

**Analysis of Marketing Strategies and Advanced
Retail Sales Processes to Improve Company A's
Position in the Segment**

by

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ABSTRACT

In recent years across the United States, product sales have seen a downward trend when compared to the robust sales figures posted around the 2010 time period across the major players in the product manufacturing space. Due to depressed commodity prices, large product sales have caused a lot of the dealers to shift in its prioritization of sales from a predominant large product business model, to a more diverse large product and small product strategy portfolio to stay profitable amidst economic headwinds. This study will look into ways that the Company A dealer channel could pivot their internal processes around targeting customers who are engaged in the purchase funnel of purchasing small products and how Company A could change the way the company equips their trusted dealer channel to combat competition in this segment.

This study will examine new strategies that may be executed through the Company A dealer network and their subsequent retail showrooms to increase sales by focusing on key product differentiating characteristics, unique technical selling points, dealer facility positioning in high potential Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and new retail digital marketing technologies that should be leveraged throughout the sales process to improve market share. Company B is considered to be the primary rival competitor in this small product market, as this firm is one of the fiercest competitors to Company A's quest for total product sales superiority.

This study conducted a mixed method survey to ascertain what areas of marketing and promotional assistance should be prioritized by Company A, to outfit the company's existing dealer channel with the right tools to combat Company B and other competitors in

the U.S. small product market. Additionally new retail showroom technologies and strategies were based upon existing market research studies, focused on which customer's and product characteristics were the most impactful for positively impacting small product sales in the United States.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the U.S. experienced a downward trend in prices for corn, soybeans, and cotton combined with net farm income being, “down 49 percent since 2013,” these changes in the market have led to a sharp decrease in overall product purchases and subsequent dealer total net sales (Schnepf 2017) . Company A dealers have had to position themselves aggressively by prioritizing other platform sales like small product sales to recoup losses from fledgling large product sales when compared to strong overall product sales in the past 10 years. To put this industry’s market scale into perspective, according to a 2016 report published by the U.S. Farm Credit Administration (FCA), “2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture Data indicates the total market value of U.S. farm inventory was estimated to be approximately \$244 billion in 2012” (Koenig 2016). Due to these market trends, Company A has made a strategic shift in its priorities for key platform focuses and geared critical sales initiatives toward competing favorably with Company B for the market share landscape in the competitive small product marketplace.

In the contested North American small product market Company A has established the firm as a viable front runner in market position only behind Company B, as Company A has consistently positioned products ahead of Company C and Company D. Per Figure 1.1 below, there are well established players present in the small product market sector that Company A is vying for superiority against, as Company A is represented across the small product platform up through the mid-size and large size products available to U.S. consumers. Company A prides itself as striving toward being the market leader in every product category the company has a presence in, yet it is evident market share remains up for grabs. Within the small product segment, Company A internal market research has

found it alarming that XX percent of all competitors' customers have visited a Company A dealer location before ultimately choosing an alternate brand of product to meet their small product needs. This study will provide insights that will inform future initiatives or strategic decisions found on improving Company A's market share presence in the United States, but none of that would be attainable without a strong nucleus of a retail dealer channel.

Figure 1.1 Marketing Segment Coverage

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1.1 Background

The small product arena is contested throughout North America, and there are significant financial ramifications for any competitor in this space. An original equipment manufacturer (OEM) must have a deep understanding of what a valued customer needs are and how the company will position the small product platform by leveraging its dealer network to cater to and penetrate key customer demographics. To reinforce its pursuit of their desired position of a market leader for product manufacturing, Company A has invested heavily in their valued independent dealer channel that is strategically positioned in rural and metropolitan locations across the United States and Canada. The dealer network at Company A is much more than a source of complete good sales or where customers can have machines serviced by highly trained original equipment manufacturer (OEM) certified technicians, they are the lifeblood of Company A because the dealer

network is the face of the company to the customer in providing solutions at the end of the supply chain in their given area of responsibility (AOR).

In the last ten years, the Company A dealer channel has prioritized getting new and existing customers in the door when agricultural commodity prices were high, but large product and small product customers have slowed their pursuit of new purchases in recent years. With that negative shift in industry financial performance, there is a larger spotlight on the sales department across all Company A dealer locations to support and fulfill customer needs as they are progressing through the purchase funnel by ultimately purchasing a product at the local dealership. According to data collected in a customer needs survey from 2015, minimizing downtime and achieving optimal performance provides the strongest opportunities for Company A to further improve its position in the small product market. Given the current market dynamics, a number of important objectives have to be addressed regarding Company A and their dealer channel strategies for further improving the firm's competitive position in the small engine product segment.

1.2 Objectives

This thesis will look to improve Company A's small product market share by addressing four primary objectives focused on improving the level of insights geared toward improving small product market share throughout the body of this research that are tied to either Product, People, Place, or Promotion. The following objectives that are covered in this study:

(Objective One - Product) Identifying the key product and service attributes that affect the buying decisions of U.S. customers who are actively engaged in purchasing a small product

and how Company A should cater their small product offering to those customers in high potential markets.

(Objective Two - People) Determine how the firm's key product differentiators and characteristics should be conveyed to viable customers as they progress through the purchase funnel, thus culminating in a vital positive purchasing experience.

(Objective Three - Place) Determine new metropolitan areas and regions in the United States that should be prioritized for future retail brick and mortar locations with established competitive offerings.

(Objective Four - Promotion) How potential small product customers should be marketed to outside of and inside their local Company A dealer storefront, and ultimately new retail digital technologies that should be deployed to further differentiate and establish Company A as the market leader in the small product arena.

This thesis will combine Company A and B market research, viable customer segmentation data for small products, and machine product/service attributes valued by customers to formulate an actionable marketing strategy to attract and engage with customers as they are actively involved in the process of buying a Company A product from their local Company A dealer. All of the aforementioned data sets researched in this study is combined with market insights and those findings are translated into marketing and sales process improvements that dealer marketing managers or sales professionals across the United States can implement in the retail showroom. Additionally this thesis will formulate new ways to engage with potential small product customers in the digital and

physical retail space by keeping pace with the changing expectations of today's small product shoppers. The firm's need for a continued enterprise-wide focus of maintaining a positive purchasing experience in any location across the existing dealer channel, will prove to be the catalyst to be the industry leader in sales today and well into tomorrow.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Copious online literary resources were leveraged throughout the research process, to ensure that previous published efforts exemplified by other authors could be reviewed by this researcher in conjunction with the overall objectives of this thesis. To ensure the body of literature was adequately reviewed across the majority of applicable databases, the literature review targeted four broad areas: general consumer behavior, existing research in the area of product sales strategies, existing marketing theories, and literature on relevant research methodologies. These four areas were used to guide the literature review and focus on locating previous works of literature that could be leveraged in some manner to address the primary research objectives that were too specific in nature to have a plethora of existing resources that met all areas of the small product arena noted earlier in the introduction of this thesis.

Garcia-Alcaez, et al (2016) studied which financial attributes were prioritized by producers and small product businesses in Mexico when it came to investing in a new product for their respective operation. Product quality, cost, and service reliability are all common product considerations for any potential product consumer, but this study included specific qualitative and quantitative attributes that should be considered and factored into a consumer's decision making process as they evaluate which make and model of product meets their personal or company's needs. The research was based on a survey sent to salesman and product operators that was comprised of eighteen attributes requiring respondents to leverage the analytical hierarchy process (AHP) and the technique for order preference by similarity to the ideal solutions (TOPSIS) in their decision making processes.

Per the findings of this study, it was determined that, “one product was selected from a set of six alternatives, integrating six attributes in the model: initial cost, annual maintenance cost, liters of diesel per hour, safety of the operator, maintainability and after-sale customer service offered by the supplier. (Garcia-Alcaez, et al. 2016) This journal article was selected for this thesis as the outputs of the 2016 research are certainly applicable to the primary customer’s needs that fit into the scope of this thesis. Additionally the primary consumers of focus for this thesis are the business to consumer (B2C) type of transactions, or in other words the financial transaction conducted between the agricultural product dealer and the intended end-operator of the small product.

Walley, Custance, and Taylor (2007) studied how the value of a brand can impact the purchasing decisions for consumers that are in the market for purchasing a product in the United Kingdom. Initially the research was based around interviewing a combination of agricultural producers and traditional farmers in the United Kingdom to formulate a set of product attributes that could be influential to a potential consumer engaging in the purchase funnel for a product. The researcher’s then took those early attributes and created a survey based around fictitious product models and surveyed an additional 428 consumers and producers on which hypothetical attributes of products delivered the greatest brand value. The findings of the article were founded on brand loyalty creating the greatest impact to U.K. industrial product purchasing decisions at 38.95 percent, with product price posing a 25.98 percent stake, and service reining in 14.90 percent of the overall responses (Keith, et al. 2007, 387). This journal article was not only selected because of its alignment to the general theme of this thesis, but also because of the importance that Company A has

put on its core brand values for their product portfolio offering. This sense of brand value is highly aligned with Company A's core values behind brand management and tied to the reasoning why Company A valued consumers react the way that they do with their final purchasing decisions year-over-year. Therefore it is of the utmost importance to include brand value in any potential research on how to increase small product sales in the North American market.

Cavallo, Ferrari, Bollani, and Coccia (2014) studied how technological innovations of products throughout the Italian agricultural industry impacted the behavior of its users as it relates to which machine characteristics are favored by attendees of an International Exhibition of Agriculture products (EIMA) held in Bologna, Italy. A research study was constructed on the framework of a sample size of 300 Italian respondents that completed a questionnaire executed randomly to attendees of the Italian EIMA. The aforementioned questionnaire sought to determine which Italian consumer perceptions of technological innovations were the most impactful for consideration at the time of purchasing agricultural equipment in Italy. After statistical analysis was completed on the survey responses, the research findings were used to construct fictitious personas around what the motivational characteristics were for potential buyers in the product market sector and which product technological enhancements were found to be the most important to consumers in the product purchase funnel. Whether a respondent possessed a machine that had these features, wished to have them, or merely did not have a need to include them on their product; the survey concluded that hydraulic brake systems and continuous variable transmissions were the most available and desired technological features of consumer's

surveys in that space (Eugenio, et al. 2014, 48). This article was primarily selected because it gives a statistical view behind the needs, behaviors, and technology drivers of potential future product purchasers in Italy, and how that information could be correlated to North American consumers of products alike. The personas constructed in the study could also be leveraged by the client of this thesis to consider similar technological initiatives that impact the way that products are engineered strategically to fill the constant technological requirements of their valued consumer base over time.

Park, Mishra, and Wozniak (2014) studied how agricultural farmers were positively impacted and responded to the efforts of firms who marketed to these individuals with various marketing strategies and what key tactics from firms executing in this space led to the direct-to-consumer marketing strategy being established as the most impactful marketing tool for increasing the sales of agriculture commodities. Through the usage of an empirical statistical study, it was determined that direct-to-consumer marketing was far more lucrative for small farmers, than the traditional usage of direct-to-consumer retail outlets or intermediated outlets without the usage of direct marketing strategies (Timothy, Ashok and Shawn 2014, 214). This article was selected as it provides a unique model for how a firm's marketing strategy can be impactful for agricultural producers who leverage direct-to-consumer marketing, as opposed to merely selling their goods and products through retailers without the aid of marketing strategies to combat consumer selection bias. This quantitative data will assist the overall thesis objective around key strategies that the client firm could potentially deploy to improve product market share amongst its targeted customer base.

The collected resources and other published journals were reviewed to get an accurate cross-section of the body of literature that has previously been introduced as it relates to the North American small product market and consumer founded purchase drivers are affected by market segmentation across various agriculture manufacturing competitors in this small product space. Due to the unique focus of this overall thesis, the literature research was conducted by scanning similar industries to agricultural manufacturing or analysis that had been compiled for consumer responsiveness to other products similar to those offered by Company A. The impact of this literature review will be exemplified throughout the main body of this thesis as resources were found by this researcher that can be leveraged for supporting consumer's product or financial considerations, brand value's impact on small product consumer's purchase drivers, technological innovations for similar consumers across varying markets, and impactful direct-to-consumer marketing strategies for targeting agricultural producers. The lasting impact of this section reaffirmed the known gaps in the small product industry and how the thesis findings can potentially be in pole position to fill said gaps.

CHAPTER III: THEORY

The conceptual framework is a key component of this research as there are numerous disciplines for potential areas of focus when considering the implications and many sectors of the product market place. To better align the research, there were a few conceptual theories prioritized. First the two types of theories that have overarching implications throughout each objective are derived from consumer behavior theory and how those consumer's engage within a traditional purchase funnel framework in Company A dealer's retail showrooms or at a direct competitor's store. To better understand the datasets collected, the following two sections will provide a brief overview of two primary theories that will help to understand small product demand. Following those initial two theories on small product demand, one final conceptual framework is the "Strategic Insight in Three Circles." (Urbany and Davis 2007) The Three Circle analysis is a visual framework for a firm's understanding of consumer's needs as it relates to the products offered, and how that strategy applies itself to the primary competitive firm and their respective product offering. The three theories impact the way that the firm must target and cater to consumers in the small product arena.

3.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is a vital area for a firm to gain a better understanding of when it applies to how consumer's seek out products or services amongst a myriad of competition that a firm creates or sells to fulfill a set framework of needs. According to Perner, "consumer behavior involves the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased...and may influence how a product is best positioned or how we can encourage increased consumption." (Perner 2009) Like many other competitors

operating in the small product market, Company A's internal market research department possesses a great deal of market research to better understand the overarching principles that product customers prioritize as they enter the market for a new or used small product . This thesis relies on Company A's internal market researches breadth of collected research to illustrate the main customer' journey that occur in the customer segments applicable to Company A small product owners and operators. Along with leveraging consumer behavior and small product customer segmentation data, this thesis will focus on how Company A should position their portfolio of products to fulfill the collected needs and purchase drivers of consumers in order to improve the company's overall market share.

To extrapolate further on consumer behavior and how it lends itself to the product market at hand, one must take stock in the fact that consumers across all segments should behave rationally in trying to get the most value out of their dollar when they purchase a small product. This basic consumer behavior rationale can be applied to the Utility Maximization theory, in that a consumer is faced with a myriad of product brands that they could purchase, yet they will allocate and exhaust their predetermined allocated budget on the brand of product that is perceived to deliver on higher utility needs to meet higher utility levels. This utility maximization could also drive the consumer's utility or joy that they derive from the product model shopping experience. The utility is derived from the collection of dealer attributes that comprise the overall customer experience gleaned from their time spent in the dealer's retail showroom. In this instance the sense of utility, could also lend itself to the joy or sense of accomplishment that an operator or owner of a small product receives from completing a specific task or job with their Company A products.

Inherently, a potential product customer will want to maximize this utility while minimizing the amount spent for that specific model of product, no matter the manufacturer. This thesis will focus on collecting specific data that Company A should prioritize in future company or dealer driven initiatives that maximizes this sense of consumer utility, while strengthening the brand loyalty from said consumers as they progress through the customers' purchase journey in pursuit of a product that fulfills their lifestyle or professional needs.

3.2 Purchase Funnel Framework

Similar to processes that many firms engage in across product markets based on a monopolistic or competitive landscape, a customer's purchasing experience is a vital component to any retail channel when it applies to goods and services consumed by customers. A customer's purchasing experience is directly correlated to a customer's product acquisition process, where there are processes that consumer's cognitively are aware of or are unaware of when they are initiating their customer journey to a product or service that they wish to purchase or consume (Court, et al. 2009). One such example of this process and how it is executed throughout the course of a competitive landscape is the Company A Enterprise Purchase and Sales Funnel in Figure 3.1. Like many other firms, Company A has invested a great deal of enterprise assets to understand its customers and how their needs should be addressed and answered throughout the purchase funnel. The overarching principles noted in the left-hand side of Figure 3.1 are foundational for understanding how a consumer engages in a purchasing behavior starting from the awareness stage, leading all the way to the use of said product at the end of the consumer product purchase funnel. This thesis will focus on how Company A should attempt to meet

those needs in the purchase funnel and cater to those needs strategically through each step in its customer's path to purchase by positioning their products ahead of the Company B offering positioned in the competitive product arena.

Figure 3.1 Company A Consumer Purchase Funnel and Sales Funnel Framework

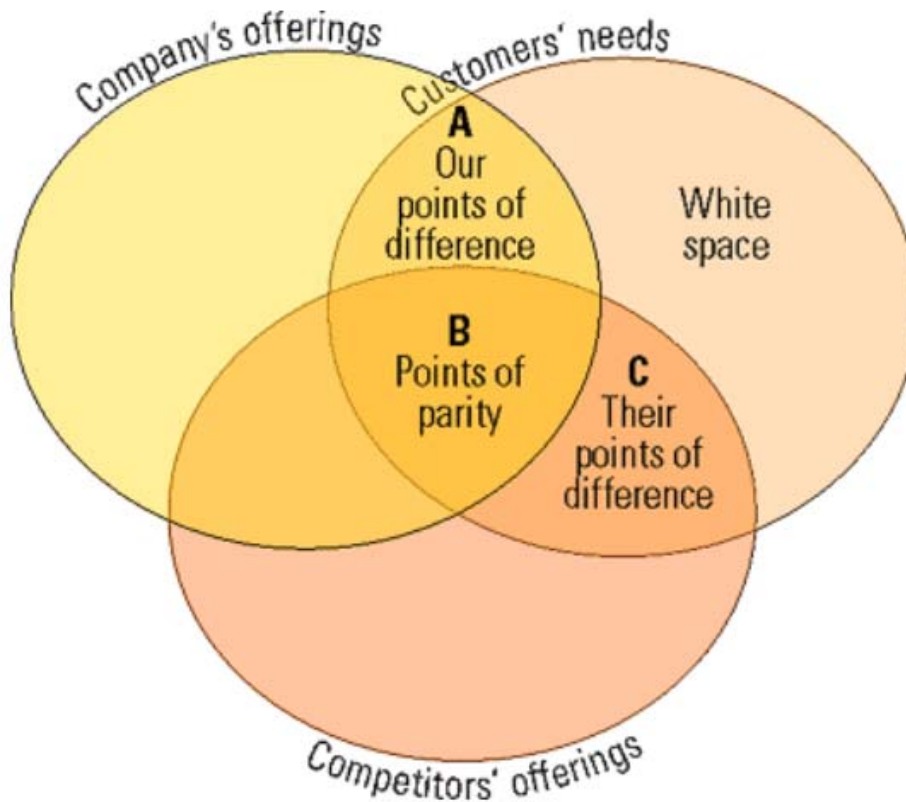
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3.3 Conceptual Framework: Strategic Insight in Three Circles

Product positioning is an integral component of a firm's product marketing strategy, especially when considering how that firm's product attributes, features, and unique selling points are communicated to the respective segmented customer markets. A firm must have a strong understanding of where its products lay within the scope of its consumer's minds, in order to have a commanding stance on how to leverage any and all known competitive advantages in the market place. With the strategic insights conveyed by Urbany and Davis in the 2007 Harvard Business Review entitled the "Three Circle Strategy," this paper gives a visual representation of how internal and external strategies are perceived by consumers and how those strategies are compartmentalized by consumers when there is a competitive firm offering a complementary product simultaneously. (Urbany and Davis 2007) Using the framework proposed in Figure 3.2, one could associate Company A's small product offering in the yellow circle, a Company A customer's needs allocated in the upper-right circle, and list a Company B product or secondary competitive offering in the competitor circle. Supporting data is collected and provided to reinforce what a small product customer's purchase drivers are and how

Company A can take advantage of its strong dealer network and industry leading products that make up pieces of area A or B in Figure 3.2. Additionally further insights are promoted for Company A's dealer channel to refocus strategic plans and marketing tactics to minimize those competitive differences noted in area C of Figure 3.2 and offer viable solutions for their products to fulfill within the sales process.

Figure 3.2 Strategic Insight in Three Circles



Source: Harvard Business Review, Urbany and Davis, November, 2007

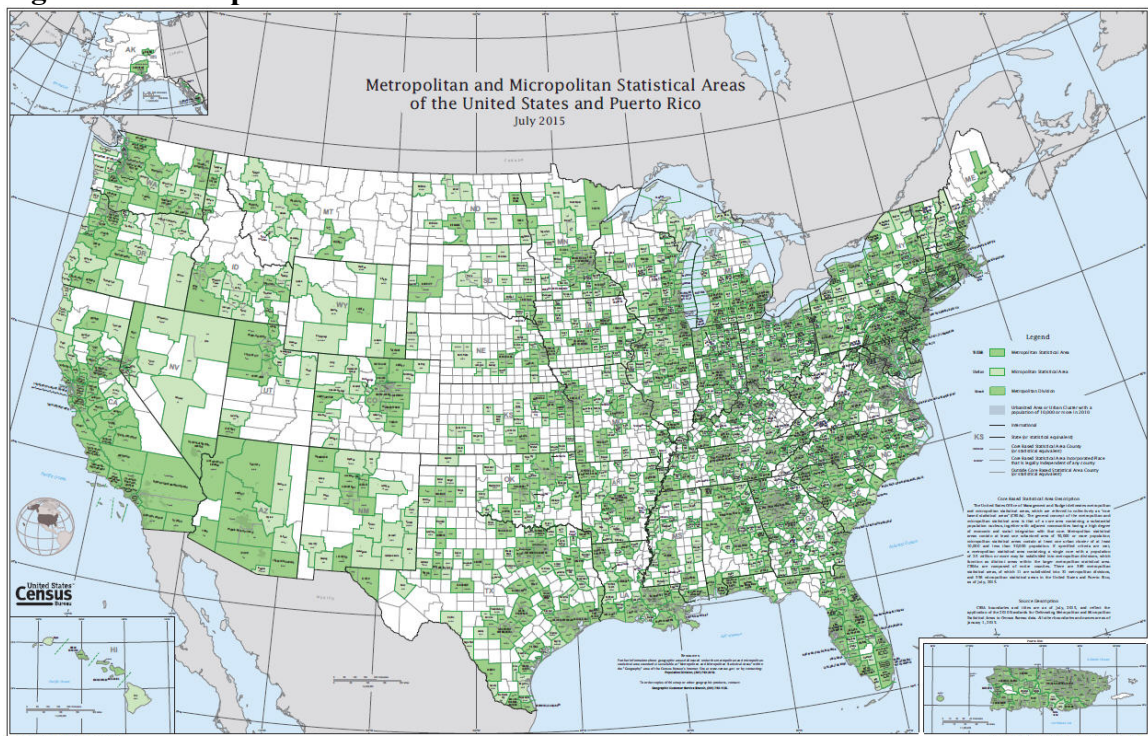
CHAPTER IV: DATA AND METHODS

The client of this thesis has made a reputation on being the perennial market leader in large Product manufacturing for the United States. However Company A has yet to mirror this presence in the small product sector when it comes to the given market. The competition between Company B, Company C, and Company A has proved to be a long fought one that has driven many internal critical initiatives striving to formulate the appropriate tactics to improve product market share for its valued Company A dealers and the overall enterprise. Born out of these internal critical initiatives and annual drive to obtain market share in the small product market in the United States, Company A has created an internal data-rich enterprise founded on assisting Company A dealers with the right tools to sell their products. Even with the presence of a robust internal market research department at Company A, there are multiple data sources that are collected externally. The following section will focus on the manner of how data and information are collected. The reasoning for the analytical efforts, and ultimately how that information will be compiled and used throughout the thesis framework.

One of the most far-reaching methods of data collection that is undertaken in this thesis, is the collection and analysis of Company A customers in the United States and the key characteristics that differentiate its purchase drivers from consumers throughout the product market place. The customer segmentation data provided by Company A's internal market research is a snapshot of customers across the Company A enterprise, but this research will need to identify key segments of customers that represent the largest market potential for selling additional products in this sector. The research will identify the key purchase drivers derived from customer segmentation data that have correlation to

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) by taking MSA maps and determining the regions that geographically should be prioritized at the local Company A dealers. Due to their increased levels of purchasing power, consumers residing in MSAs tend to be some of the most sought after customer groups by product manufacturers because of the high population densities Figure 4.1 and how high population densities are classified by metropolitan areas of populations greater than one million. (United States Census Bureau 2016)

Figure 4.1 Metropolitan Statistical Areas of the United States



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

When a firm of any scale is conducting business in a monopolistic market or in Company A's position where they are operating in an oligopolistic market structure when it comes to the small product market share, all competitive firms must have an understanding

of where their customers live and who has purchased their goods or services. To facilitate this deeper segmented view of the firm's customer base and to get an accurate representation on the number of machines in the field and the locations of said machines, Company A leverages their internal financial department to obtain an understanding of their customers. Company A's financial division keeps a meticulous representative view of where consumers reside or conduct business that have used Company A as the financier to obtain their product. Once a consumer engages in an installment arrangement with Company A to finance their respective product, a Uniform Commercial Code-1 (UCC-1) form is established on the behalf of the debtor and this demographic information is retained by Company A financial throughout the life of the agreement. This thesis uses this research where those known customers reside throughout the United States by using the UCC-1 findings to determine which regions and segments of customers should be targeted for future product sales who have either purchased a product in the past or have paid off their previous financial obligations to Company A and could be poised for a new model of product via trade-in at their local Company A dealership. To properly leverage the data points referenced for collection above, there must be a tactical plan for execution at the Company A dealer level to ensure any analysis collected for this thesis is put in motion to benefit any existing or future customer's journey along the purchase funnel.

One of the primary internal benefactors of any increased focus on the product arena are the dealer marketing managers who operate in the larger Company A dealerships across the United States and Canada. The Company A dealer channel is provided marketing and advertising support from Company A to support its dealer network appropriately as they

are the last stewards of the value chain driving the Company A brand value proposition when it comes to customer's perceptions of their products. The Company A dealer marketing managers must squeeze every ounce of market share with the existing offering of marketing strategies and advertising promotions driven to them from Company A and redelivered out to the field of potential customers. These tactical initiatives tasked to drive sales at the dealer level will assist with targeting potential customers, customer engagement, and sales incentives. The product strategic initiatives executed by dealer marketing managers play a role in the sale of product and services. This thesis will take a different approach with the way that it goes about collecting survey data that has been collected previously, and will instead dive into the tools that are currently not being offered to those marketing managers today, and provide new avenues to pursue in order to target and connect with potential Company A customers in new and inventive ways.

To examine the current level of dealer marketing needs across various dealer entities in the Company A dealer network, a web-based survey was conducted in January 2018 among a group of twenty-five Marketing Managers employed by high-performing dealer organizations located across the United States. This survey is intended to poll those twenty-five marketing managers on the current level of marketing tools made available to them by Company A to meet the respective company's needs to target small product customers, specifically with product promotions through the retail showroom. After reviewing multiple web-based online offerings, Survey Monkey was selected as the web-based vendor to execute this small sample sized survey because of the user friendliness for potential participants and secure framework that is built in to the survey creation and

execution process. (Survey Monkey 2018) The marketing manager participants for this survey were sent a formal letter via email inviting them to access the survey that previewed the reasoning and intent behind the correspondence that they were receiving and for requesting their informed consent to participate as their time allowed. After consenting to participate in the eight question web-based survey, the participants accessed a secured link that took them to a mixed-method short survey focused on the current levels of marketing potency in their stores today, and what new technologies could be implemented to target, engage, and fulfill the product needs of potential customers in their retail showrooms in the future. After the survey was tested internally with the assistance of Survey Monkey tools, the twenty-five survey participants were given 14 days to complete the survey with an additional reminder sent out before the survey deadline. From those targeted twenty-five respondents, a total of 18 completed surveys were sent to the researcher via the Survey Monkey tool anonymously in aggregate form and the findings were then converted into Microsoft Excel for further analysis.

The survey data was analyzed to determine if there are any trends in the qualitative data illustrating what gaps currently reside in the marketing manager's work stream and how Company A could improve upon this area of focus to empower dealer sales professionals with improved selling processes focused on increasing small product sales in the future. Having a firm balance of marketing and advertising mediums in position for a given dealer's market, will only increase the odds of that dealer for meeting its customer's psychological needs as they are reinforced by sales professionals at their local dealer to purchase a small product that meets their specific needs. The survey data was analyzed and

compiled by leveraging a grouping process similar to an Ishikawa fishbone diagram to determine root causes of the respondent's data. For the quantitative questions, respondent data was analyzed and reviewed to determine what confidence intervals are available and the final data is represented in graphs or figures in this study. Information gleaned via this dealer marketing manager survey, assisted in constructing what new marketing tactics and advertising methods should be prioritized internally at Company A in the future and how that information could hypothetically be packaged to target customers identified through the segmentation and MSA data noted throughout this thesis.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Having a firm understanding of market potential is vital in any competitive landscape, and for Company A having a strong understanding of where those primary small product customers reside is important. According to a Company A internal market research survey conducted in 2015 with a sample size of 414 respondents, both Primary Customer and Secondary Customer segments possess the greatest number of small product customer saturation in the South and Midwest regions of the United States as shown in Figure 5.1. From a market potential standpoint, Company A could prioritize incentive dollars for their field teams in those areas to leverage with their dealers. Company A dealers could base its promotional efforts and sales strategies on small product performance, uptime, and low cost of ownership to differentiate its products from the competition in those MSAs of the South and Midwest regions. Customers have similar needs from their products regardless of brand, so having the right sales strategy and approach to fulfilling customer needs with their products tied to a given task and subsequent product attachment will prove to be instrumental in positioning their products at the forefront of the industry to improve market share.

Figure 5.1 U.S. Company A Small Product Customer Landscape by Region

Figure Intentionally Omitted

5.1 Primary Customer and Secondary Customer Operations and Accessories (Product Objective)

Primary Customer and Secondary Customer may choose to seek out a local Company A dealer differently throughout the customer buying journey no matter the horsepower of product purchased, yet their level of satisfaction comes from the types of tasks they depend on their products to complete during daily operation. The same Company A internal market research survey study executed and referenced in Figure 5.1, was based on 414 customer respondents on what tasks or accessories were of the utmost importance to them for being confident in their Company A product throughout the lifecycle of ownership for said product. This opportunity for Company A sales professionals to target customer's at any stage during their purchase funnel, will improve sales conversions by focusing on those survey insights as opposed to competitive barriers offered by other makes and models.

Figure 5.2 Company A Customer Needs – By Product

Figure Intentionally Omitted

Customer segmentation data for a firm's consumer base can vary by market or product over time. Many external factors go into what consumer classification a firm prioritizes when they target a mix of customers for its products. Earlier in this section, the primary customer and secondary customer are listed as the prioritized focus of this thesis when it comes to potential product customers. If the customer segmentation focus is extended to customers that use Company A's products for commercial farming

applications, there obviously is far more potential buyers to cater to as those under product applications. Company A dealers operate in an omnichannel retail market but for those customers that come into the retail showroom in-person, sales professionals should position preexisting product packages to cater to those customer's operations that are centered on commodity production cycles. Pre-positioning products with viable commodity specific attachment or implement packages allow sales professionals successful closing rates to increase as they are presenting a suite of packages tailored to an abundant customer-type in their area of responsibility.

5.2 Company A Small Product Customer Decision Journey as it Relates to The Purchase Funnel Framework (People Objective)

Every day many consumers across the world make decisions based on the following non-exclusive list of parameters: preconceived notions of a particular product's brand value, exposure to a given product in the past or by word of mouth, perceptions of value through first-hand product usage, or historical experiences that assist said consumer in systematically or categorically making a final decision to purchase. A consumer entering the market to purchase a product is a very age old situation, where some studies have shown that, "70 percent of a buyer's buyer journey is completed before they even engage with a seller," to engage in the process of completing a purchase or transaction for a good or service. (Pardot 2018) The Purchase Funnel framework supported by Company A is referenced earlier in Chapter 3.2, and is the basis of understanding for how a potential customer starts a search for a product with a set number of competitive brands at the wide end of the funnel and ultimately progresses through that narrowing funnel to decide one brand of product to purchase. To take the purchase funnel framework analysis deeper, this thesis ascertains what information is factored in by a consumer with their buying journey as the customer progresses along the purchase funnel. Therefore a need existed for this study to ascertain a stronger sense of how a consumer buying journey related to the purchase funnel, so suggestions could be proposed to Company A for new ways that the firm could meet those points of customer influence with advancements to its marketing techniques during the customer's journey.

Company A took an active role in obtaining a deeper understanding of its customer's buying journeys in 2016, by engaging the services of consulting firm X, a

global best practice and insights company to execute a customer buying journey alignment audit to enhance the firm's sales content offering and overall content effectiveness. The consulting firm X marketing council created an audit tool to determine what Company A marketing and sales content is available to potential consumers by collecting insights from key internal stakeholders at Company A. The audit process collected the following information from Company A stakeholders in the form of, "tracking customers' buying journey questions, prioritize questions to identify the top opportunities for marketing intervention, evaluating existing Company A content portfolio against its potential to answer said questions, and identify the next steps Company A should with their content." (Consulting firm X 2016) Summary of the information collected in the audit process shown in Figure 5.3, would be highly impactful for Company A to leverage in changing their approach to small product marketing content creation as it relates to the targeting of product customers. Having a deeper understanding of the buying journey for all customers, would increase the level of saturation for Company A content marketers while simultaneously being able to target customers at more influential intersections throughout their journey and overall purchase funnel.

Figure 5.3 Company A Customer Buying Journey Study (People Objective)

Figure Intentionally Omitted

5.3 Product and Service Attributes that Differentiate Company A Products from the Competition through the Product Lifecycle (Product Objective)

Many of the leading product manufacturers competing in the U.S. small product arena, create similar products by specifications or horsepower to meet customers varying needs across all segmentation types. An exhaustive consumer research scan was executed in order for this thesis to position the reader appropriately to obtain a better understanding of what personal requirements Company A customers prioritized for product features and service attributes as they enter the awareness or consideration phase of the Company A Consumer Purchase Funnel Figure 3.1. A Consumer Research study executed in 2015 by Company A internal market research found that across all product sizes offered in the United States, small product owners were driven by lower satisfaction than midsize or large product owners and the small product lower satisfaction score of 73 percent presented Company A with the strongest growth potential in the market. Larger product customers own more implements and accessories for their products, and are looking for unique product features that will allow them to minimize downtime and reduce operator time that it takes to engage or remove accessories and implements.

Table 5.2 Average U.S. Customer Satisfaction Scores and Top 5 Product Needs by Product Size among All Product Owners (414 Total Respondents) (Product Objective)

Table Intentionally Omitted

As product manufacturers position themselves year-round for small product market share superiority, Company A's product sales often hinge on the manufacturer having a firm understanding of what their customer's needs are and said manufacturer's ability to introduce a piece of to market that can meet those customer's varying needs in a cost effective and affordable platform. Noted earlier in this work, minimizing downtime and achieving optimal performance provides the strongest opportunities for Company A to further improve its position in the small product market. General product downtime related operator needs usually center around performance related areas ranging from simple problem diagnosis, mechanical failures, attachment offerings, implement connectivity, or front loader capacity during operation. There is an emotional need tied to a customer making a purchase decision for which brand of product that they want to purchase, and there has been some research tied to the level of satisfaction that customers have for their product as they execute jobs or tasks; and this is applicable for all makes and brands of products. Per Figure 5.4 a quantitative study was executed in 2015 that surveyed product operators across multiple customer segments and brands to measure the importance of customer needs as its related to their satisfaction, and this study determined that competitors' customers are least satisfied with implement attachability and loader capacity;

both of which are strong consumer needs that Company A sales professionals should capitalize on during competitive product comparisons.

Figure 5.4 Product Operator Satisfaction by Brand (Product Objective)

Figure Intentionally Omitted

5.4 Competitive Brand Purchase Drivers - Company B Products (People Objective)

Since 2012-13 Company A has focused a great deal of its national marketing and advertising campaign dollars behind the promotion of its small products with good strategic reasoning as these models are in direct competition with Company B's model offering of products. Both of these lines offered by the two firms in question have established these products as the smallest product offering in their portfolio and have positioned these products as versatile machines perfectly geared toward those primary customer segments with a plethora of small ground engaging accessories and implements rendering these products as the quint-essential affordable products for any customer's budget. Company B has done an exceptional job across all segments positioning their series of products as the cost-effective option to Company A's family of products and have based many of their competitive comparisons on grasping their portion of market share for those price conscious customers. According to a 182 person respondent phone interview on brand consideration executed by Company A market research conducted a phone interview for a brand consideration study in 2014 to 182 Company product customers, and in that study those respondents stated that "XX percent of those customers only considered Company B, XX percent considered Company A, and XX percent considered other brands excluding

Company A,” before they made their Company B product purchase (Company A Market Research 2014). The results of the Company B customer study are there to show that Company A has market share to gain from Company B by improving the overall dealer experience of those customers who actively considered Company A first in their purchasing decision. If the adequate measures can be made to improve the Company A customer’s purchasing experiences on the retail sales floor, then there is a higher chance Company A sales professionals can establish a higher closing rate on product sales before those customers can take their business elsewhere to other makes and models.

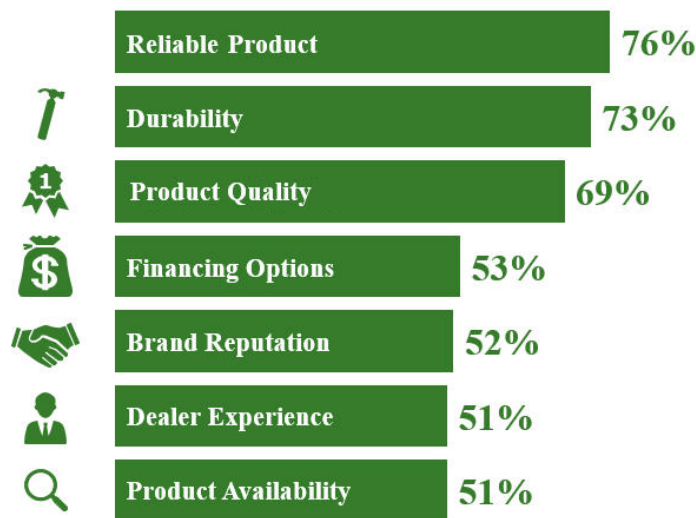
Figure 5.5 Company B Customer’s Brand Consideration Prior to Product Purchase

Figure Intentionally Omitted

The retail experience at an agriculture dealership is a pivotal piece behind any potential customer’s purchase journey as they navigate the market for that quintessential small product that meets their specific operator needs. Whether that customer may be a seasoned product operator, or a first time buyer seeking knowledge before they ultimately make a purchase, a positive welcoming experience is essential for a potential customer to receive the proper product information and performance specifications to make them feel like they are making the right purchasing decision. In the same Company B customer study performed in 2014, Figure 5.6 illustrates how 182 Company B customers responded by phone that even though sound manufacturing is a necessity, financing, product reputation, strength of dealer network, and product availability ultimately drove the

decision toward the Company B family of products over the competition. (Company A Market Research 2014) Company A dealers should concentrate on making all small product customers feel valued by conveying the strength of the Company A dealer channel and rationalize the price realization of affordable products to combat unfounded premium price comparisons from the likes of Company B dealers that are conveyed to customers throughout the sales processes engaged at competitive dealer’s showrooms across the product marketplace.

Figure 5.6 Company B Customers Purchase Factors in the Buying Process Ranked by Importance, (People Objective)



5.5 Leveraging United States Metropolitan Statistical Areas for Potential Customer Mapping (Place Objective)

Noted in Figure 5.1, two of the most important small product customer segments for Company A’s products is the Primary Customer and Secondary Customer. These customers are positioned across the varying regions of the United States, but unlike

traditional product customers or non-traditional customers, Company A is aware that the quickest path to improving market share will come from the firm that can target and attract the greatest number of customers in U.S. MSA's. Those same primary customers who are in the market for a product would rely heavily on a local dealer to act as the subject matter expert in identifying the appropriate Company A product that can meet specific needs. In order to position the dealers for success, Company A needs to have a firm handle of where those MSA's are and how those relate to high performing dealers who are poised to have the right business structure to fulfill their local small product market potential. By comparing the South and Midwest regions noted in Figure 5.1, to the MSA locations with the largest population and subsequent market potential from Table 5.3; Company A could begin to geographically position the sales incentives and advertising campaigns aggressively in those metro markets. Taken from the U.S. Census Bureau data for the Top 20 United States Metropolitan Statistical Areas with the greatest population increases from 2000 to 2010 and filtered for MSA's with more than 1,000,000 citizens, Table 5.3 shows that, "13 of the top 20 areas with the greatest population increases since 2010 were positioned either in the Midwest or the South." (United States Census Bureau 2011) The 13 MSA locations highlighted green in Table 5.3 are an exceptional control group for Company A to test new marketing strategies or retail technologies in the dealer channel, with the sheer number of potential customers located in those densely populated markets.

Table 5.3 Top 20 Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the United States for Population Increase 2000 to 2010 (Filtered in Order of Greatest Population Increase from 2000 to 2010, for those MSAs with more than 1,000,000 in population) (Place Objective)

Location	Population		Change, 2000 to 2010	
	April 1, 2000	April 1, 2010	Number	Percent
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	1,375,765	1,951,269	575,504	41.8
Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ	797,071	1,130,490	333,419	41.8
St. Louis, MO-IL	1,249,763	1,716,289	466,526	37.3
Kansas City, MO-KS	1,330,448	1,758,038	427,590	32.1
Virginia Beach-Norfolk, VA-NC	3,254,821	4,224,851	970,030	29.8
Providence-New Bedford, RI-MA	1,644,561	2,134,411	489,850	29.8
Oklahoma City, OK	3,251,876	4,192,887	941,011	28.9
Fresno, CA	4,715,407	5,946,800	1,231,393	26.1
Dayton, OH	1,711,703	2,142,508	430,805	25.2
Columbia, SC	4,247,981	5,268,860	1,020,879	24.0
Knoxville, TN	5,161,544	6,371,773	1,210,229	23.4
Chattanooga, TN-GA	1,311,789	1,589,934	278,145	21.2
Flint, MI	1,122,750	1,345,596	222,846	19.8
Fort Wayne, IN	1,796,857	2,149,127	352,270	19.6
Naples-Marco Island, FL	2,179,240	2,543,482	364,242	16.7
Lincoln, NE	4,796,183	5,582,170	785,987	16.4
Utica-Rome, NY	2,395,997	2,783,243	387,246	16.2
Columbus, GA-AL	968,858	1,124,197	155,339	16.0
Lafayette, LA	1,927,881	2,226,009	298,128	15.5
Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC	1,525,104	1,756,241	231,137	15.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

5.6 Leveraging Uniform Commercial Codes for Known and Potential Utility Customer Mapping (Place Objective)

Company A financial, the financing arm of Company A retains all customer information on Company A customers that borrowed funds to initiate a loan for their product. Like other firms, to mitigate risk and increase asset protection, once a consumer engages in an installment arrangement with Company A to finance their respective product, a Uniform Commercial Code-1 (UCC-1) form is established on the behalf of the debtor throughout the life of the financial agreement. Across the United States, each individual state has specific laws on commercial transactions or negotiable arrangements, hence why the UCC is called a “uniform code, because it evens out the differences in state laws and gives stability and reliability for companies operating across state lines.” (Wolters Kluwer 2017) With the scope of this thesis on the United States and those MSA’s referenced in Chapter 5.4, Company A financial UCC-1 data on Company A and competitive customer information is collected by the states where the Top 20 largest MSA locations reside across the United States in 2010 population figures. This researcher collected the following UCC-1 data from Company A financials database: All of the Company A product owners or similar competitor’s models of products new or used purchased in the last 10 years, the number of units by state location, and the total volume potential in dollars that respective product inventory represents statewide. (Williams 2018) After compiling that UCC-1 data manually, the researcher amalgamated all of that UCC-1 data with the MSA data from the US. Census Bureau and created a new reference visualization found in Table 5.4 that gives a unique market potential snapshot for those, “Top 20 U.S. Metropolitan Statistical Areas in 2010,” and a regional blueprint for what U.S. markets that Company A should prioritize

in the future based off of population density and known product purchasing absorption (United States Census Bureau 2011).

Table 5.4 Top 20 2010 U.S. Metropolitan Areas and Statewide Known Product Customers in Those Markets (UCC-1 Data for all Competitive Brands Purchased in the Last 10 Years) (Place Objective)

Figure Intentionally Omitted

Sources: U.S Census Bureau

5.7 Targeting High Potential Dealer Metropolitan Statistical Area Drive Time Mapping for Online Retail Conscious Customers (Promotional Objective)

American consumers across all customer segments in the e-commerce retail space, are accustomed to conducting research online at home before they make a purchase online or use the research to make a purchase at a brick-and-mortar retail location. Many online shoppers value their e-commerce experience over physically visiting brick-and-mortar locations, because customers can quickly access product information, consumer reviews, competitive pricing for complimentary goods, and complete a transaction online without a face-to-face sales driven purchasing experience. In today's retail market place, most retailers are feeling the effects of consumer behaviors that have come on the heels of the Amazon.com e-commerce age. In a 2017 study comprised of 1,000 U.S. adults executed by the retail firm June20, "Americans are craving the curated experience that being in a physical store brings – 65 percent of Americans said that they visit a physical store because they like to see and touch a product before buying it." (Black 2017) Traditional point of sale transactions are obviously not limited to the physical shopping experience with seasoned e-commerce consumers, so the desired physical location that agriculture

manufacturers choose to establish a physical retail footprint at is still competitively viable in the technological age. Due to U.S. customer's still favoring brick-and-mortar for purchases, Company A should position new Company A dealer facility locations in MSA's to take advantage of the greatest market potential in areas where there currently aren't Company A locations or there are only competitive Company B or Company C dealers in that sales region.

Table 5.5 suggests online shopping is a very large driver behind all product categories for U.S. consumers throughout the purchase journey, but for larger priced items like automobiles and appliances, consumers still prioritize in-store experiences over online buying. The online prioritized information is derived from a 1,200 person U.S. internet user study surveyed by eMarketer.com in 2017 to determine which product categories U.S. consumers prioritized for in-store purchases versus online transactions. (Chadwick 2017)

A strong business case could be established for Company A to base future strategic plans around dealer location mapping tools due to the following data sets: the in-store customer prioritization data in Table 5.5, the surveyed preferences of U.S. adult consumers to frequent brick-and-mortar retail locations, the small product market potential derived from all of the MSA locations noted in Table 5.3-5.4, and the known Company A product customers regional breakouts given in Figure 5.1. Leveraging Company A's geospatial mapping program, this thesis selected a MSA location from Table 5.3 randomly and compared the known number of competitive and Company A dealer locations in an approximate 120 mile by 160 mile MSA regional quadrant. This MSA region of focus is selected at random to ascertain a potential customer's 20 minute drive time needed to

navigate a local competitive small product territory, in an attempt to recreate what the potential drive time might look like geographically in a U.S. MSA.

Table 5.5 Categories for Which U.S. Primary Household Shoppers Prefer to Buy Digitally vs. In-Store, February 2017, Sample Size of 1,200 U.S. Internet Users (Promotion Objective)

	In-Store	Digitally
Automotive	88%	12%
Major Appliances	85%	15%
Tools/Hardware	77%	23%
Jewelry	71%	29%
Electronics	69%	31%
Kitchen & Bath	69%	31%
Apparel/Footwear	68%	32%
Kitchenware	68%	32%
Small Appliances	66%	34%
Office/Stationary	64%	36%
Tablets/Smartphones	61%	39%
Computers	60%	40%
Cameras/Accessories	57%	43%
Entertainment	48%	52%
Toys & Games	48%	52%
Books	38%	62%

Source: eMarketer.com

The regional U.S. Market Potential maps noted in Figures 5.7 – 5.9 uses the Company A geospatial mapping program, which is an accurate assimilation of the MSA data collected above and known Company A and competitor dealer locations. Drive times are certainly important items to consider as it relates to what a consumer is willing to embark upon to visit their local dealer. Competitive dealer boundaries are conveyed in the maps below by zonal marking, but specifically in Figure 5.7 respective dealer locations are called out with the following breakdown; Company A leads the respective market area with

XX total locations, while Company B (XX), Company D (XX), and Company C (XX) trailed behind the market leader with their respective number of retail dealer locations. Areas noted in orange represent the highest potential, while areas noted in blue represent the smallest customer potential for that given MSA. This location planning information is quite powerful to possess, especially when considering the implications of targeting existing or competitive customer's based off of the previous purchase histories with future prescriptive small product marketing or advertising plans. Beyond just marketing, Company A could start to invest additional synergistic tactics that would address those known pockets throughout the United States MSA's similar to Figure 5.9, where Company B customers have shorter drive times than Company A customers do currently. Company A could position future dealer location plans to increase coverage represented in Figure 5.8 and disrupt any existing stranglehold a given competitive dealer may have in its local market, and introduce a Company A retail location to break into those lucrative high potential markets to increase points of market share.

Figure 5.7 Company A Customer Potential Grid Mapping – All Known Competitive Dealer Locations - MSA Location not Disclosed, State and County Lines Removed (Place Objective)

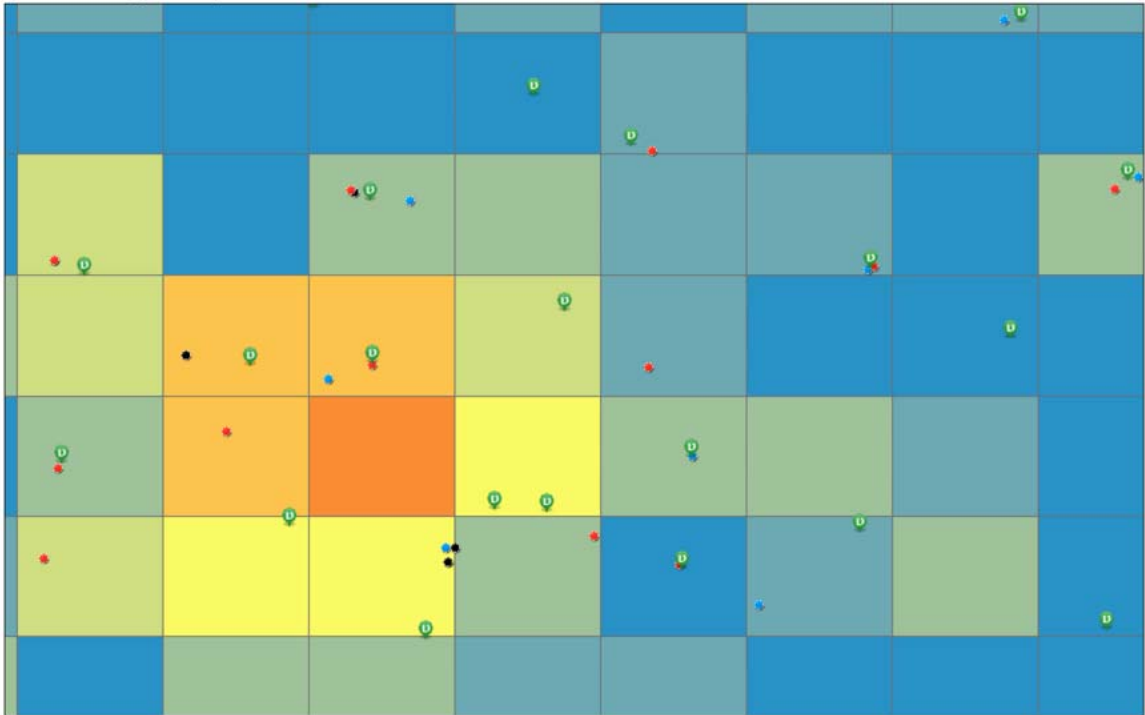


Figure 5.8 Company A Customer Potential Grid – 24 Company A Dealer Locations with 20 Minute Customer Drive Time Mapping - MSA Location not Disclosed, State and County Lines Removed (Place Objective)

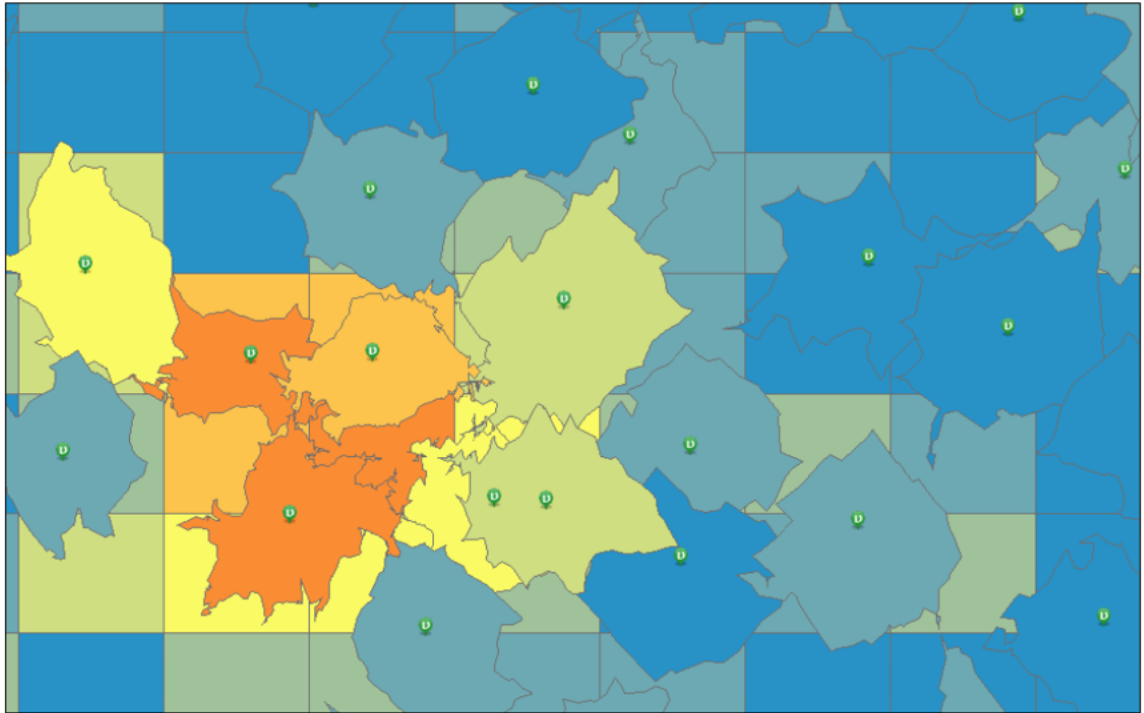
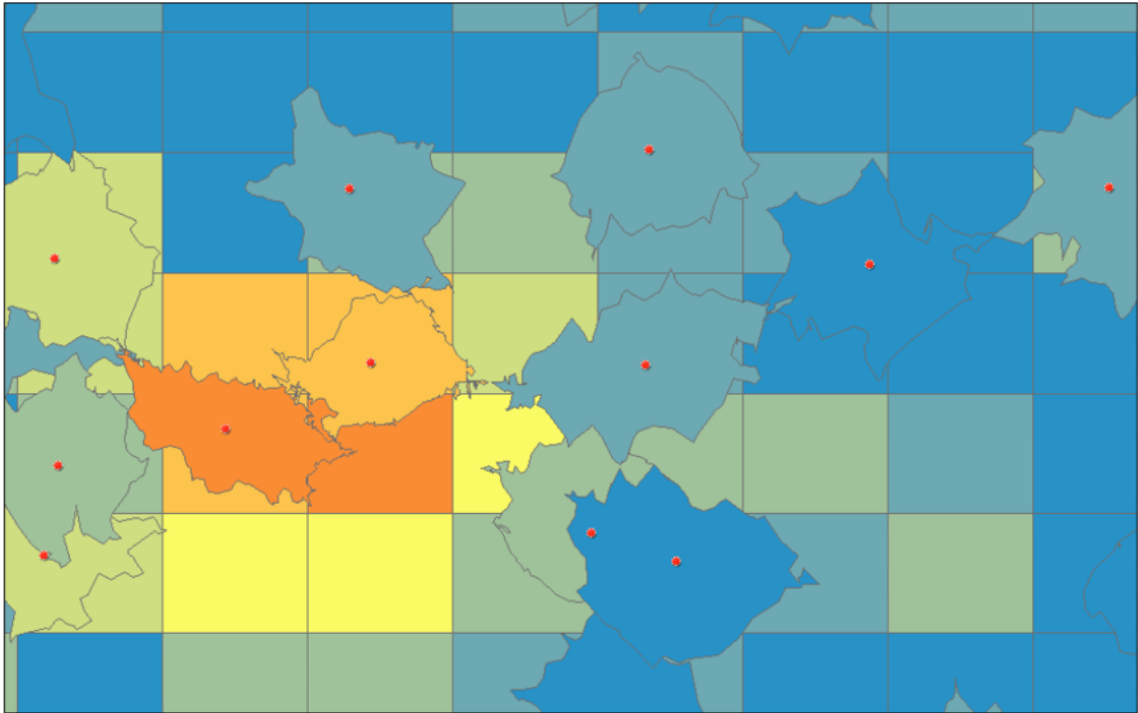


Figure 5.9 Company A Potential Customer Grid – 17 Company B Dealer Locations with 20 Minute Customer Drive Time Mapping - MSA Location not Disclosed, State and County Lines Removed (Place Objective)



5.8 Marketing Manager Mixed-Method Survey Sample Characteristics and Results (Promotion Objective)

To examine the complexity of marketing retail standards for the twenty-five high performing U.S. dealer organizations and how the marketing mix defines the overall level of marketing sophistication for small products, foundationally the research started with a sample size of 18 (n=18) respondents from the original twenty-five who completed and submitted the survey with an overall respondent response rate of 72 percent. This particular survey has a 12 percent margin of error, at a 95 percent confidence level and subsequent z-score of 1.96. Of those 18 respondents, 61 percent (n=11) had a corporate level position championing the retail space, while 39 percent (n=7) did not have a designated person in charge of the dealership's retail floor. Taking that one layer further, of those 11 marketing managers that responding as having a corporate level leader in charge of the retail showroom, 91 percent (n=10) had implemented some form of consistent executable processes in place for reoccurring retail showroom management. Of the respondents to this survey, 66 percent (n=12) had a retail showroom champion at the individual store level, while 33 percent (n=6) did not have a dedicated headcount tied to managing the retail space at their respective store level. This proved to be an insightful finding as it relates to operational managerial processes, as Company A dealers across the United States have varying organizational hierarchies where some have corporate structures that manage their companies at a macroeconomic regional level and some dealers rely on individual store locations to manage their business at the microeconomic level.

For a competitive product manufacturing company in today's economic climate, the firm must put some implement the appropriate processes and measures into how the brick

and mortar retail location appears to customers, whether it is the flagship primary location or a satellite store location. For small product manufactures, the same theory certainly applies to managing potential customer's retail experiences as they drive by that dealership or walk onto the front lot before entering the main entrance of the showroom. With this in mind, the survey respondents were asked how they perceived the overall retail effectiveness of their flagship store's showroom layout was for potential customers. Noted in Table 5.6 of the respondents to this survey, 44 percent (n=8) stated that they felt their retail showrooms were average, 33 percent (n=6) felt they were great, and 22 percent (n=4) felt that their showroom's footprint was stagnant or ignored at their flagship location. Parlay this sense of retail presence with the survey responses stating that 66.66 percent (n=12) of those involved stated that their flagship store's retail strategy was not mirrored at their satellite locations, with only 33.33 percent (n=6) responding that their satellite location replicated their flagship emphasis. It is hard to justify for some organizations to invest in large facilities across every storefront location, yet when it comes to your customer's perceptions and experiences; they want to deliver a strong purchasing experience no matter where in that dealer's coverage area that customer chooses to walk through the door.

Table 5.6 Company A Marketing Manager Survey – Flagship Location's Retail Showroom Layout Effectiveness, Survey Respondent Sample Size n=18 (Promotion Objective)

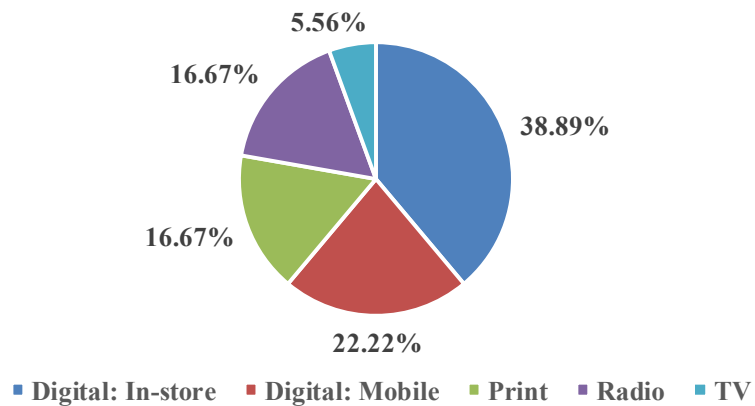
Table Intentionally Omitted

Firms can execute push and pull marketing promotional strategies closely together as they strive to fulfill their yearly strategic or tactical marketing plans in a given business cycle. Company A dealers are no different, as they rely on Company A to create tactical plans to cascade to their dealer channel to execute upon in attempts to secure new valuable customers and retain existing trusted Company A product owners. The same process is deployed for dealers looking to target small product customers as noted in scope throughout this thesis. The respondents of this survey were asked what percentage of their overall marketing promotional needs were executed in or through the retail showroom area as they often work in conjunction with the sales professionals in their organization to promote alignment in execution. Of the respondents to this survey, 11.11 percent (n=2) stated that above 75 percent of their marketing needs were executed in the retail showroom with the other respondents stating: 27.78 percent (n=5) answered 50 percent to 75 percent of their marketing mix was leveraged in the showroom, 44.44 percent (n=8) answered with 25 percent to 50 percent of their marketing mix, and 16.67 percent (n=3) leveraged 25 percent or less of their marketing promotional mix through the showroom.

Marketing and advertising promotions can take shape across various mediums or platforms of execution for Company A dealers today. There are various traditional mediums that range from print, radio, TV, to digital execution for marketing and advertising campaigns to reach the right small product customer in a given segment or market. The survey respondents who answered a question regarding the promotional levels in their retail showrooms noted previously, in the same web-based survey they were asked a supporting question with regards to which promotional delivery medium was preferred in their given area of responsibility for leveraging their valued customers. Of the respondents

to this survey, 38.89 percent (n=7) responded with in-store digital as their preferred choice, 22.22 percent (n=4) preferred digital via mobile, 16.67 percent (n=3) preferred print, 16.67 percent (n=3) preferred radio, 5.56 percent (n=1) preferred TV as the selected medium for promotional needs tied to small product customer targeting. The full breakdown of these survey respondents are noted in Table 5.7, and provide a strong representation of how important digital marketing and advertising is for Company A dealers today to ensure they reach their desired customer segments in a cost-effective manner.

Table 5.7 Company A Marketing Manager Survey - Preferred Medium for Small Product Promotional Needs as it Relates to the Retail Showroom (Promotion Objective)



As noted in Figures 5.6-5.8, retail location is important for any storefront as they compete for their customer’s business when there are multiple brand offerings available to them in their local markets for a specific product model. Some of the survey respondent data previously provided in this chapter gave a clear understanding of how some Company A marketing managers prefer to leverage their marketing and promotional dollars, but this is all merely an effort to increase foot traffic in their retail showrooms to drive purchases. Once they are in the door, a customer has already progressed through the Purchase Funnel

Framework past awareness and onto consideration or the evaluation stages (per Figure 3.1). It is up to that respective dealer to engage with the customer in a way that meets their purchasing requirements that they might have in their mind for the quintessential small product that meets their needs. To assist in this process, it is quite common for some Company A dealers to deploy tablets to help their sales professionals convey the unique selling features of their small products, along with leveraging digital tools in the aid of promoting product specifications or preventative maintenance packages. Of the respondents to this survey when asked if they felt digital tablets would improve their customer's purchasing experiences, 66.66 percent (n=12) believed that tablets would be beneficial to their business and viable within the next three years, 22.22 percent (n=4) did not see a need at this time for tablets, and 11.11 percent (n=2) felt that their organization could adopt these technologies further down the road than in three years' time.

A firm striving to offer a high level purchasing experience in order to meet their customer's required level of engagement when they are present in a retail location is extremely important to reach any firm's predetermined product sales goals. Digital signage plays a large role in this offering if that firm has been pursuing adequate technology advancements in their retail space to stay abreast of trends in the retail market place where customers leverage online or digital commerce sources to navigate their way through the Purchase Funnel. Firms vying for relevancy in any competitive landscape must cater to those constantly connected customers who may use their smartphones to navigate their day in the following ways: work demands, family time, friends and leisure, or engaging in online commerce. Whether a customer is in the market for apparel, a personal electronic device, an appliance, an automobile, or even a small Company A product; there will be

some level of research performed by that customer in advance of making an educated purchase on the corresponding product of their choosing. Throughout all Company A dealer locations located in the United States today, no firm or manufacture has established their presence as the market leader in a digital signage offering that can bridge the gap between the customer's online research performed at home and being able to leverage that content visually in the sales process at their local dealer or retail storefront. This known gap across all small product manufacturer's retail spaces was one of the driving factors behind this thesis and Marketing Manager Survey was framed in a way to address this lack of offering to receive adequate direction from the subject matter experts at the Company A dealer level.

The Company A Marketing Manager web-based survey was created so that it would have some initial fundamental questions to frame up the intent and general scope of marketing promotional needs at a given location, prior to ultimately determining where the survey respondent stood on new technologies and processes that could help them convey the breadth of their product adequately in their showrooms to positively impact parts and product sales. The respondents of this survey were asked what new retail showroom development techniques or advancements in digital retail technologies would positively impact their overall business the most, and were asked to rate their subsequent responses in order of perceived value with one being the most valuable with those responses shown in Table 5.9 below. Of the respondents to this survey, 27.78 percent (n=5) ranked new digital solutions tied to improving how they complete product transactions as the most valuable for their organization. Within that same question's prioritized response subset, 22.22 percent (n=4) of the respondents selected any new digital device that could increase foot

traffic, collect customer information, or assist with promotional redemptions as the second highest potential ranking. Of the respondents to this survey who replied with their next tier down in value priority, 38.89 percent (n=7) ranked new digital solutions tied to improving how they complete transactions for aftermarket parts products as the next layer of value for their organization behind product transactions and customer information collection. In the fourth position as prioritized by survey respondents for future value to their organization, 22.22 percent (n=4) of those respondents stated the ability to improve their customer’s overall purchasing experience with new retail showroom physical layout plans as a priority to their business.

Table 5.8 Company A Marketing Manager Survey – Value Prioritization of New Retail Showroom Focuses and Digital Technological Advancements that could Increase Sales (Promotional Objective)

Value Rank	Retail Showroom Focus for Improvements	Percentage of Respondents	Sample Size
#1	New Digital Solutions: Product Transactions	27.78%	(n=5)
#2	Increase Foot Traffic/Cust. Info Collection/Promo Redemption	22.22%	(n=4)
#3	New Digital Solutions: Parts Transactions	38.89%	(n=7)
#4	Retail Layouts: Improving Customer's Purchasing Experience	22.22%	(n=4)

Source: Company A Marketing Manager Survey, Survey Monkey Tool 2018

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This study began with establishing a common understanding for how Company A's long-time place at the forefront of the product manufacturing landscape has allowed them to prosper in that space over the years. Yet with depressed worldwide commodity crop prices, a drop in overall U.S. net farm income has driven the need for Company A as an enterprise to pivot and prioritize business strategies in the small product sector with primary emphasis on increasing product sales. This study establishes the existing need to tactically shift the focus on increasing sales of its small product in the following ways: how products are positioned within the competitive small product market place, how products are conveyed to viable customers as they progress through their purchase funnel and ultimately the purchasing experience, regions in the United States that should be prioritized for future advanced retail brick and mortar facilities, ways that small product potential customers should be marketed to outside and inside of their local Company A dealership's storefront, and ultimately new retail digital technologies that should be deployed to further differentiate and establish Company A as the market leader in the small product arena.

In sharp contrast from the large product manufacturing competitive landscape, this study established the primary competitive pressures faced by Company A in the small product manufacturing space were from Company B, Company C, or Company D in the United States. The regions where viable points of competitive market share are up for grabs and ripe for improvement by Company A, are predominantly the South and Midwest regions of the United States for primary customers and secondary customers (noted in Figure 5.1). New customers residing in the potentially lucrative MSA's are deemed as the hot bed of strategical focus for Company A, as the sheer population density and economic

potential cannot be stressed enough as important leading market factors to prioritize when considering what markets to saturate with future promotional mixes to drive small product sales.

In Chapter 5, the study focuses on the analysis behind what needs are considered by potential customers as important, when considering a brand of small product in the United States. How a firm positions its products to meet customer needs may seem rudimentary in nature, but in the diversely competitive U.S. small product arena today this study strives to establish key product differentiators that manufacturers can leverage during a potential sale. After extensive research, this study determined the Top 5 Company A small product customer needs by tasks they have prioritized that require a product to perform or the Top 5 accessories that will assist said machine to complete that task during operation. The market research provided in Figure 5.2, suggests how Company A dealers should package their products on their sales lots to be ready for customers who are trying to achieve those top 5 tasks and equip their sales professionals to key in on potential packages that could be financed for customer's to reduce that sticker shock at the time of sale. With the do-it-yourself (DIY) culture that is prevalent in most primary customer owners seeking a Company A product, awareness to all of the accessories offered by Company A may be minimal, but having them pre-packaged by a collection of major tasks could very much bridge that gap between awareness and successfully transition into a transaction at a local Company A dealer.

This study determined in Chapter 5 how impactful brand consideration could be for customers who are seeking competitive brands of small products, like the data that was collected in Figure 5.5 illustrated that XX percent of Company B customers actually came

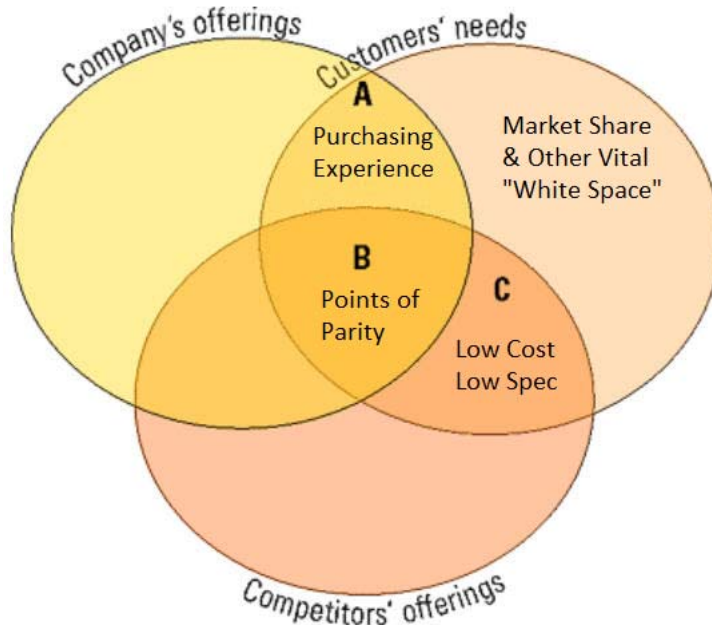
into a local Company A dealer before ultimately deciding to purchase elsewhere. This further illustrates the buying power of an educated consumer as they weigh product features and specifications before making a purchase decision, thus rendering the Company B purchase factors noted in Figure 5.6 as specific areas that could be addressed during the sales processes by a Company A dealer focused on improving small product market share. small product customers are more likely to seek out a local Company A dealer as the subject matter experts for what model or horsepower size of product is most suitable to meet their needs, so leveraging the information provided in Table 5.2 on top 5 product (small product) needs and how those are related to customer satisfaction would be another step to build into listing that respective product model's unique selling points. Regionally Company A sales professionals should review the data from Chapter 5 that was collected by Terry Griffin and Jared Collup from Kansas State University's Department of Agriculture Economics, and interweave those operations into the Company A dealer's pre-packaged products. (Griffin and Cullop 2018) Having a firm cater to a product offering based on a customer's exact needs, would be a strong differentiator for any customer looking across the list of viable brands in the product market.

The conceptual framework by Urbany and Davis entitled the "Strategic Insight in Three Circles," was introduced by this researcher in Chapter 3 of this study to give a visual understanding of how firms can target and cater to their primary customer base in a closely competitive market like the one that Company A and Company B operate in for small products. Company A should leverage their dealer's organizational scale and level of diversification across the entire breadth of small product platforms to its utmost advantage and overcome the segmented competitive landscape between existing competitors.

Providing the right tools to the dealer channel to reinvent the way they go about delivering that customer's retail purchasing experience when they are in their local dealer's retail showroom, will allow for greater sales closing rates and additional take-home product packages. As a direct output to the findings of this research, there is a suggested change in strategy for Company A Dealers to leverage against Company B competition has been applied to the Three Circle Strategy visually referenced below Figure 6.1 as an update to the original standard Urbany and Davis visual noted earlier in this research as Figure 3.2. Per Figure 6.1, noted below in the region "A." the customer's purchase experience is really what sets Company A's offering apart from those similar positioned Company B models from a customer's perception as Company B has often staged their products as the low cost option (Region "B") to that of Company A's models.

The biggest opportunity area is noted in the area coined as "White Space," by Urbany and Davis originally as it has the most potential for growth and subsequently aligns to small product market share that is up for each manufacturer in this space to acquire. (Urbany and Davis 2007) This opportunity area aligns with the research gleaned from the sources already noted in this study, primarily around those markets that Company A haven't prioritized in the past or those competitive markets already saturated by a different market leader's portfolio. Additionally an area of focus to seize control of the viable white space, would be to go after the producers in the South or Southeast where products are required for unique operating requirements. These niche markets have been often overlooked by the competition, so these unique customer needs could help Company A to seize that proverbial low-hanging fruit market share by acquiring some of that white space that Urbany and Davis have noted.

**Figure 6.1 Strategic Insight in Three Circles – Company A and Company B
Competitive Framework**



Source: Originally Harvard Business Review, Urbany and Davis, November, 2007

This study executed a web-based survey to 25 marketing managers who applied their trade in Company A dealerships across the United States with a final sample size of 18 respondents who answered all questions presented to them in the Survey Monkey questionnaire. In Chapter 5, respondent data suggested that a majority (61 percent) of the dealers polled did indeed have someone championing the retail showroom at their local brick-and-mortar location. This is an important number when one considers how aligned the retail storefront should be to those marketing campaigns handed down from Company A directly or created holistically by that respective dealer organization to execute for small product push or pull-marketing needs. Overall the survey respondent themes centered on their collective need for advances in retail showroom technologies that would enhance and further distinguish their provided levels of customer experience when a consumer is in their

retail space pursuing small product or aftermarket wear parts. This need for retail digital tools, is directly correlated to the same respondents stating that (38.89 percent) of their small product promotional needs are met through digital in-store mediums. The research shows that in order to improve Company A dealer's sales of small products in the future, technological advances that would aid a dealer sales professional in the process of conveying unique selling points of products to their customers is indeed the prioritized route that Company A should focus going forward.

For customers who like to conduct a great deal of their research at home before stepping foot into their local Company A dealer's showroom, improving the way that Company A's product is conveyed or positioned to a customer is extremely important and could be a tough hurdle for some sales professionals to overcome when there are various customer types in search of small products in all competitive markets. Further research needs to be pursued around technology that would easily assist sales professionals in the promotion of the products unique selling points, and help sway some customers who are on the fence for what brand of small product they are pursuing when they find themselves in the consideration phase of the purchase funnel. Retail innovation is how a firm keeps pace with their retail consumer, so any company looking to stay ahead of industry trends should aspire to introduce new digital technologies in their facility showrooms that will assist their dealerships in meeting those constantly changing customer's retail expectations. The proposed digital device could be a powerful tool that would assist in a candid sales processes that could cater to that customer's small product needs and allow that dealer sales professional to close the sale on that specific device while minimizing the overall time the customer has to be at the dealership. This retail showroom digital improvement could be

the next sales tool that would greatly impact the way that the Company A dealer channel goes about securing points of market share away from Company B and other competitors in the small product arena.

Further research needs to be conducted on a wider cross-section of the overall population of marketing managers and sales professionals employed at Company A dealers today, than just the targeted high performing dealer organizations present in the performance group of marketing managers that was surveyed in this study. Regression analysis was attempted for this study, but the modeling was found to be inconsistent and problematic for considerations to be made from the analysis, due to the original smaller population size. Additional resources could be warranted to execute this study on a larger scale to generate a greater sample size of respondents, which could only increase the actionable value of the survey results and draw strategical changes from the outputs of this larger survey project. This would create a study environment for additional actionable insights that could be gleaned from a larger sampling of marketing professionals and could create the potential for a third survey focused solely on what promotions and sales incentives work the best for competitive conversions on customers that have owned competitive lines of small products in the past and can be converted to Company A customers.

Another avenue for additional research in the future, would be the impact of Company A dealer's facility location planning needs and how that is impacted by the many customer demographic, psychographic, and economic considerations that go into choosing a facility's physical address in a major MSA market. Further research and gap identification must be made in order to develop future digital retail technologies that could

be the catalyst in differentiating Company A from Company B in the small product market by reaching those ever-changing customer dynamics of today's Company A customers. Future owners and operators will be found across all of the primary generational demographic groups, so smart digital technologies deployed in a customer's retail experience in everyday ecommerce will quickly lend themselves to what they expect from their trusted retail dealership. The future of commerce and the marketing associated with it will be greatly impacted by a consumer base that has been engrained with instant gratification via their chosen smart device, and how brick-and-mortar retailers can successfully bridge the gulf between online shopping and in-store customer experiences.

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