

The Importance of Brand Strategies and Marketing

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study how **branding/ brand positioning** is central for a product to be distinguished from the products of the competitors and also the role of **brand awareness strategies** in building it. In marketing, positioning has come to mean the process by which marketers try to create an image or identity in the minds of their target market for their product, brand, or organization. Brand positioning is at the heart of marketing strategy. It is the act of designing the company's offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's minds. A good brand positioning helps to guide marketing strategy by clarifying what a brand is all about, how it is unique, how it is similar to competitive brands, and why consumers purchase it. Thus, in simple words brand positioning refers to the position or image which a brand enjoys in the minds of present and potential customers. The definition of brand/ Brand positioning: is defined as the conceptual place you want to own in the target consumer's mind — the benefits you want them to think of when they think of your brand. An effective brand positioning strategy will maximize customer relevancy and competitive distinctiveness, in maximizing brand value. It's a well-known fact that for a lot of companies, their brand is their single most valuable asset. It's critically important when developing a brand positioning strategy to deliver on all three positioning objectives at the same time. This is because brands that are highly relevant though not differentiated run the risk of being commoditized. Similarly, brands that are highly differentiated, though not particularly relevant, become niche providers. The brand positioning is an internal statement designed to direct external communication, and should inform tagline development. The tagline itself will come out of the tagline, as tighter, more creatively inspiring copy line. There are a variety of ways to position a brand, and it's useful to consider brand positioning examples to illustrate how these can be effective. Perhaps the most common approach is positioning on a category or product benefit, which can be particularly effective. So it's no surprise that one of the first things most new businesses set out to do is establish a strong brand. They invest time and money in a great-looking logo and a memorable name. These are very important things, and it's important to get them right. But what a lot of business owners fail to realize is that brand is so much more than just a name or a logo.

Key words: brand strategies , positioning , product , communication , marketing,

Introduction

In order to make an impression in a market, brands need to stand for something. Inconsistent brands and messages fail to make a lasting impression because it is difficult for customers to trust them or register what

these brands represent. On the other hand, when a brand is both consistent and relevant to customers, it builds recognition, credibility, trust, and ultimately loyalty. Consistency is also important when it comes to differentiating a product. Brands simplify decisions for customers. When a brand consistently communicates how and why it is distinct from competitors, it reminds customers why they prefer this brand over others—and why they may be willing to pay more for it.

ZAPPOS' VALUES: An excellent example of core values infusing a strong brand comes from online retailer Zappos. The company's ten "Family Core Values," listed below, are written for current and prospective employees and describe Zappos' operating principles. At the same time, these values also set the tone for what customers can expect from Zappos and how they interact with the Zappos brand.

Zappos Family Core Values

1. Deliver WOW through Service
2. Embrace and Drive Change
3. Create Fun and a Little Weirdness
4. Be Adventurous, Creative, and Open-Minded
5. Pursue Growth and Learning
6. Build Open and Honest Relationships with Communication
7. Build a Positive Team and Family Spirit
8. Do More with Less
9. Be Passionate and Determined
10. Be Humble

Even if you are unfamiliar with Zappos, these core values give you a strong sense of what the company must be like, either to work for or to do business with.

Not every organization defines ten core values; in fact, most keep the number to six or fewer in order to retain a better focus on defining and expressing the organization's identity. What does matter is to find ways for the brand to deliver these values, so that they become real for employees and customers. For example, Zappos empowers individual employees to make judgment calls about how they deliver WOW-worthy customer service; every decision doesn't have to go through manager approval. By encouraging personal initiative in this way, the company also invites creativity, learning, and passion from its employees.

Finally, consistency is an imperative in the globalized economy in which virtually every business operates today. Brand-related messages and communications circulate around the world at astonishing speed: Just ask any company that has seen a major story break on social media. While it does make sense to target specific messages to different global markets according to consumer needs, those messages should all be aligned to a consistent, centralized brand identity. A brand manager—the marketer responsible for directing and managing brand strategy—must think of herself as an ambassador, advocating and communicating on behalf of that common brand in the various markets where the brand is represented.

Objective:

This paper intends to explore and analyze why **brand/ positioning** is closely related to the concept of perceived value. Also difference between a prospective customer's evaluation of the benefits and costs of one product when compared with others, with **brand strategies** articulated in numerous forms including product benefits, features, style, value for money.

Brand Positioning: A Tool for Achieving Consistency

The Brand Platform

Product positioning is an important strategic tool that helps organizations focus their messages and marketing activities around a consistent, differentiating message aimed at a target segment. Brand positioning works on the same principle. The goal of brand positioning—like the positioning for any product or service—is to explain why that brand is different and better for its target customers, and why the differences matter.

At the same time, brands need a consistent, universal identity that is the same regardless of whom you communicate with. For this reason, brand positioning starts with defining precisely what the brand stands for. This is called the *brand platform*. The brand platform may include a variety of descriptive elements to paint a clear picture of what a brand represents. Some brand platform models are very complex, with ten or more inputs. Others are simpler and more streamlined.

The brand platform begins with the organization's mission statement, since the ultimate purpose of a brand is to help the organization achieve its mission. It also incorporates the value proposition for whatever the brand promotes. Remember that brands may operate at the company level (needing a company-level value proposition) or at the product or service level (needing an offering-specific value proposition). In addition to the mission statement and value proposition, the basic elements of any brand platform are a brand promise, core values, a brand voice or personality, and a brand-positioning statement. These are discussed below.

The Brand Promise ; brand strategies

The brand promise is, in effect, the singular experience your brand promises to provide to your customers. It expresses what you want them to feel when they interact with your products and services. Year in, year out, the brand promise is what your customers count on and, ideally, it's the reason they keep coming back to you. The brand promise should be unique and linked to your competitive advantage: something other brands do not and cannot deliver in the way you do. It describes the most salient benefits your brand provides, including benefits that create an emotional connection with customers.

The brand promise is important not only for customers, but also for employees and other internal audiences. It sets the tone for how the company operates and for the experience the brand provides to customers across all segments and all points of contact.

Finally, the brand promise should be simple and easily understood, so it's easy to communicate and reinforce. Some marketers equate the marketing tagline, or advertising slogan, with the brand promise. While there are some exceptions, most brand-promise statements do not use the same marketing language that's used in ad slogans. For instance, Nike's "Just Do It" slogan works very well as part of an ad campaign, but it's not very illuminating as a brand promise. Similarly, fast-food chain Taco Bell never intended its catchy "Make a Run for the Border" tagline to be interpreted as a brand promise. Also, taglines, which are part of marketing communications, may need to be updated more frequently than the brand promise. In contrast, the brand promise should be the global, enduring commitment you stand for over time.

The following are examples of effective brand promises:

- The Coca-Cola Company: to refresh the world in mind, body, and spirit, and inspire moments of optimism
- TOMS Shoes: Through your purchases, TOMS helps provide shoes, sight, water, safe birth and bullying prevention services to people in need. Learn more about what we give.
- Target: expect more, pay less

Core (Brand) Values

Core values are guiding principles for how an organization does business. These values express a perspective on the world, and they govern both internal conduct and external behavior. While the brand promise explains *what* consistent experience a brand will deliver, the core values describe *how* the company will behave as it delivers that experience.

Brand-Positioning Statement

Brand positioning follows the same process for product and service positioning outlined in the positioning module: understanding market and competitive dynamics, confirming competitive advantages, defining the market niche and positioning strategy, and delivering on that strategy. Fortunately, the brand promise should provide strong guidance around the competitive advantages and market niche that should be represented in the positioning statement.

Brand managers may develop brand-positioning statements according to the same formula used for product positioning (discussed in the positioning module):

Note that the target audience for the brand-positioning statement should include all the audiences for the brand, not just the specific, narrowly defined target segment you'd expect in a product- or service-positioning statement. The brand needs to be relevant to every conceivable audience you are trying to reach (which may include multiple target segments). For that reason, the brand-positioning statement needs to be written in such a way that it has a broad enough appeal to speak to that "larger" audience.

As with a product- or service-positioning statement, the brand-positioning statement becomes a guiding document for decisions about the key messages the organization should communicate about the brand, as well as other marketing activities.

Aligning to Deliver the Brand

It takes strong focus and hard work to get through the brand-positioning process and build a brand platform. But once this work is done, brand managers and marketers have a basis for deciding what they want to achieve with the brand. Next, the fun of brand building can begin.

Because brand encompasses much more than just marketing, it is important for the entire organization to understand the brand and each person's role in delivering the brand promise to customers. Every employee in every department, from Accounting and Finance to Product Development and Technology (and everyone in between) plays a part. Organizations with great brands look for ways to educate all internal stakeholders about what the brand means and how it connects with their way of doing business. Company leaders provide incentives for employees to innovate and excel at delivering the brand effectively.

Of course, organizations also communicate about their brands to external audiences—to current and future customers, investors, thought leaders, and influencers, for instance. Brand is embedded in every strategy, tactic, and activity associated with a marketing mix for a given target segment. The brand platform is like a filter that lets through the kinds of communication that an organization needs to reach its audience, but it keeps out the distracting noise and chatter that might confuse or alienate that audience. The brand platform gives a brand coherence and helps the company stay on track.

Figure 1, below, illustrates the tools and artifacts marketers use to deliver strong alignment between brand, messaging, and other marketing activities. The brand strategy and positioning are very consistent from year to year, and they rely on the tools and artifacts we've discussed in this reading. Market-specific positioning and messaging are designed to reinforce the brand while promoting the organization's products and services to target segments. The positioning tools and process discussed in the previous positioning module work at this level of marketing alignment. They remain relatively consistent, with marketers reviewing and refining positioning strategy every twelve to twenty-four months in alignment with company strategy, priorities, and performance.

Brand, Messaging, and Marketing Alignment



Positioning by product attributes and benefits:

It is to associate a product with an attribute, a product feature, or a consumer feature. Sometimes a product can be positioned in terms of two or more attributes simultaneously. The price/quality attribute dimension is commonly used for positioning the products.

A common approach is setting the brand apart from competitors on the basis of the specific characteristics or benefits offered. Sometimes a product may be positioned on more than one product benefit. Marketers attempt to identify salient attributes (those that are important to consumers and are the basis for making a purchase decision).

2. Positioning by price/quality:

Marketers often use price/quality characteristics to position their brands. One way they do it is with ads that reflect the image of a high-quality brand where cost, while not irrelevant, is considered secondary to the quality benefits derived from using the brand. Premium brands positioned at the high end of the market use this approach for positioning the product.

Another way to use price/quality characteristics for positioning is to focus on the quality or value offered by the brand at a very competitive price. Although price is an important consideration, the product quality must be comparable to, or even better than, competing brands for the positioning strategy to be effective.

Parle Bisleri — ‘Bada Bisleri, same price’ ad campaign.

3. Positioning by use or application:

Another way is to communicate a specific image or position for a brand to associate it with a specific use or application. Surf Excel is positioned as stain remover ‘Surf Excel haina!’ Also, Clinic All Clear – ‘Dare to wear black’.

4. Positioning by product class:

Often the competition for a particular product comes from out-side the product class. For example, airlines know that while they compete with other airlines, trains and buses are also viable alternatives. Manufacturers of music CDs must compete with the cassette industry. The product is positioned against others that, while not exactly the same, provide the same class of benefits.

5. Positioning by product user:

Positioning a product by associating it with a particular user or group of users is yet another approach. Motorola Mobile, in this ad the persona of the user of the product has been positioned.

6. Positioning by competitor:

Competitors may be as important to positioning strategy as a firm’s own product or services. In today’s market, an effective positioning strategy for a product or brand may focus on specific competitors.

This approach is similar to positioning by product class, although the competition is within the same product category in this case. Onida was positioned against the giants in the television industry through this strategy. Onida colour TV was launched with the message that all others were clones and only Onida was the leader— ‘Neighbour’s envy, owner’s pride’.

7. Positioning by cultural symbols:

This is an additional positioning strategy wherein the cultural symbols are used to differentiate the brands. Examples are Humara Bajaj, Tata Tea, and Ronald McDonald. Each of these symbols has successfully differentiated the product it represents from competitors.

Conclusion

Branding consists of a set of complex branding decisions. Major brand strategy decisions involve brand positioning, brand name selection, brand sponsorship and brand development. A brand is a company’s

promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits, services and experiences consistently to buyers. At the lowest level, marketers can position a brand on *product attributes*. Marketing for a car brand may focus on attributes such as large engines, fancy colours and sportive design. However, attributes are generally the least desirable level for brand positioning. The reason is that competitors can easily copy these attributes, taking away the uniqueness of the brand. Also, customers are not interested in attributes as such. Rather, they are interested in what these attributes will do for them.

However, a brand should rather be understood as a set of perceptions a consumer has about the products of a particular firm. Therefore, all branding decisions focus on the consumer. Finally, while a brand's positioning should be designed to be fairly enduring, a brand positioning can (and often should change) over time to reflect changes in the marketplace, including new competitors, new technological advances and new benefits sought.

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