have an emotional connection to the product and will evaluate the price more strictly than the user themselves.

Consumers with lower incomes may use price as a trigger to evaluate alternatives. These consumers may seek products like what EOTECH offers but at a lower quality and price point. They may not be in the market for a new product from EOTECH but aspire to have products produced at that level. If the price point changes to reach this audience, that may influence the consumer into making an EOTECH purchase vs. a lower-priced alternative.

Price as Evaluative Criteria

Price is an important evaluative criterion because the price point of EOTECH products accounts for more than half of what the average American spends on entertainment in one year. It is important to make consumers put other evaluative criteria above price to aid consumers in purchase decisions.

Disjunctive Decision Rule and the Lexicographic Decision Rule are both based on high performance (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). This is beneficial for EOTECH competing with lower quality and price point products so consumers could see the products based on performance to justify the price difference.

Compensatory Decision Rule uses a sum of the evaluative criteria. The product that has the greatest sum of consumer judgements would be the selected brand (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). If EOTECH was meeting high on multiple evaluative criteria it would allow for consumers to see the value in the brand overall rather than just on one point.

The Disjunctive Decision rule and the Lexicographic Decision rule would not be beneficial if price point was the most important evaluation criteria unless it was a surrogate indicator. Consumers that lack expertise to make informed judgments are more likely to use price as an indicator of high-quality products (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Consumers who do not see price as a surrogate indicator may view EOTECH as overpriced rather than high quality compared to competitors.

DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

Due to the strict regulatory nature of firearm sales in the United States, EOTECH utilizes an omni-channel distribution model to sell and distribute their products. Most optics are classified as non-firearms and have limited regulations on ownership outside of military or law enforcement designated products. Because these products typically have an Export Administration Regulation (EAR) classification, they can be sold to US Citizens but not exported without a license (The Export Administration Regulations - EAR | MIT Office of the Vice President for Research, n.d.). This limits distribution to the United States and U.S. Territories.

In the domestic commercial market, EOTECH sells products through wholesale distributors, dealer direct relationships, buy-groups and consumer direct (their website). Wholesale Distributors sell to Dealers who then sell directly to consumers. Dealer direct relationships are more expensive to manage and the inventory holding requirement to sell direct is high, but a lot of dealers purchase as a group to increase sales margin. The company website is the only method in which consumers can purchase EOTECH products directly from the factory at full Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP).

PROMOTION STRATEGY

Communication Values

A common value that firearm owners share throughout each segment is the value of freedom (Pew Research, 2017). America is considered the land of the free and is often associated with the word freedom. Using imagery surrounding the United States can help communicate the value of freedom that is shared by this consumer base. As the demographic continues to change and grow for this industry, this version of communication may need to change to fit patriotic views.

Gender Roles

Gender roles are evolving and communication to the consumer must change to include stronger female messaging. EOTECH should take steps to perceive women as a common consumer. The majority of EOTECH

imagery highlights white men. Using one gender to promote a brand may create the perception of gender role stereotypes which may make consumers feel excluded from the brand. Ways for EOTECH to avoid this is to include more imagery of women explaining and using products. EOTECH may also utilize popular female sport shooters on social media to promote the brand directly to a stronger female audience. This may help women feel more comfortable and interested in interacting with advertisements and the brand.

Reference Groups

Reference groups need to be used to understand how consumer perception will change with increased inclusion of minority groups (women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people) in marketing. Minorities are the fastest growing consumer of firearms and firearm accessories, so it is important to change the messaging to match this evolution (Pew Research, 2017). Current advertisements show white men using and explaining different products. Excluding minorities hinders the growth of the company as well as the social acceptance and equality of minorities in the United States. 64% of ethnic minorities and 49% of white consumers said that advertising that showcases different cultures would leave the consumer feeling more positive about the brand (Al-Saraf, 2021). Utilizing reference groups, EOTECH can understand how consumer behavior may change based on a stronger presence of minorities in the promotional strategy. This strategy may help create customer acquisition with consumers that may have previously dismissed the brand because of its lack of inclusion of minorities.

Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders for EOTECH can include members that have purchased multiple products from the company, are involved in groups for sport shooting or hunting, are subscribed to receive updates from the company on new products or were early adopters of EOTECH products. Consumers that are active in the community as well as active in seeking out new information are likely to share that information to others (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). These consumers tend to be charismatic, respected by others and knowledgeable which all lead to an ability to influence other consumers (Indeed Editorial, n.d.). It is important that EOTECH try to utilize opinion leaders to influence consumers to purchase EOTECH products. To do this, EOTECH can promote to consumers they deem to be opinion leaders to encourage them to speak to others about the brand. This promotion could include the opinion leader getting a discount off their next purchase for sharing information to others. If someone they shared information with then purchases a product, the opinion leader would receive the promotional discount.

Diffusion Inhibitors

EOTECH technology is considered innovative compared to other brands the industry despite the core product age. Products that are complex to understand have a slower diffusion rate (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). EOTECH can use videos on social media platforms and their website demonstrating how to use their products. Showing examples of other consumers easily using the product can help consumers feel comfortable trying a new product. It is important to demonstrate the positive performance results that using this new product can achieve. This can be done in the form of statistics about the performance of the product as well as videos demonstrating the performance of the product. This information can either be compared to other brands or

stand alone for the consumer to view. Making the observability of the positive effects of adopting innovative products like EOTECH allows for more rapid diffusion (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020) The largest diffusion inhibitor is trialability. Since return policies are strict on firearm accessories, consumers have limited chances to have a trial of the product. Being unable to try a new innovative technology like EOTECH products can discourage adopters of the product (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). EOTECH can try to reduce this by promoting customer reviews that have already purchased the product, using influencers to talk about their experience with the product, and promoting events that consumers can try the product out at.

Household Information Receiver

The user, decision maker, and purchaser should mainly receive information concerning EOTECH products.

Users and Decision Makers

Users of the product are more likely to be motivated to interact with product information and remember product information since they are motivated by success in their hobby. If the user is not the purchaser in the household, then they will most likely be the initiators, information gatherers, influencers and decision makers in the purchase decision. The user of the product is most likely going to be a high involvement consumer. Information should be focused on detailed product information as this consumer is persuaded more by advertisements that contain this (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

Purchasers

The purchaser in the household may or may not be the user of the product. In the case that they are not the user of the product or knowledgeable in the product they will be less motivated to interact and recall information. These members of the household should receive information close to holidays that may be appropriate for gift giving. During this time, the purchaser may be more motivated to interact with information leading to a purchase decision. The information provided for the purchaser should be in the form of images, emotion, and message source. These consumers are more likely to be low involvement and are more persuaded by this messaging (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

Promotional Campaigns

Exposure of promotional campaigns are primarily using magazines, social media and websites that fit the lifestyle of EOTECH products. EOTECH also utilizes firearm conventions to interact with the consumer. Firearms are not promoted on media outlets like TV commercials, radio commercials, or social media paid advertisements (Romer, 2021). Because of these advertising regulations, it is harder to get the segment to interact with a promotional campaign. This also becomes an issue for introducing and gathering new consumers into the market who do not currently live the stereotypical lifestyle of this segment.

EOTECH Promotional Strategy

EOTECH utilizes social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube to interact with consumers and promote products. Owned media is a good way for EOTECH to interact with the consumer without the large cost of advertisements. Consumers that follow the company's different owned media are already choosing to

be engaged with the brand showing interest in the content that they are promoting. Using social media also allows for the company to create a brand image that is cohesive with the lifestyle of their consumer. Consumers that can see self-identification in the brand are more likely to become brand loyal and attend and interpret the messaging appropriately (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Using these platforms also helps viewers share information more efficiently to friends and family that may not currently be aware of the brand. Since social media strongly depends on the use of images and videos this is a great way for the company to show visuals demonstrating easy use of the product which also helps the diffusion inhibitors the company faces.

EOTECH also utilizes print media such as magazines and publications to reach consumers. Consumers can subscribe to a digital magazine in the same way they do newspapers (News Media, 2021). This is important since today's consumers are largely found online. The magazines that EOTECH promotes are tailored to the lifestyle of their target consumer. Outdoor sports, firearms and shooting sports are mainly where targeted promotion occurs. 68% of magazine readers that noticed an advertisement are likely to act (News Media, 2021). Promoting through this medium allows EOTECH to draw consumers to their website to find out more information about the product.

EOTECH also has a large presence at various conventions within the firearm industry which allows the consumer to interact and learn about the product in person. Having a presence at an event that consumers are choosing to go to increases the chances they will research the information later. It is up to the spokes people running the EOTECH booth to ensure that consumers are representing the brand properly.

Purchase Motives

Purchase motives for this segment are a need for performance, status and safety. The different uses of the product can help determine the specific needs of each consumer. The promotional campaign can reduce motivational conflict with these demonstrations relating to lifestyle. Using videos of the product performance allows consumers to see what they can expect from these products. For a consumer of hunting and sport shooting this is an important motivator based on evaluative criteria. This can also help consumers see the price per value of the products. Motivational conflict can also be reduced by consumer reviews on the quality and performance of the product.

Learning Principles

The more important it is for the individual to learn information, the more effective and efficient they become in learning (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Consumers purchasing firearm accessories from EOTECH are driven by inherent interest in the lifestyle. Consumers purchasing products like EOTECH are unlikely to have to unlearn information regarding the product which makes learning and recall easier for the consumer. If a consumer unlearned information regarding the products reputation, it would be in the sense of the political and social stigma due to the increasing number of mass shootings and political pressure as the divide between political parties grows (Langmaid, 2022).

Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning will be used for most learning by customers considering marketing is focused on product performance. Consumers can have a chance to interact with the brand before purchasing at events like firearm conventions, in-store demonstrations, and community events. It is important for the company to be present to allow customers the chance to interact with the product. If the consumer has a positive experience with the brand, they will be more likely to purchase from the company because of that association. This also relates to customers who have purchased the product before and have a positive experience with the product and the brand. These customers are more likely to purchase from the same brand because of this positive experience they have associated with either the product or brand.

Each encounter that a consumer has with a brand and its products adds to the strength of learning. The more positive interactions the consumer has, the stronger their learning experience is and the better they can recall later on.

Emotional Implications

It is important to consider the emotional implications that are associated with the firearm industry due to gun violence. Consumers may feel a sense of sadness, anger or hate when viewing promotional campaigns that show firearms. 44% of U.S. adults personally know someone who has been shot (accidentally or intentionally) by a firearm (Pew Research, 2017). Although consumers in the industry typically do not have a negative perception of firearms regardless of interactions they may have had, it is important to be cautious how wording and imagery may impact someone who has experienced negative interactions. EOTECH ensures that messaging is focused on product information and product use demonstrations. EOTECH does not use messaging or visuals that play into political conversations and social violence happening in the United States. This type of messaging can impact positive feelings consumers may have about their products.

The consumer in this segment also has a strong sense of identity in the product connected to the product itself and their own freedom (Pew Research, 2017). This connection between the product and the consumer's self-identity is important when considering the role of emotions in the consumer purchase. Using imagery and videos that show people who fit the image and lifestyle can create strong emotions and personal connection to the ideology of freedom.

Lifestyle

Many consumer purchases for hunting and sport shooting view these hobbies as part of a lifestyle. That means showing the products being used in different ways directly portrays the accurate lifestyle of this consumer. Viewing the promotional campaign also may connect to consumers that interact with EOTECH as an aspirational brand. Using appropriate imagery will promote views on the ideal lifestyle using targeted promotional campaigns. Consumers purchasing for self-defense are typically not as involved in the day-to-day firearm community lifestyle. This can create difficulty in designing a lifestyle image that fits consumers who are only interested in the product and not the lifestyle. EOTECH can bridge the gap by creating promotional campaigns that also showcase people using the products for safety. These promotional campaigns can use specific messaging that speaks directly to the benefits of the product as it relates to self-defense.

Attitude Changes and Perception

A change in beliefs needs to occur to position EOTECH to be considered an inclusive brand in an industry whose demographics are growing in minorities. This applies to women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQ+ community. People of color are more likely to be affected by gun violence, women are more likely to be assaulted or killed from gun violence than men and hate shootings are more likely to happen to LGBTQ+ people than straight people (Edmund, 2022), (Killian, 2022), (Pew, 2017). Currently, these subcultures are not the majority demographic of firearm purchases but have grown largely in the last few years. Due to their interactions with firearms, these demographics may have a negative perception of the industry or feel excluded from lack of brand inclusion.

EOTECH needs to restructure the attitudes and perceptions for consumers not currently in the industry. 62% of U.S. adults say diversity in advertising had some impact on the way they perceived the brand and its products (Petrock, 2020). Creating content that uses multiple subcultures in its imagery would help change the perception of consumers who feel a barrier to entry for this market. Consumers that see people like them are more likely to pay attention to advertisements, feel like they can be part of the community, and purchase products from brands with inclusion. Changing the image of who EOTECH consumers can be can help aid in a positive perception of the brand for minority subcultures. These changes are specifically for public marketing strategy and do not speak on any changes that may have to happen internally to match the belief and value of inclusion.

Messaging

EOTECH's messaging is focused on performance and product information. Purchases in this industry are more likely to be high involvement which means consumers are persuaded by product information (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Since the products are a firearm accessory product uses depend on what the consumer is using a firearm for. The promotional campaign shows multiple styles of shooting to relate to every consumer's lifestyle and provide information and demonstrations of the product. This type of promotional campaign aids in creating consistent expectations in the product performance. By demonstrating how the product can be used and the results that come from its consumers have a clear expectation of what their products will do when they use them. This consistency is provided even more so in the statistics of performance and features that EOTECH provides for consumers in marketing and on the company's website. By providing consistent messaging related to the expectations of the customer creates a better perception of the brand for the customer.

Problem Recognition

EOTECH products are mainly a high involvement purchase consumers are more likely to seek out product information prior to problem recognition (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). This consumer can be motivated to purchase through the information and performance statistics provided about the products. Consumers in this segment can also be motivated to have problem recognition if they were not interacting with the brand naturally though advertising with influencers in the community and performance reviews of the products.

For less active or educated consumers, EOTECH may have to reach out to the consumer as they are unsure of what information to look for during the start of their problem recognition. Lower quality and price point brands are more likely to attract a consumer through marketing because of the consumer's lack of knowledge in the products. EOTECH can use email, social media, print and website marketing to attempt to provide consumers with the proper information. Consumers in this segment may interact with the community less so influencer marketing will not be as beneficial as consumers who are actively following influencers in the community.

Since many of these purchases will be high involvement purchases it is important to utilize selective problem recognition. Since EOTECH is a high-priced product, it is important that market share is gained compared to lower priced and quality competitors. The main type of information used to decide is performance of the product. Since most consumers are expecting a performance increase in hunting or spot shooting, products features that help will be the most important decision making aspects.

Post-Purchase Dissonance

Since this is a high involvement purchase consumers are more likely to search for reassurance of their purchase decision after purchasing and experience post-purchase dissonance (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). To avoid this, EOTECH must take different steps like reaching out to the consumer to thank them for their purchase and to ask for feedback on the product. This can aid a purchase decision as well as reduce post purchase dissonance (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

During the promotional campaign, EOTECH can use consumer reviews, detailed product and price information, return information and warranties to help reduce post purchase guilt. EOTECH is a highly rated brand it is important to highlight that to consumers to reassure them in the product they are purchasing. It is also important that EOTECH provides detailed product and price information in their promotional campaigns. A consumer having all the information at the start of their research will help them fully understand the product before purchasing. When this consumer then goes to look for reassurance after the purchase they will not be surprised by any added information about the product. It is also important that EOTECH openly explains their return policy to consumers to reduce the fear of their decision not being easily altered. Letting the customer know the return policy ahead of time and creating easier ways to return can help reduce post purchase dissonance (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). Warranties also play an important role like returns. Longer warranties can help a consumer feel more comfortable with a purchase decision because.

Brand Loyalty

The messaging of EOTECH is designed to create awareness of the brand and its performance. Using information about the products and the increased performance a person may have in their desired use will initiate a purchase. The customer's evaluation on the product performance itself will create brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is most likely going to come from product use for this industry as messaging and values are similar between differing brands. Since EOTECH sells high priced point products, it is less likely that consumers will be purchasing numerous new products every year. What is more important is that the consumer purchases the product and then through word of mouth can create new consumers of the brand.

This also plays into the importance of brand image and reputation. Having a good brand image and reputation will solidify the positive word of mouth experiences that consumers have had with the company.

Brand Delight

EOTECH is focused on providing high quality and high performing products for individuals in different segments of the firearm industry. These products are expected to outperform competitors in the industry because of innovative technology and high-quality materials. Consumers purchasing for hunting and shooting for sport expect to see positive results from the products they purchase. Consumers that can see a superior increase in their performance due to the product compared to other brands may become loyal to the brand. EOTECH considers itself to specialize in this aspect and should be able to evoke brand loyalty through its customers. Customers who experience this connection and create brand loyalty are more likely to spread information about the brand through word of mouth which is very valuable for the firm in customer acquisition (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT

EOTECH can ensure customer satisfaction by delivering great customer service, high quality products, reasonable prices for the level of quality, minority inclusion and customer security. The accessibility and the simplicity of EOTECH's website and distributor stores and websites can help contribute to customer satisfaction. If the customer has an easy time looking for the correct product and the website is easy to navigate through, it can help ease the shopping experience (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). EOTECH will also work with their customers to ensure that they are getting the best and right accessory they are looking for. Finally, customer security also leads to satisfaction because then the customers feel safe when using their personal information when purchasing an item from EOTECH.

Most factors that lead to customer satisfaction also led to customer commitment. EOTECH can gain customer commitment by building relationships with the customer and treating them with respect and ensuring that the consumer is satisfied with their shopping experience. Any of the three processes; brand identification, brand comfort, brand delight, can help gain customer loyalty for EOTECH (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

Brand Identification - Majority of consumers consider firearms part of their self-identification. Since firearm accessories are part of the firearm the consumer is using, consumers who purchase from EOTECH may also feel like the brand reflects their own self-concepts.

Brand Comfort - When EOTECH provides customer service that is above or at the consumer expectation, consumers may feel a sense of comfort and then are more likely to continue purchasing from the brand (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020). This may also help build relationships that create brand loyalty.

IMC RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this consumer analysis there have been suggestions for EOTECH in their IMC approach but based on consumer growth in the minority segment of this industry (women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people) the main recommendation for EOTECH is to focus on is diversity in promotional strategies to increase market share with these demographics. EOTECH currently uses messaging that is focused on performance and function through print media, social media, and TV advertisements. Changing diversity in these advertisements will allow EOTECH to connect with the growing minority demographics in the firearm accessory industry.

Social Media

EOTECH should use minority influencers on social media platforms that currently purchase from EOTECH or similar brands. Using influencers that are established in the lifestyle of this industry will reach a larger audience within the minority groups more quickly than the brand could do just by increasing their imagery of minority groups. During this EOTECH must also increase their imagery of minorities for the brands own social media advertisements and company website. This will create a cohesive message for the brand image. Since the purpose of increasing inclusive messaging and imagery is to increase minority consumers of EOTECH it is also important that the company ensure that the internal structure matches the public image. If the company does not fully create and embody inclusiveness it may result in a negative brand image over time. Without cohesive and inclusive messaging, the consumer can become confused on what the identity and values of the brand are (Mothersbaugh et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

EOTECH has positioned themselves to be considered a premium firearm accessory brand. By providing high quality products with innovative technology, EOTECH has continued to grow its market share and brand image since their inception in 1995. EOTECH has the chance to create new customer acquisition opportunities due to a significant change in the stereotypical firearm consumer. By creating a more diverse promotional strategy, EOTECH will be able to speak to the minority consumer segments that have been growing in popularity over the past three years. EOTECH has the opportunity and ability to educate a new consumer base on the industry and products to enhance the brand's perception. This will allow EOTECH to continue to have multiple competitive advantages over competitors in the market and continue to grow their market share.

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Professor's Evaluation - IMC 603 Consumer Behavior and Insights – Final Project Rubric

CONTENT	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS EARNED	Comments
Introduction and Overview	25	25	Excellent introduction of EOTECH and its position in the firearms accessory sector for consumers (as opposed to the institutional sector, which is not addressed in this assignment.)
Company Background and Situation	50	49	Thorough overview of the brand, its development, position, challenges and opportunities in the marketplace. Speaking to the CEO of the company as part of your research was a real plus. My only suggestion is to provide a brief description of partner, Bushnell, which may not be a household name.
Market Segmentation	40	40	Great work analyzing the characteristics and motivations of current and prospective firearm owners, with respect to income levels, gender, ethnicity and various lifestyle segments, especially those interested in sport shooting; hobbies; hunting; and/or self-defense. You make a good case for increasing appeals to diverse consumers in order to grow the market generally.
Product Position	40	40	Thorough discussion of the brand's position in the marketplace of a premium or "luxury"

			brand in the accessories sector, relative to other competitors and perceptions in the marketplace.
Pricing	40	40	Good discussion indicating how pricing serves to signal quality and status in the marketplace, among other contexts.
Distribution Strategy	40	40	Excellent assessment of the distribution approaches by the brand in terms of physical access, taking into account the various policies and regulations impacting distribution of firearms and related products.
Promotion Strategy	40	40	You offer a number of strategies for communicating with new consumer segments with regard to their outlooks, preferences, needs and motivations.
Product	40	40	Thorough discussion surrounding brand quality and perceptions.
Customer Satisfaction and Commitment	40	40	Good research and discussion concerning customer satisfaction and potential post-purchase cognitive dissonance. Given the controversial social and cultural contexts surrounding this product category, post-purchase considerations are likely to ensue.

IMC Recommendations	40	40	<p>You recommend that EOTECH engage in strategies which appeal to women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQ+ consumer segments, in efforts to grow the brand, using representative models and influencers over their website and relevant social media platforms. This recommendation is consistent with news reports indicating that growth in the market for firearms and training has been fueled by women and African-Americans. See for example: https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/08/17/gun-training-women-free-detroit-rick-ector-gun-sales-concealed-carry-background-checks/8162968002/. Some of this is occurring in the digital space, where ads can be targeted with precision and in accordance with various policies and regulations concerning such marketing.</p>
Conclusion	20	20	<p>Good job summarizing how EOTECH can compete successfully for new consumers in the current marketplace.</p>
References/Research Sources <i>(Proposition(s) or recommendation(s) are justifiable and supported by appropriate references (textbook, articles, industry</i>	25	25	<p>Excellent location and application of relevant sources to support your analysis and recommendations. Anywhere</p>

<i>data, trade or firm web sites, examples from industry and/or key executives, etc. All in-text citations and Reference page sources are credible, and correctly APA formatted.)</i>			
Organization/Clarity of Plan <i>(Document is arranged such that information is easy for the reader to find. The information flow is logical and enhanced by the appropriate use of formatting elements such as subheadings, bullet points, etc. Arguments are logically and clearly stated; illustrations such as figures, tables or graphics serve to support important statements or arguments.)</i>	25	22	<p>The quality of the writing is high and most information is presented in a clear and logical manner.</p> <p>That said, the organizational aspects need a bit of improvement. Namely, many of the subcategories/subheadings can be condensed and labeled more generally. (Please see the examples that I gave early in the document.) This will allow you to present information more concisely in several areas, while maintaining the context of your findings, analysis and recommendations. Also, there was reference to a Figure – however, there is no figure provided with this document. I'm not sure if you meant to include it and forgot – or if it was included in a different version of the assignment.</p>
Viability of Concepts <i>(Recommendations are realistic and able to be implemented under normal circumstances.)</i>	25	24	<p>Overall, this is a very informative and analytical submission which provides compelling strategic rationales for marketing the firearm accessory products made by</p>

			<p>EOTECH. There are many well-reasoned recommendations presented in this audit, backed up with data.</p> <p>Nevertheless, this is a highly controversial topic given the social and cultural contexts that surround firearms in general as they relate to interpretations of Second Amendment; the proliferation of mass shootings in the U.S.; and police shootings of unarmed citizens – especially men of color. These aspects and the current political divisions in society create a very complex environment in which to market such products. Therefore, be mindful that marketing executions in this regard are subject to scrutiny and criticism – including but not limited to who is targeted by and featured in the advertising, among other issues. Many consumers may reject such messaging – but your audit and proposal illustrates that there is room for market expansion among the consumer segments you propose. I would also ask you to look into the policies governing advertising content on the various social media platforms because some have restrictions on what they allow on their platforms. As private entities, they are</p>
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			allowed to establish their own policies.
Professionalism <i>(Document is formatted properly, including cover page, table of contents, page numbers, and is free from spelling, grammar, syntax and language usage errors. Document is submitted on or prior to the due date/time.)</i> Professionalism is required and expected.	10	9	As mentioned, the writing is very strong. Beyond that, there are a number of punctuation and APA style formatting issues flagged in my comments which need to be corrected.
Total:	500 pts. max.	494/500= 99%	

Comments: I think you did a great job with this assignment, despite a few minor issues. You provide excellent research and a firm grasp on compelling consumer insights along with viable recommendations to help this brand achieve its marketing goals.

Excellent work!