

# The Marketing Audit as a Method for Evaluating the Marketing Plan

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## Abstract

*The marketing audit is a comprehensive, systematic, and periodic review of an organization's marketing environment, strategies, and activities. As businesses continuously adapt to evolving market conditions, the effectiveness of marketing strategies becomes crucial for sustainable growth. This article delves into the role of the marketing audit as a method for evaluating the marketing plan, exploring its framework, components, benefits, and challenges. Through theoretical exploration and practical applications, the paper highlights how marketing audits provide actionable insights, ensuring alignment between marketing efforts and organizational goals.*

**Keywords:** marketing audit, marketing plan, evaluation, marketing strategy, organizational goals

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## 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic business environment, companies must continually assess their marketing efforts to remain competitive. The marketing plan is the blueprint that guides these efforts, outlining strategies and actions to reach target markets, build brand equity, and achieve business objectives. However, no marketing plan can be static—ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure its effectiveness. A marketing audit offers a systematic approach to assessing the plan's performance and making adjustments as necessary.

This article investigates the concept of the marketing audit as a method of evaluating the marketing plan, providing a structured approach to ensure optimal performance. By examining the scope, components, and implications of marketing audits, this research aims to illustrate the importance of this tool for maintaining a competitive advantage.

## 2. Definition and Scope of the Marketing Audit

A marketing audit is a comprehensive, independent examination of an organization's marketing environment, objectives, strategies, and activities. Its primary objective is to assess the effectiveness of these elements in achieving organizational goals and to recommend necessary changes.

The scope of a marketing audit covers:

**Macro and Micro-environmental Analysis:** Examines external factors such as market trends, competitive forces, and technological developments, as well as internal elements like organizational capabilities and resources.

**Marketing Strategy Review:** Evaluates whether the marketing strategy aligns with overall business objectives and market conditions.

**Marketing Operations and Processes:** Assesses how marketing tactics (e.g., pricing, distribution, promotion) are executed and managed.

**Marketing Systems and Metrics:** Reviews the methods used to track performance, customer satisfaction, and market share.

The audit's systematic nature ensures that all elements of the marketing plan are rigorously evaluated, providing actionable insights to improve effectiveness.

### **3. Components of the Marketing Audit**

A typical marketing audit comprises several key components, each focusing on different aspects of the marketing plan:

#### **3.1. External Environment Audit**

This audit examines external market conditions that could affect the organization's marketing strategy, including:

Economic Trends: How economic conditions influence customer purchasing power.

Competitive Analysis: Assessment of direct and indirect competitors, market positioning, and competitive threats.

Technological Advances: Impacts of technological innovation on product development and marketing channels.

Regulatory Environment: Legal and ethical considerations that may affect marketing activities.

#### **3.2. Internal Environment Audit**

The internal environment audit focuses on the company's marketing resources, processes, and systems. It assesses:

Organizational Structure: The effectiveness of marketing departments and teams.

Resource Allocation: Adequacy of marketing budgets and personnel.

Brand Strength: Evaluation of brand perception, loyalty, and equity.

Customer Relationships: Effectiveness of customer engagement strategies, loyalty programs, and retention efforts.

#### **3.3. Marketing Strategy Audit**

This component examines whether the marketing strategy is coherent with the overall business strategy. It assesses:

Market Segmentation and Targeting: Appropriateness of selected target markets and customer segments.

Positioning Strategy: Evaluation of the brand's value proposition and differentiation in the market.

Product/Service Offering: Review of product portfolios, including their relevance and alignment with customer needs.

Marketing Mix (4Ps): Analysis of the product, pricing, place, and promotional strategies.

#### **3.4. Marketing Systems Audit**

The marketing systems audit assesses the tools and processes used to gather, analyze, and report on marketing performance:

Data Management Systems: Effectiveness of CRM, sales tracking, and analytics platforms.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Appropriateness of KPIs in measuring marketing performance.

Customer Feedback Systems: Mechanisms for collecting and analyzing customer feedback, complaints, and suggestions.

#### **4. Benefits of Marketing Audits**

The marketing audit offers several significant benefits, including:

##### **4.1. Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses**

A marketing audit reveals an organization's strengths and weaknesses in its marketing strategy and execution. By identifying areas of improvement, organizations can adjust their plans to increase their competitive edge.

##### **4.2. Ensuring Alignment with Organizational Goals**

By evaluating whether the marketing strategy aligns with broader organizational goals, a marketing audit ensures that resources are directed toward achieving long-term business objectives.

##### **4.3. Enhancing Decision-Making**

Marketing audits provide critical insights into market conditions, customer behavior, and internal processes, empowering decision-makers with the data needed to make informed strategic adjustments.

##### **4.4. Promoting Accountability and Transparency**

The audit process promotes accountability by evaluating performance metrics, ensuring that marketing teams are held responsible for achieving measurable results. It also brings transparency to the allocation of resources and marketing spend.

#### **5. Challenges in Conducting Marketing Audits**

While marketing audits are valuable, they are not without challenges. These may include:

##### **5.1. Time and Resource Intensive**

Conducting a thorough marketing audit requires time, resources, and expertise. Organizations may find it difficult to allocate sufficient personnel or budget to complete the process.

##### **5.2. Resistance to Change**

Organizations may resist implementing recommendations from marketing audits, particularly if they involve significant changes in strategy, organizational structure, or resource allocation.

##### **5.3. Data Availability and Quality**

Marketing audits rely heavily on data. Poor data quality, incomplete records, or inaccurate customer feedback can compromise the effectiveness of the audit process.

#### **6. Best Practices for Effective Marketing Audits**

To overcome these challenges and maximize the benefits of a marketing audit, organizations should adopt the following best practices:

### 6.1. Conduct Audits Regularly

Marketing audits should not be one-off exercises but regular, periodic evaluations. This ensures that organizations remain agile and responsive to changing market conditions.

### 6.2. Involve Key Stakeholders

Including key stakeholders from marketing, sales, finance, and operations ensures that the audit findings are comprehensive and that the recommendations can be implemented across the organization.

### 6.3. Use an Independent Auditor

Hiring an external marketing auditor ensures objectivity, helping to avoid bias and bringing a fresh perspective to the analysis.

## 7. Conclusion

The marketing audit is an essential tool for organizations aiming to evaluate and refine their marketing plans. Through systematic evaluation of the internal and external environment, marketing strategies, and operational processes, marketing audits ensure alignment with organizational goals and enhance decision-making. By identifying areas for improvement, marketing audits drive accountability, optimize resource allocation, and ultimately contribute to the organization's competitive advantage.

However, organizations must recognize the challenges associated with marketing audits and take appropriate steps to ensure their successful implementation. Conducting regular audits, involving key stakeholders, and ensuring data quality will maximize the value of the audit process, making it an indispensable tool for continuous marketing improvement.

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