

## **SURVIVAL KIT ITEM FOUR**

### **Pilot Pen V Ball Grip**

These teaching notes were prepared by Lau Geok Theng.

#### **Item Description and Preparation**

- A V Ball Grip Pilot marker pen, blue color, thickness of writing tip is 0.7, and refillable.
- Preparation:
  - The souvenir pen can be brought into the classroom and pass around for students to have a look and feel. If additional units of the pen can be bought economically at the local bookstore, the instructor can consider buying more units to pass around the class and let the students have more time to examine the pen.
  - Students should be asked to read carefully the opening story for Chapter 18 on Pilot Pen.
  - Students should be asked to examine the website ([http://www.pilotpen.com.sg/products/liquidink\\_vballgrip.html](http://www.pilotpen.com.sg/products/liquidink_vballgrip.html)) which provides a detailed description of the pen.

#### **Some Possible Topics for Discussions**

##### *Product Levels*

- Ask students to share their views regarding the core product, tangible product and augmented product for a pen such as the V Grip.
- The tangible product consists of the key elements of the pen. The ink housed in a secure container is one key element as without ink the pen will not work. The other key element is the mechanism allowing the ink to flow onto a tip to allow for making markings on paper. The V Grip appears to use the rolling ball-point technology. (The students can be asked to write with the pen and provide feedback whether the pen is as good as claimed -- an ever-strong, anti-friction tungsten carbide ball plus brilliant liquid ink that guarantee gliding-smooth, skip-proof writing.)
- The core product for pen is recording of information or message. In this regard, other substitutes include audio recording devices and electronic

recording devices. The core product can also be considered as communication. In this aspect, the pen is competing with other substitutes such as the telephone, and chat facilities. Expensive and well designed pens such as Parker and Mont Blanc which are often bought to be given as gifts, the core product may include goodwill and friendship.

- The augmented product helps consumers to enjoy the tangible product better. For pilot V Grip, the pen holding area is designed with special shape and materials to provide comfortable grip and enables the user to be able to grip it and use it for long hours without feeling numb and tired. (The students can be asked to check and hold the grip and provide feedback, whether the grip is really anti-fatigue and comfortable.) Most pens are designed with a clip so that the pen can be clipped onto the shirt pocket or T-shirt collar and can be wherever a person needs to record something.

*Product Attributes and Attitudinal Scores*

- Students can be asked regarding the important attributes of a pen to consumers and how much of these attributes the Pilot V Grip and other pens possess. This is in effect an application of the concept of evaluative criteria and Figure 5-2 in Chapter 5.
- Some important attributes for a pen are: (a) reliability of ink flow, (b) availability of different thickness of writing tip, (c) availability of different colors, (d) comfort of grip, (e) stylish and good looking design, (f) availability of clip, (g) price, and (h) ability to refill. Students can be asked to rate the importance (1 to 7) of each of these attributes.
- Students can also be asked to rate the performance of Pilot V Grip on each of these attributes (1 to 7). For thickness, V Grip is available in 0.5 mm and 0.7 mm. For colors, V Grip is available in black, blue, green and red.
- Students can be taught the Fishbein Multi-attribute Model and the attitudinal scoring for each brand of pen. Fishbein Model is:

$$A_o \text{ (Attitude towards object)} = \sum B_i E_i$$

where B is the belief that a brand possesses an attribute and E is the evaluation of the importance of an attribute.

- If the ratings of attribute importance and the attribute ratings for two brands of pens by a person are as follows:

| <u>Attribute</u>                    | <u>Importance</u> | <u>Pilot V Grip</u> | <u>BIC BU<sup>2</sup></u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Reliability of ink flow             | 7                 | 7                   | 6                         |
| Availability of different thickness | 5                 | 5                   | 4                         |

|                                  |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Availability of different colors | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Comfort of grip                  | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Stylish and good looking design  | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| Availability of clip             | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Price                            | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| Ability to refill                | 5 | 6 | 1 |

- The  $A_O$  for Pilot V Grip will be  $(7 \times 7) + (5 \times 5) + (5 \times 4) + (6 \times 5) + (5 \times 6) + (5 \times 5) + (3 \times 3) + (6 \times 5) = 218$ .
- Students can also be asked to calculate the  $A_O$  for BIC BU<sup>2</sup> and draw relevant conclusions.
- The  $A_O$  for BIC BU<sup>2</sup> (based on the table above) will be  $(6 \times 7) + (4 \times 5) + (3 \times 4) + (4 \times 5) + (4 \times 6) + (4 \times 5) + (7 \times 3) + (1 \times 5) = 164$ .
- The conclusion is that consumers are more pre-disposed to purchase Pilot V Grip based on multi-attribute attitude model.
- Instructors can use the above table to show computations and application of the concept, or they can develop a similar table with student inputs in the scorings and then use the students' scorings to compute the  $A_O$  for Pilot and BIC and draw conclusions accordingly.

### *Marketing Communications*

- Students can be asked what is the best way to communicate the benefits and attributes of the V Ball Grip Pilot Pen?
- In the opening story in Chapter 18, we are told that a television commercial for Pilot Pen V Grip features three-dimensional animation by Mediafreaks. It shows a kid saying that his parents have stopped talking to each other since they discovered the Pilot Pen V Grip. They have instead been writing notes to each other using the V Grip. The kid then sighed that the nagging has not stopped since his parents are still writing notes such as 'homework done?' and 'time for shower' to him. (This commercial can be seen in YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYxdscXT3TU>)
- Student can be asked if this commercial is effective in communicating the benefits or characteristics of the pen.
- As lower priced pens like the Pilot V Grip are often seen as low involvement products, selective attention and retention are challenges faced by marketers. As such, humor and creativity plays an important role. The above advertisement by Pilot has humor and is creative.

- The key message in that advertisement is that the Pilot V Grip is very easy and pleasant to use, often easier than verbal communications.

NOTE: The suggestions for the use of the pen above are only guidelines. I have deliberately written this note in outline form, so you can vary some of the ideas or try other ideas. I have not provided detailed descriptions or suggestions as I do not wish to bog you down with reading of unnecessary details. You can provide your feedback on the use of the above item for classroom discussion to McGraw Hill or myself ([laugeoktheng@hotmail.com](mailto:laugeoktheng@hotmail.com)) so we can decide whether to include this item for future editions of the book and if yes, how to modify the suggestions for its use in the classroom.