Chapter 14

A Design Framework for a Market Intelligence System for Healthcare Sector: A Support Decision Tool in an Emergent Economy

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ABSTRACT

The healthcare market is a dynamic sector, where marketing decisions are decisive and critical. Strategic and tactical planning demand data and information to produce knowledge, which will capacitate firms for business maneuvers as product positioning, pricing, and technological implementation for optimal business development. Marketing data and information must be provided from a variety of sources to produce knowledge, in a process that can be characterized as “organizational intelligence.” Collected contents from healthcare associated industrial sectors, such as chemical and pharmaceutical, have the potential to produce integrated value chain knowledge, improving analysis and decision processes. Approaching the healthcare market, a framework for an intelligence system for marketing decisions is discussed in this chapter. Initially reviewing the literature, a conceptual base is formed, which delimits the evaluation of intended framework. As an exam of practical marketing intelligence system application, case studies of real decisions observed in Brazilian market are done at the end of the chapter to evaluate how intelligence and knowledge, as conceptualized in the literature review, serve in typical healthcare marketing competition, as managerial support for problem solutions.

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INTRODUCTION

The actual complexity of businesses management can be observed in different situations. From content control point of view it is specially noticed. On one hand, the environment is overloaded with disorganized data and information contexts, spread throughout the organization and even in the competitive chain. On the other hand, the lack of consistency for tactical decisions, such as the critical marketing plans alternatives where a mistake can lead to a risky situation, as an error in product offer, misinterpretation of customer needs or definition of incoherent prices which can result in financial losses or opportunistic chances for competitors. This chapter develops a study about a framework to build an intelligence computer-based system oriented for marketing decisions that aims, fundamentally, to answer the question: how to provide intelligence, through a technological tool, for marketing planning and execution in one organization. The first market sector chosen for its application was healthcare industry, specifically working in Brazilian competitive conditions: a fast-evolving market which has attracted substantial investments, recent changes in legislation, new competitive conditions and the growth of new potential customer segments. This specific market provides a remarkable case for study, where main organizations and business firms are now practicing strategies and tactics to gain positions and attend to customer needs.

As a methodological approach, the chapter initially presents a literature review of fundamental and recent concepts to develop the understanding of marketing intelligence. This analysis is made from contributions of different scientific areas aiming to relate intelligence basis to information and knowledge management systems. The system framework investigation is then developed, considered in this study as a composition of three main aspects: a) adherence to theoretical fundamentals; b) technological infrastructure specifications; and c) software development process details. After this, a multiple case analysis, based on Brazilian healthcare market is conducted, observing typical marketing decisions that can be supported by the intelligence system.

BACKGROUND

In this section, concepts will be discussed to form the fundamental base for market intelligence system comprehension. Such base is initially oriented by a study of basic concepts of data, information, information systems and knowledge, as the intelligence system is proposed as an evolution of these conceptual paradigm, largely debated in areas such as information science, knowledge management and information technology. In sequence, intelligence and related concepts will be studied, completing the intended description of an essential foundation for chapter development.

Basic Concepts

All of the concepts discussed in this section had been significantly debated in the literature for decades, by different scientific areas. Terms or expressions like information systems and knowledge management provoked such an intense discussion, with massive scientific production, that makes it difficult to produce an independent, open, philosophic-based and subject-oriented review. Here it was conducted a guided theoretical discussion that aims to produce a conceptual platform for the study focus: the framework of a market intelligence system conception and the study of its application for healthcare decisions. References listed at the end of the chapter, used in this partial and objective discussion, can give alternatives to further studies about these instigating themes.