

## BOOK REVIEW

Samuel Rohr and  
Abrar Fitwi <sup>±</sup>

Robert L. Williams and Helena A. Williams, **Vintage Marketing Differentiation: The Origins of Marketing and Branding Strategies**. New York, NY, Palgrave MacMillan, 2017, 256 pp, ISBN: 978-1-137-39431-6.

Vintage Marketing Differentiation by Robert and Helena Williams is a historical analysis of the origins of the Marketing and Branding strategies used by organizations throughout the world. The book examines the origins of marketing and branding strategies that were used for over 100 years. Many of the Marketing and Branding strategies used today are actually variations of past strategies. The book examines and traces 16 Vintage Differentiation strategies back to their original business source. The purpose of the books is to show the cyclical nature of innovation grounded in evolutionary modeling in which managers become aware of changes in their environment and adapt accordingly.

Williams and Williams do a thorough job of defining differentiation and the phases of marketing differentiation process. They provide a historic example of how companies have traditionally differentiated their product. More specifically, the authors identify three phases of the differentiation process: creating products and marketing innovations, implementing differentiated marketing mix, and maintaining the brand differentiation during brand flux. A unique feature of the book is historical and practical views on innovation. Not only do the authors provide sound theories of innovation, but some practical application in regards to encouraging innovation. The book includes a discussion of product and marketing innovation.

---

<sup>±</sup> Samuel Rohr, PhD, Assistant Professor of Management, Department of Business Administration and Economics, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN 46556, Indiana, United States. E-mail: [srohr@saintmarys.edu](mailto:srohr@saintmarys.edu).

Abrar M. Fitwi, PhD, Associate Professor of Finance, Department of Business Administration and Economics, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN 46556, Indiana, United States. E-mail: [afitwi@saintmarys.edu](mailto:afitwi@saintmarys.edu).



Additionally, the authors discuss the development of the Marketing Mix from the twelve ingredients that went into making it. It also provides some effective Marketing Mix examples from products like Wrigley, Aunt Jemima, and Buster Brown. Finally, the authors provide advice on how to manage a product's flux referring to the reinforcement and adaption of the brand image or reputation over a period of time. The brand must constantly be reinforced and adapted simultaneously.

Williams and Williams examined the sixteen vintage marketing strategies that comprise the 4 Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) of Marketing. The authors explored thirty historic brands and their use of the vintage Marketing strategies. Interestingly, many of the brands have employed several of the vintage marketing strategies. As the brand fluxed, the brands changed their marketing strategy changed accordingly. The authors grouped Marketing efforts into three categories: Promotion grouping, Price grouping, and Place grouping. Furthermore, the authors examined the types of activities that companies employed in each grouping. Although the activities are part of the success, the most important component is fact finding and analysis plays creating value. As past cases indicate, the best Marketing strategies falter without careful fact finding and analysis. As the authors noted, marketing strategies will be most successful when careful matched with market conditions.

An interesting section of the book was the chapter that examined historical promotional activities that various companies have used over the years. The authors focused on Marketing activities including saturation advertising, unique promotion, packaging innovations, trade cards and visuals, educating the consumer, endorsements, logos and trademarks, slogans and singles, and encouraging WOM (word of mouth). For each marketing activity, the authors provide examples of companies and brands that perfected these strategies. Organizations can not only learn what companies have previously deployed, but they can see how companies have effectively balanced promotional activities based on market conditions. Based on the success of the companies listed, organizations can learn from the successful implementation and combination of promotional activities.

It was also interesting that the authors discussed the vintage pricing strategies that focused primarily on attracting customers by reducing their risk to purchase. They have included several examples of companies and brands that were among the earliest to implement these pricing strategies and differentiated through samples, trials, and coupons.



Although the Marketing concepts are somewhat dated, their applicability still remains true today. Similar strategies continue to be implemented in business today as there exists patterns of the revitalization of earlier innovations. The book concludes with examples of how current companies are successfully implementing one or more of the 16 Marketing strategies identified. Additionally, the fifth P of Marketing, or Perception, the authors identified in the book can be easily recognized in the cases. The strongest contribution the authors made were the identification of historical marketing strategies, the differentiation process, emphasis of matching marketing strategies and Marketing analysis, and the development of the 5th P of Marketing (Perception).