Marketing Variable Mix Of Product Essay, Research Paper

INTRODUCTION

The Japanese have again burst into the technology industry with the introduction of their newest product, Aibo, the robotic pet dog. Aibo is a Japanese word short for companion , and it also stands for Artificial Intelligence Robot. This creature is able to navigate its environment and respond to changes. This highly innovative idea began back in 1994 when Toshi T. Doi, Sony Corporations lead engineer, enlisted an artificial intelligence expert named Masarhiro Fujita to formulate a robot with sophisticated sensors. Fujita took just two weeks to develop the first prototype robotic creature that led to this current venture.

AIBO S TANGIBLE PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

No larger than a Chihuahua and constructed primarily of magnesium alloy, Aibo is equipped with infrared sensors and cameras for eyes that allow it to judge distance and avoid walking into objects. It also has sensors on its head, in its paws, and an antenna for a tail. Aibo is programmed to enjoy being petted and dislikes being scolded, not unlike real dogs. It also shows happiness by wagging its tail and illuminating its green eyes. Aibo can perform some standard tricks such as sitting and begging, and it can even dance and play music. As sophisticated as it may be, Aibo can not respond to voice commands, and it requires a remote control that emits musical tones the robot recognizes as commands.

AIBO S AUGMENTED AND GENERIC PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

Aibo s augmented product attributes revolve around the Sony brand name. Sony is a well-established corporation in the electronics industry. It is the most recognized brand name in the world, evoking a status of quality and dependability. Aibo will have a considerable lure on customers keen on cutting-edge gadgets. The first of its kind in sophistication and advanced robotics, Aibo will carry a significant status for technology buffs and expensive electronic toy collectors who can afford them.

From a generic product perspective, Aibo is already winning over the hearts and minds of consumers. Its almost life like touches and actions such as the occasional yawn, flopping on its belly when it s bored, and the wagging of its tail when it is happy is rapidly captivating people all over. For some, the appeal is in the joy of owning such a technological and futuristic marvel. For others, It may be the hope of companionship from and innate object, not unlike today s interactive computers. For most consumers it is just plain and simple entertainment. One thing is for sure, Aibo is appealing to all age groups, genders, and nationalities. The day after Sony s announcement about Aibo, its Tokyo call center was flooded with over 1,000 customers eager to order the artificial pet.

SONY S NEW PRODUCT ADVANTAGE

Sony cyber canine is the first robotic pet of its kind and caliber to hit the market. Sony plans on following with numerous versions of robotic pets such as dogs, cats, and monkeys. They are leading the way into the age of digital creatures. Sony believes robotic pets can offer a differential advantage. Aibo currently shows promise of becoming one of Sony s pillars in its $40 billion electronics industry. Aibo is truly an innovation that comes with all the risks, costs, and initial investment a new innovative product creates. This is a major step for Sony that could lead to a significant future market advantage. If Aibo is successful, Sony could experience continued future growth, larger profits, and an advantage over competitors. Sony s computer engineer Doi s decision to pursue robotic technology in 1993 has given Sony an edge on the industry. In spite of that fact, look for competitors version of robotic pets to be following right behind.

PRODUCT MARKETING

Sony s current marketing strategy is to sell only 3000 of the robots in Japan and 2000 in the United States at the costly price of $2,500. The product will be sold exclusively through the internet starting June 1. This appears to be a test marketing strategy to observe Aibo s performance and to monitor consumer behavior and competitor reaction towards the product. Sony must be careful to avoid some of the pit falls of test marketing such as dissatisfaction with the high cost, the time delays before full introduction, and the real threat of allowing competitors to catch up with the innovative product. The ultimate goal for Aibo would be complete commercialization and consumer acceptance of the product.

CONCLUSION

Aibo s introduction was exciting, drawing a considerable amount of international media attention. This was tempered by Sony s apparent reluctance to commercialize the product and sell only 5000 robots. If Sony is certain of the quality and functionality of its product, it seems that full commercialization would have been the direction to take. Consumers are infatuated with electronic products and gizmos. Like the tamagotchi, hand held electronic pet crazes of last year, electronic pets as sophisticated as Aibo can only be a huge success.

I understand there are significant risks to skipping a test-marketing period and going straight to full commercialization, but in the electronic industry, time is of the essence in owning and selling a new and innovative product. I would have marketed this product more aggressively through a large media campaign, possibly waiting for the holiday season to unveil Aibo. Sony s apparent test marketing strategy could backfire on them, allowing competitors ample time to produce a similar, if not a better product. I think Aibo, the robotic pet dog and its future product line, show great promise for Sony. How could you not be attached to one of these robotic pets!

REFERENCES

1. Joel R. Evans and Barry Berman, Marketing, 7th edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall Inc, 1997