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REVIEW

Strategies for sustainable growth in competitive environments

Estrategias para el crecimiento sostenible en entornos competitivos

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: in a dynamic and competitive business context, the importance of applying strategic concepts to strengthen organisational sustainability and growth was analysed. Through a case study, a theoretical framework was established based on four essential pillars: strategic planning, product development, competitive differentiation and customer loyalty. These elements were considered fundamental to guide managerial decisions that would positively impact the company's profitability and positioning.
Development: strategic planning was presented as the central tool for defining priority objectives and outlining effective courses of action. According to various authors, it facilitated adaptation to the changing environment and improved decision-making. Secondly, the growth strategy of product development was addressed, which sought to satisfy new market needs through innovation, as demonstrated by Apple's portfolio. The competitive differentiation strategy, on the other hand, offered a key advantage by highlighting unique product or service attributes. Finally, customer loyalty was further explored, highlighting its role in building lasting relationships and reducing operating costs.
Conclusion: it was concluded that the integration of these strategies allowed transforming weaknesses into strengths, generating added value and consolidating customer loyalty. Overall, it was evident that these practices contributed to the positioning of the company and to sustainable and competitive growth.

Keywords: Strategic Planning; Differentiation; Loyalty; Product Development; Competitiveness.

RESUMEN

Introducción: en un contexto empresarial dinámico y competitivo, se analizó la importancia de aplicar conceptos estratégicos para fortalecer la sostenibilidad y el crecimiento organizacional. A través del estudio de un caso práctico, se estableció un marco teórico basado en cuatro pilares esenciales: planificación estratégica, desarrollo de productos, diferenciación competitiva y fidelización de clientes. Estos elementos fueron considerados fundamentales para guiar decisiones gerenciales que impactaran positivamente en la rentabilidad y el posicionamiento de la empresa.
Desarrollo: la planificación estratégica se presentó como la herramienta central que permitió definir objetivos prioritarios y trazar rutas de acción efectivas. Según diversos autores, esta facilitó la adaptación al entorno cambiante y mejoró la toma de decisiones. En segundo lugar, se abordó la estrategia de crecimiento por desarrollo de producto, la cual buscó satisfacer nuevas necesidades del mercado a través de la innovación, tal como lo demostró Apple con su portafolio. La estrategia competitiva de diferenciación, por su parte, ofreció una ventaja clave al resaltar atributos únicos del producto o servicio. Finalmente, se profundizó en la fidelización de clientes, destacando su papel en la construcción de relaciones duraderas y en la reducción de costos operativos.
Conclusión: se concluyó que la integración de estas estrategias permitió transformar debilidades en fortalezas, generar valor agregado y consolidar la lealtad del cliente. En conjunto, se evidenció que estas prácticas contribuyeron al posicionamiento de la empresa y a un crecimiento sostenible y competitivo.

Palabras clave: Planificación Estratégica; Diferenciación; Fidelización; Desarrollo de Producto; Competitividad.

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing business environment, strategic decision-making becomes a crucial element in ensuring the sustainability and growth of organizations. This paper aims to explore a set of essential theoretical concepts derived from a case study analysis, establishing a robust theoretical framework to support proposals for improvement. Among the fundamental pillars addressed are strategic planning, corporate growth strategies through product development, competitive differentiation strategy, and finally, customer loyalty. Each of these components represents a key tool for achieving organizational objectives, improving profitability, and positioning the company effectively in the marketplace.

Strategic planning is at the core of this theoretical analysis, as it enables organizations to design a clear path to the future, taking into account both their internal capabilities and the changing environmental conditions.[1] This management tool not only facilitates the formulation of priority objectives but also enables the establishment of concrete courses of action to achieve them. From this perspective, strategic planning is presented as a guide for efficient and effective decision-making, allowing companies to adapt and respond with agility to the challenges of the market, as well as the strategy of growth by product development, which seeks to expand the value offer of the company through innovation or improvement of existing products.[2,3]

This strategy is particularly relevant when the aim is to reach new market segments or to satisfy the current needs of consumers better. Examples such as Apple demonstrate how this tactic can be used successfully to maintain competitiveness and to dynamize the product portfolio.

On the other hand, the competitive strategy of differentiation becomes important in the face of an increasingly demanding consumer. In this sense, offering unique products or services with value attributes that stand out from the competition becomes a fundamental strategic advantage.[4] This approach allows companies to position themselves not only on price but also on quality, design, functionality, or user experience.

Finally, the concept of customer loyalty, which is understood as the development of long-lasting and stable relationships with consumers, will be addressed. Beyond simple incentives, customer loyalty requires an integrated approach that combines technology, service, interaction, and customer knowledge to foster a lasting connection with the brand.

DEVELOPMENT

This section will develop the theory of the essential concepts that emerge from the case report, explaining the principles of these concepts through their primary referents to generate a comprehensive and sustainable theoretical framework. The primary theoretical framework of the work is strategic planning; on the other hand, the corporate strategies of growth through product development and competitive differentiation will also be analyzed. Finally, the theory of customer loyalty will be developed.

Strategic Planning

Firstly, strategic planning is defined by a large number of authors in which they are different but complement each other; according to the ECLAC2012 Strategic Planning Manual, strategic planning is a management tool that supports the decision-making process of organizations regarding their current activities and the path they must follow in the future to adapt to the changes and demands imposed by the environment and to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness and quality in the goods and services they provide'.[5] The inclusion of strategies in the plan for the fulfillment of the established objectives is of utmost importance since "it consists of an exercise of formulation and establishment of priority objectives, whose main characteristic is the establishment of courses of action (strategies) to achieve these objectives. From this perspective, SP is a key tool for decision-making".[5] Companies need to understand themselves holistically and have the capacity and strategic agility to survive the new business environments.[6,7] Strategic planning is management by plan, an analytical process aimed at effective and efficient decision-making.[8] It includes various characteristics to consider, such as organizational knowledge, strategy formulation, competition, and leadership.[5,9]

Corporate strategy of growth through product development

The strategy of growth through product development aims to offer new products or services to existing consumers in the same market. There are two ways to achieve this: by introducing new products that incorporate innovative functions and features or by enhancing existing products with new features to better meet consumer needs. One company that has followed this strategy is Apple, in its constant development of new and innovative products, expanding the existing line.[10,11,12]

Competitive strategy of differentiation

Concept that we cannot ignore is the strategy of differentiation; as the years go by, consumers are in constant search of satisfaction with higher expectations and demands being popular the strategy of product differentiation and/or service, this is characterized by offering customers a service or product with a superior value and different in some aspect such as design, service, functionality, among others.[13,14,15] It is a frequent strategy in large and successful companies, 'Differentiation is a magic formula that is behind the success of large companies such as Apple, Coca-Cola, Zara, Google, Walmart, etc.'[16,17]

Customer loyalty

Finally, one of the specific objectives of the case report is to increase customer loyalty; Juan Carlos Alcaide Casado defines loyalty as a positive attitude, which involves the union of customer satisfaction (formed by rational elements, affections, and behaviors) with a stable and lasting consumption action'.[18,19] Customer loyalty is not only about discounts, gifts, or points but also about forming a bond between the consumer and the brand through technologies, processes, ideas, and interactions.[20] A crucial

moment in a company's day is customer acquisition, where they must focus their efforts on attracting new consumers and retaining existing ones by implementing loyalty policies and preventing customers from engaging in similar activities with competitors.[20,21]

Retaining customers over time has several benefits, such as increased sales thanks to repeat purchases by the same customers, improved marketing productivity, and reduced business costs by increasing the number of satisfied customers.[23,24]

In conclusion, with the theoretical framework, after having developed the main concepts through various opinions and statements of authors that arise from the case report, we can identify the importance of strategic planning to establish an appropriate action plan for a correct decision making and achieve the overall objective of increasing the profitability of the restaurant.

Through corporate and competitive strategies, a weakness is transformed into a strength by creating vegan and vegetarian options, including groups of people taking advantage of the changing trend towards healthy and environmentally sustainable gastronomic options; on the other hand, through the opportunity of technological progress in the gastronomic market, a strong investment will be made in the acquisition of a robot waiter. Additionally, by implementing post-sales service actions, we will further increase customer loyalty by capturing consumer data. As a result, added value is achieved in the restaurant, leading to increased sales, a broader customer base, and enhanced customer loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing and developing the key concepts emerging from the case report, we can affirm that the implementation of sound strategic planning is essential for any organization seeking to adapt to a changing environment and remain competitive. This tool enables companies to establish clear goals, identify opportunities and threats in their environment, and define the necessary courses of action to achieve their objectives. In this particular case, strategic planning serves as the basis for guiding management decisions, facilitating the transformation of weaknesses into strengths, and exploiting market opportunities.

The corporate strategy of growth through product development is presented as an effective response to the current market demands. In an environment where consumer preferences are evolving rapidly, innovation and constant improvement of the product portfolio become key differentiators. The development of vegan and vegetarian options, for example, not only responds to a growing trend towards healthier and more sustainable consumption habits but also broadens the restaurant's target market, generating new revenue and positioning opportunities.

The competitive differentiation strategy complements this approach by enabling the company to differentiate itself in specific aspects of its offering. In saturated markets, differentiation through quality, design, customer service, or overall experience can provide a crucial advantage. In this case, the incorporation of innovative technologies, such as a robot waiter, not only improves operational efficiency but also reinforces the restaurant's image as a modern space aligned with the latest technological trends, thereby generating a higher perceived value among customers.

Finally, customer loyalty is consolidated as a fundamental strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of the business. A loyal customer not only contributes to recurring purchases but also acts as a brand ambassador, generating positive word-of-mouth advertising and reducing the costs associated with attracting new consumers. Actions focused on after-sales service, the strategic use of customer data, and personalized attention are key tools for strengthening the emotional bond with the consumer and increasing their loyalty to the brand.

Together, these strategies form a coherent and synergistic framework that enables the restaurant not only to improve its profitability but also to position itself as an innovative, customer-oriented organization prepared for the challenges of today's environment. The effective integration of these concepts is the path to sustained growth and differentiation in an increasingly competitive market.

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FINANCING

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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