

**Competitive Analysis of WeP as a Brand and
Analysing its Market Presence**

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Comments by the Faculty

WeP stands for Wipro employees Passion and WeP Peripherals Limited is one of India's largest employee-owned companies. It was established in September 2000. The company is one of the major players in the Indian market for dot matrix printers, its main competitors being TVS electronics and Epson. Starting primarily with Dot Matrix Printers, WeP has now diversified into emerging and growing segments including Power Solutions, Retail Solutions and After Market, while continuously strengthening its portfolio of printers. The aim of the project was to understand the position of WeP as a brand in the printer industry with focus on dot matrix printers and aftermarket business unit and to study the competitors, such as, Epson and TVS Electronics, their marketing strategies in the dot matrix printer industry.

The research was conducted with the help of questionnaires and in depth interviews with the channel partners of WeP Peripherals Ltd., over a period of 40 days. The Data collected is segregated based on the feedback obtained from the partners region-wise and the data has been analysed. The feedback was analysed using descriptive statistics.

On completion of the survey and analysis, the major issues identified are related to the company's marketing activities in terms of promotions, brand awareness and brand identity. Recommendations were proposed based on the above findings.

In the present study, the student attempted to analyze the product life cycle phase of WeP. Competitor analysis has been also conducted during the project. The student also recommended about creating a distinctive brand identity through innovative promotion strategies. The project was a great exposure for the student to connect a number of marketing concepts with real life situation faced by a company. The student also attempted to apply the learning for the more effective operation of the company.

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Industry Overview

Printers market in India is currently undergoing through a phase wherein the market can be characterized with steady growth and a cut-throat competition amongst players operating in the market space. The major factors influencing growth in the market happen to be the prevailing of major active industry verticals and the exponential growth in content creation. Further, the presence of a massive small and medium business (SMB) population also boosts the market to a large extent, wherein SMBs shell out a decent proportion of their revenues for computational purchases.

The market comprises of multiple segments including inkjet, dot matrix and laser printers. An array of factors including high content generation, enterprise mobility, declining prices and the huge PC base in India basically propels the market forward. An ongoing tendency to adopt inkjet multifunction devices, cloud printing, green printing and managed printing services is on the rise in the India, whereas the market for dot matrix printers is not growing and is very much stagnant.

About WeP Peripherals Ltd

WeP stands for Wipro employees Passion and WeP Peripherals Limited is one of India's largest employee-owned companies. It was established in September 2000. Prior to this WeP was a division of WIPRO and was started in the year 1986 as peripherals divisions under Mr. Ram Agarwal (Managing Director and CEO). Starting primarily with Dot Matrix Printers, WeP is now diversified into emerging and growing segments including Power Solutions, Retail Solutions and After Market, while continuously strengthening its portfolio of printers. With the ever-growing demand for printers and UPS in the country, among the small and medium enterprises, WeP's products are designed, keeping in mind the current requirements of the market, which are high on quality and yet cost effective. WeP designs, develops, manufactures and services these products. The major business units of WeP are Printer Business Unit, Retail Business Unit, Power supplies Business Unit and After Market Business Unit. (WeP Peripherals Limited, 2011) The products offered by WeP are as follows:

- ◆ Dot matrix printers
- ◆ Hi speed dot matrix printers
- ◆ Line matrix printers
- ◆ Passbook printers
- ◆ Retail POS (Point of Sale) systems
- ◆ Retail POS printers
- ◆ Retail billing printers
- ◆ UPS
- ◆ Online UPS
- ◆ Consumables & Print head
- ◆ ID card printers
- ◆ Scanners

Project Overview

The company is one of the major players in the Indian market for dot matrix printers, its main competitors being TVS electronics and Epson. Of late, the company has been seeing a decline in the market share of dot matrix printers. To understand the reasons behind the declining market share, this project has been undertaken.

Objective

The aim of the project was to understand the position of WeP as a brand in the printer industry with focus on dot matrix printers and aftermarket business unit and to study the competitors such as Epson and TVS Electronics, their marketing strategies in the dot matrix printer industry.

Methodology for Data Collection

The research was conducted with the help of questionnaires. An in-depth interviews with the channel partners of WeP Peripherals Ltd. was conducted which included elite Partners, tier 1 partners and resellers of WeP products. The survey was carried out at pan India scale. The action plan prepared to carry out the survey is as follows:

- ♦ The details of the elite partners and other channel partners across the different locations were obtained from WeP database.
- ♦ The sample size was decided to be a minimum of hundred.
- ♦ The partners were contacted through telecalling or direct meetings depending on the location
- ♦ The questionnaire had open-ended as well as close-ended questions and focussed on marketing related activities and branding.
- ♦ The feedback was analysed using descriptive statistics. (Zikmund, 2003)

Scope of the Study

The study gives the company's image in the dot matrix printer market. The aftermarket business unit has also been studied with respect to the competitors such as Epson and TVS electronics.

Limitations of the Study

- ♦ The study was limited to two main units of WeP, dot matrix printers and consumables.
- ♦ The study was limited to the channel partners of WeP Peripherals Ltd.
- ♦ The database of the channel partners provided by WeP was not an updated one, resulted in data redundancy and data inadequacy.
- ♦ Direct meeting of the partners was restricted to areas like Bangalore, Mysore and Hyderabad.
- ♦ Some of the partners were reluctant to share the information about the competitors.

Discussion

The product i.e. the dot matrix printers is reaching its decline stage of the product life cycle. (Kotler, Keller, Abraham, & Jha, 2009) The reason for this being the technological changes and emergence of much more sophisticated printers like inkjet and laser printers. Though dot matrix printers have their presence in the government and commercial enterprises, the market growth of dot matrix printers is very much stagnant. Though, some of the surveyed partners were optimistic about the dot matrix printer's future, its presence would continue in the sectors like banks and large

industries where robust printers are required with the ability to produce multiple copies.

Findings

The survey was carried out over a period of 40 days. The data collected is segregated based on the feedback obtained from the partners region wise and the data has been analysed.

The survey has been carried out with a total of 167 channel partners of WeP across the different locations of India. Direct meeting was conducted with 75 partners, in places including Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mysore. Telephonic interviews of 92 partners in the northern region as well as the southern parts of the country.

The products of WeP were considered to be of superior quality compared to the products being offered by that of competitors in the dot matrix printer segment. In terms of brand preference in dot matrix printers, 38% preferred WeP, 50% preferred TVS electronics and 12% for Epson. Some of the issues identified were as follows:

- ◆ WeP lacks a brand identity due to lack of promotional activities in major parts of the country.
- ◆ Limited number of warehouses leading to delay in delivery of products,
- ◆ Reseller meetings not happening regularly.
- ◆ Supply not meeting demand in various locations, has resulted in competitors to emerge ahead.
- ◆ Procedure oriented approach causing inconvenience to the partners (lack of transparency in policy).
- ◆ Declining demand for DMP's, service related issues and lack of marketing support leading to partners becoming inactive.

From the survey conducted, it was found that TVSe is perceived to be a superior brand in the dot matrix printer industry in India, due to its value for money and its strong service network, and hence, there is reason to go for TVSe over the other brands. On the other hand brands like Epson and WeP can be fitted in the category of relatively superior brands, as their product quality is good but lag behind TVSe. The brands such as Epson and TVSe

do not have a strong service support as compared to TVSe. There are other minor players in the dot matrix printer industry such as Lipi, but their presence was found to be very low during the survey.

Tabulation has been done below to show the results of the survey i.e. the channel member's perception about these brands.

Table 1 : Channel member's perception about these brands

Superior Brand	Relatively Superior Brand	Inferior Brand (low presence)
TVSe	WeP Epson	Lipi

Conclusion

On completion of the survey and analysis, the major issues identified were related to the company's marketing activities in terms of promotions, brand awareness and brand identity. The company has not been able to create a brand identity for itself.

Brand identity is the outward expression of a brand – including its name, trademark, communications, and visual appearance. Brand identity reflects how the owner wants the consumer to perceive the brand – and by extension the branded company, organization, product or service. Effective brand names build a connection between the brand personalities as it is perceived by the target audience and the actual product/service. Brand identity is fundamental to consumer recognition and symbolizes the brand's differentiation from competitors.

Brand identity is what the owner wants to communicate to its potential consumers. Brand identity needs to focus on authentic qualities – real characteristics of the value and brand promise being provided and sustained by organizational and production characteristics

The main competitors in the dot matrix printers Epson and TVS-e have a good brand identity, Epson being a global brand and TVS being a leading conglomerate in the Indian market. Though WeP's association with WIPRO gives it an brand identity, it is imperative to have a brand identity in the current market scenario. Brand building will have to be done over a period of time. Brand identity needs to be created for WeP as a brand.

Hence, the company needs to create a brand identity for itself. The company can go for promotions using mass media advertisements, hoardings and boards, which will result in brand visibility and brand awareness. In this manner brand identity will be created and can be sustained by offering quality products.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- ◆ Recruit quality people and give them proper training to do branding activities in the market and to reach out to customers, salesman's ability to communicate in local language would be an added advantage
- ◆ Focus on better dealership management, lack of which has resulted in communication delays and gaps between the company, partners and resellers.
- ◆ Formulate a strategy to gain confidence of resellers, as they can push the products. This is one of the strategies adopted by the competitors to push their products
- ◆ Regular reseller meets need to be conducted to gain momentum in the market place. It ensures a constant touch with the resellers and their association with the brand can be maintained and enhanced.
- ◆ New launches, if done, in reseller meets would create awareness in the trader community about the product and would act as a medium of promotion of the product.
- ◆ Ensuring strong presence of WeP products online would help in boosting sales, as the competitors are very active in their internet marketing activities. It is a key area WeP can focus on to promote products as well as generate sales.
- ◆ Increasing the number of warehouses (currently 3) will ensure availability of products on time, which in turn will ensure timely servicing of products and increase customer satisfaction.

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