

Improving Sunkist's Brand Awareness and Market Competitiveness Through the STP Model and SWOT Analysis

Jiajie Zhang^{1,a,*}

¹*Grit Academy, Guangdong, China*

a. avargas0337@mtmercy.edu

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This study proposes a marketing campaign for Sunkist to boost sales and brand awareness through strategic differentiation. In an increasingly competitive fruit industry, Sunkist faces challenges in maintaining relevance and capturing consumer attention despite its long-standing reputation and quality offerings. By analyzing historical trends, industry dynamics, and market segmentation, the study identifies key consumer segments: college students, parents, and the elderly. It explores Sunkist's strengths, such as its sustainable practices and family-owned cooperative structure, while addressing weaknesses like low brand competitiveness and limited product diversity. Strategic solutions are suggested using segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) models, emphasizing digital and in-store engagement. Execution plans include social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and in-store promotions to enhance brand recognition and loyalty. Metrics for campaign evaluation, including sales trends and social media engagement, are outlined to ensure measurable success. This research highlights Sunkist's potential to strengthen its market position by leveraging its unique brand heritage and focusing on diverse consumer demographics.

Keywords: Brand Management, Marketing Strategy, SWOT Analysis, STP Analysis, Brand Awareness.

1. Introduction

This study proposes a Sunkist marketing campaign to improve this standing by differentiating Sunkist as a brand for increased sales and brand awareness. The campaign considers historical, industry, and market analyses to address segmentation, targeting, positioning, strategy, and execution. The present study then analyzes competitors to examine internal and external forces and tie it all together by outlining evaluation metrics and methods to track and ensure the success of the campaign. This study will focus on enhancing brand recognition among students and parents and brand loyalty among older consumers.

Owned and operated by citrus growers and members in California and Arizona, the Sunkist cooperative began in 1893 when PJ Dreher and his son Edward L. Dreher founded the Fruit Exchange along with several citrus growers and landowners. As members grew and the cooperative expanded, it was renamed California Fruit Growers Exchange in 1905 with more than 5,000 members and 45%

of the California citrus industry. In 1952, it was officially named Sunkist Growers, Incorporated. In the late 1990s, Sunkist became the largest cooperative in the United State fruit industry and controlled nearly 60 percent of the navel orange market. More importantly, the Sunkist cooperative supports sustainability and grows USDA-certified organic fruits on family-owned farms. According to Sunkist family stories, the Sunkist cooperative has been family-owned for generations, and each generation is making innovations based on the knowledge passed down [1].

The popularity of mandarins is increasing, now accounting for over 45% of the citrus market. Their small, convenient size and easy-to-peel nature make them an essential item in the produce aisle. Since being introduced last year, Sunkist Delite mandarins have experienced remarkable success, with sales tripling in their first season and quickly establishing the brand as one of the leading brands its category.

According to Fresh Trends 2021, mandarins were most often purchased by affluent and older shoppers. Those trends still hold true this year. It shows that incremental purchases are possibly based on income, with shoppers earning more than \$100,000 a year the most likely to buy. Following last year's trend, older shoppers are more likely to buy oranges than younger consumers; in fact, those 60 and older are more than twice as likely as younger consumers to buy citrus. The youngest consumers (18-19 years old) are among the least likely to buy citrus overall. The likelihood of buying increases with the number of children in the family. Southerners are less likely to buy citrus than other regions [2].

According to the USDA, global citrus production increased by 2.8 million tons between 2021 and 2022 from the previous year to a record 37.9 million tons, with China, the EU, Morocco, and Turkey as the main producers. Global consumption and exports are at record high levels. However, US production is expected to decline by 25% due to unfavorable weather in California, the highest citrus-producing state. Although consumer demand remains strong, consumption is down as imports cannot replace the decline in production [3].

According to a study by Rabo Research Food and Agribusiness, mandarins have been one of the most consumed fresh citrus in the US over the past few years because of their convenience, health, and flavor. Current US per capita consumption of easy-to-peel citrus is 7 pounds per year, this includes mandarins, tangerines, and clementines. The easy-to-peel nature makes mandarin a perfect snack and can be easily cross merchandised with other foods. Mandarin is an excellent source of vitamin C, antioxidants, and minerals that decrease bad cholesterol, boost good cholesterol, and regulate blood pressure. The key compounds of beta carotene and beta-cryptoxanthin help improve the immune system, improve the growth of development, and reduce the risk of cancer. These factors along with their sweet taste make mandarins one of the most popular easy-peel fruits. Thus, the huge market of mandarin oranges is suitable for consumers in many age groups [4].

2. Case Description

Sunkist is a well-known fruit brand that famous on its citrus products, especially their oranges and mandarins. As one of the leaders in the citrus industry, Sunkist promote itself on providing nutritious and high-quality fruit to consumers. Citrus is a nutrient powerhouse, rich in vitamins and antioxidants. Even though the elderly are the biggest citrus consumers, there is still a potential chance in targeting other demographics, such as college students and parents. However, the abundance of competing brands in the market often makes customers get lost with those so many brands. This study examines how Sunkist can strategically position itself to stand out and appeal to different consumer groups through targeted marketing efforts and brand management.

3. Analysis

3.1. Industry Background

Even though Sunkist is very professional and has a long history in the citrus market and has high-quality products, the market performance of this brand is not as good as other brands. In other words, Sunkist's competitiveness is low and insufficient compared to other citrus brands. The World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) is to advancing sustainable development by measuring and promoting corporate impact on crucial global goals. One of its key evaluations is the Food and Agriculture Benchmark, which evaluates 350 companies across the entire food and agriculture value chain. This comprehensive evaluation covers firms involved in agricultural, products and commodities, animal protein, as well as those engaged in processing, manufacturing, retail, and food services. In 2021, Sunkist ranks 246/350 in the food and agriculture benchmark. However, in 2023, this brand still stay in the same ranking position [5].

3.2. Competitor Analysis

Sunkist competitors Cuties and Halos. Cuties are seedless, less acidic, smaller, and easier to peel than Halos. These qualities make them more appealing to children, their main audience. The Cuties mandarins rot slowly. Contains 1 gram of protein, 8 grams of natural sugar, 2 grams of fiber, and no fat. Halos are seedless, more acidic, bigger, and harder to peel than cuties. Cuties spoil quicker, and it contains 37 calories, 4% fat, 90% carbohydrates, and 6% protein. Sunkist was founded by the first California family to market Murcott mandarins. Sweet, juicy, medium-sized Sunkist mandarins are easy to peel. They can also be used in cooking recipes. A Sunkist mandarin contains 1 gram of protein, 16 grams of carbs, 15 grams of natural sugar, 5 mg of salt, and no fat [6].

All in all, Cuties are favored in the market for their child-friendly features—small, sweet, and easy to peel—while Halos cater to those who prefer a stronger taste and larger fruit, despite being harder to peel. Each brand has carved out its own market niche, catering to different consumer preferences effectively. Under the comparison, Sunkist contains almost all the strengths that Cuties and Halos have but with a convenient medium size and more versatility. In addition, Sunkist also has an abundant brand history and unique brand spirit which can help attract more customers and maintain consumer stickiness.

3.3. Lack in Brand Awareness and Influence

Unclear brand positioning and insufficient brand promotion cause Lack in Brand awareness and influence. Sunkist is professional on growing citrus and developing machines to improve their efficiency; however, they did not put enough focus on their marketing campaign and brand management. Sunkist does not have an impressive image and selling point like other brands, such as Cuties Citrus. Cuties personifies citrus to make people have a deeper impression of their brand. Through cute brand image and packaging design, it attracts family and children consumers, emphasizing the convenience and health benefits of their product. Cuties knows its selling point and positions its brand as a healthy and convenient snack choice, especially for the children's market, emphasizing the sweetness and ease of eating of its products.

In contrast, Sunkist did not realize the importance of marketing and brand management and publicity until 2023. Before that, Sunkist did not release any relevant marketing strategies until Jamie Sells became the new Vice President of Sales and began to emphasize the importance of brand publicity. Even their new advertisement video on YouTube did not highlight Sunkist's impressive selling point.

3.4. SWOT

The SWOT analysis method will analyze the Sunkist brand from four dimensions: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [7].

3.4.1. Strength

Firstly, one of the strengths of Sunkist is they have healthy benefits, such as beta-carotene, beta-cryptoxanthin, vitamin C, antioxidants, potassium, calcium, magnesium, soluble fiber and so on. Sunkist's citrus not only can be a healthy snack choice, but also versatile in different use. Sunkist's citrus can be used to cook desserts or dishes. All the citrus from Sunkist is planted from family-owned farms. The brand has a long history and rich experience in citrus growing, with the family farm having been in operation for 130 years. Additionally, Sunkist are focus on sustainability for many years, and it has strength on the organic price premium in the market. Sunkist cause low environmental impact for the society since their concept of sustainable development. The combination of Sunkist's healthy, multi-use, and eco-friendly image, along with its rich and long history, plays a significant role in building it brand image and marketing, also enhancing its prestige and credibility.

3.4.2. Weakness

Secondly, the weakness of Sunkist is their limited product mix compared to other citrus brand, inefficient management compared to traditionally structured firms, organic cost premium, and their sustainability cost premium.

3.4.3. Opportunities

Thirdly, the opportunities of Sunkist for the future market would be the increase in consumer interests and demand for fruits and vitamins, Popular fruit needed for various demographics, the demand for organic market, socially and environmentally conscious consumers, and leading cooperative firm.

3.4.4. Threats

Finally, the main threats that Sunkist is facing come from its competitor and the highly competitive market, and changes in technology. These factors may cause Sunkist to lose some market share and lose some customers. In order to improve the customer loyalty and brand influence of Sunkist brand, there are some suggestions for Sunkist brand based on STP marketing model, which is segmentation, targeting and positioning.

4. STP Model

4.1. Segmentation

For segmentation, Sunkist mandarins are a great fast peel option for those wishing to live a better lifestyle due to their numerous health benefits. To correspond with the Sunkist Committee's objectives of improving mandarin demand and sales, the present study will target consumers into several segments: college students, parents, and the elderly seeking healthy lifestyles [8].

4.2. Targeting

For Targeting, they should intend to reach their target demographics mostly online, but also in person. Because practically everyone nowadays has access to the internet, they should intend to collaborate with well-known influencers to generate widespread exposure and market Sunkist mandarins to

everyone wishing to improve their health. To reach Sunkist's offline audience, setting up booths in big retail stores that gain a lot of foot traction will boost Sunkist's exposure to newer consumers. Research has shown that, along with boosting sales, the practice of offering free food samples makes customers loyal to stores and brands over longer periods of time. With a bigger audience now in place, Sunkist will be able to distribute coupons to better market Sunkist mandarins, engage consumers, and entice them to build brand loyalty for Sunkist.

4.3. Positioning

For positioning, Sunkist Mandarins are a highly recommended organic fruit since they have more beta-carotene and beta-cryptoxanthin than regular oranges, making them a great complement to customers' diet. They also include vitamins B and C that everyone needs. Mandarins also make for an excellent low-effort snack that can be used in a variety of dishes for a savory or sweet touch. Additionally, creating the image of a long history and valuable citrus brand, because it is a non-profit operation, USDA organic certificated, healthy and tasty.

5. Suggestions and Strategy

There are some strategies and execution examples base on those strategies for Sunkist. To target college students, it can publicize Sunkist's value through social media. Firstly, Sunkist can create official accounts on popular social media such as Instagram and TikTok where Sunkist is not engaging in, then post videos and pictures introducing the Sunkist brand. Nowadays, college students often do not pay attention to and distinguish brands when buying fruit. According to Experian Simmons, 98% of college students use social media on a daily basis [9]. Younger demographics also have the highest support for causes such as sustainability and labor empowerment. Therefore, based on the purchasing behavior, ubiquitous social media engagement, and values, this strategy will effectively improve Sunkist's popularity among college students and build brand awareness to make Sunkist stand out when faced with fruit options at grocery stores.

To target parents, Sunkist can do an online campaign that mainly collaborates with food channel YouTubers. Nowadays, many parents are turning to YouTube to learn how to cook different dishes for their kids and their families. Food channels can promote the use of Sunkist citrus in cooking. In the later stage, a joint online community will be established to regularly distribute recipes and coupons to these fans. Members can submit their own recipes, ideas, and feedback to the community to encourage participation and create connections for buzz marketing opportunities. Coupons incentivize purchases which help reach the goals of increasing demand and sales. Once these parents get used to the Sunkist brand, the present study believe they will become loyalists when choosing mandarins.

To primarily target the elderly in addition to all citrus consumers, Sunkist can set up exclusive Sunkist booths in large retail stores since they seldom use online platforms such as YouTube or social media. The main purpose of this tactic is to provide an opportunity for customers to taste the mandarins before buying them and to promote the healthy and organic characteristics of Sunkist mandarins. Most customers are willing to buy products that they have tried with a good impression. As long as customers think the mandarins are delicious after tasting, they will be more willing to accept the credence attributes that Sunkist products are organic and healthy. This in-person sampling promotion will appeal to health needs and drive brand adoption to increase sales.

6. Execution

Here are some example executions that base on the previous strategies.

6.1. Official Social Media Account

Firstly, an official social media account will be created. Producing videos and posts series that introduce Sunkist and upload them to several official social media accounts. These series can include the following topics:

6.1.1. Mission Series

This content series will introduce Sunkist's superior flavor and unique cooperative business model. This promotion will help college students understand that Sunkist is different from other mandarin brands by being non-profit and mostly family-run. Choosing Sunkist not only provides the expected Sunkist quality but also supports the cause of family farmers and the whole cooperative. There will be a slogan: "Sunkist is the sweetest socially conscious mandarin."

6.1.2. Family Series

Sunkist has over 100 years of meaningful stories. This content series will reflect that Sunkist is very reliable and has created consistent value that other brands lack. As a cooperative of family-owned farms - some already in the fifth generation - the Sunkist producers offer personalized and relatable experiences that customers can connect with to trace the rich brand history, be part of the brand culture, and add life to the products they are consuming. There will be a slogan: "Every Sunkist mandarin has been grown with care by our family since 1893."

6.1.3. Healthy People and Planet Series

This content series will introduce how farms operate to support sustainability by using solar power, low-emission vehicles, and water-saving irrigation systems. Sunkist is also a proud provider of organic citrus. "Good for you, good for the planet."

6.2. Collaboration with Influencer

Secondly, Sunkist can collaborate with the YouTube channel Laura in the Kitchen, a food channel with 3.86 million subscribers, by having her upload videos called "Laura with Sunkist" regularly every Friday and create a playlist called "Sunkist Dishes." Dishes featured in these videos mainly use Sunkist citrus to cook dishes. The present study then builds up a fan group chat of "Laura with Sunkist" fans on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other chatting platforms. Discount codes for Sunkist products at stores are included in video descriptions. Additionally, the present study will set up a reward system where followers can get extra coupons if they cook the dishes in the video or come up with their own recipes and share pictures and feedback on group chat or social media.

6.3. Offline Booths Promotion

Thirdly, Sunkist can first set up booths for Sunkist in Costco, where sampling is commonly offered. Afterwards, it can expand these booths to other large stores such as Safeway, Trader Joe's, and Walmart. Staff will introduce healthy, organic Sunkist products to try and then guide them to purchase.

6.4. Evaluation

After those execution, Sunkist can evaluate its effectiveness using two types of key performance indicators, their market revenue and brand awareness.

Sunkist can analyze and compare sales data trends before, during, and after implementing the campaign to evaluate relevant growth. The difference-in-differences is a statistical approach used to

determine causal relationships in scenarios where implementing randomization is not feasible, according to The World Bank and Dimewiki [10]. In this case, they can pick one city to facilitate the taste promotion with coupons and get the outcome, comparing the results with its earlier sales and also compare the difference with another city's sales without implementing the plan, which will help Sunkist get fairly accurate correlation and differences without possible influencing factors. Sunkist can implement those strategies in a broader range of these key performance indicators to reveal success, otherwise, it can make adjustments to the strategies.

Sunkist can also analyze social media engagement data such as followers, views, tags, and hashtags. Brand engagement data will also be cross-referenced with partner engagement data to evaluate their effectiveness as influencers and how their viewers respond to the collaboration. Consistent growth will also be examined to see if increased brand loyalty resulted from increased brand awareness. It can also reach out to more collaborators. If these key performance indicators reveal success, otherwise, it can try other methods such as ecological influential tags, challenges, or some surveys with coupons on various social media.

7. Conclusion

This study provides a strategic analysis for Sunkist to enhance its brand awareness and competitiveness within the citrus market. The research identifies key challenges, such as the need for better segmentation targeting and the application of creative marketing strategies. By focusing on specific consumer groups and apply creative marketing tactics, Sunkist can significantly expand its market power and gain deeper brand loyalty from customers.

Moreover, utilize its idea of sustainability, and its long and rich history offers a unique selling proposition that aligns well with the values of nowadays consumers. This not only make Sunkist unique from competitors but also enhances its appeal as a responsible and historical brand. Implementation of these strategies should be monitored through key performance indicators to ensure effectiveness and allow for timely adjustments.

The implications of this study are substantial, suggesting that with targeted efforts, Sunkist can position itself as a leader in the industry, driving both sales growth and increased brand influence. This can potentially open new consumer segments that align with the brand's values and product offerings.

However, this research is not without limitations. The study relies on current market data and consumer trends, which are subject to change. Future research should therefore consider the dynamic nature of consumer preferences and the potential impact of global economic shifts on market behavior. Additionally, further studies could explore the long-term effects of Sunkist's marketing strategies on consumer loyalty and brand management.

In conclusion, this study provides detailed marketing strategy to help Sunkist improve its position in the market. However, it is important for Sunkist to keep researching and adjusting to new market trends and what customers want. This ongoing effort will help Sunkist stay relevant and ready to face any new challenges and opportunities that come its way.

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