Journal of Management and Economic Studies
2025, Vol.7, No.4, 295-303
http://doi.org/10.26677/TR1010.2025.1601

Brand Management: A Conceptual Review of the Conceptual Framework and Brand Positioning Strategies

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Abstract

In the first quarter of the 21st century, a period characterized by the recognized significance of customer relationships within marketing, it has become evident that for firms, merely producing goods and services that satisfy the target audience's needs is insufficient to secure a sustainable competitive advantage in highly contested markets. Consequently, it is deemed necessary to establish emotional bonds with the target segment. At this juncture, the importance of the brand concept is highlighted. Brands constitute a combination of names, symbols, designs, or concepts that encompass both tangible and intangible attributes, enabling the differentiation of products and services from their counterparts. Brands represent the perceptions, feelings, associations, and experiences held by the target audience in relation to the firm, product, or service. Brands equipped with an effective management system provide firms with opportunities for market expansion within their operational domains. Given these benefits, branding has emerged as a central focus for organizations in the 21st century. The objective of the current study is to delineate the conceptual framework of brand concepts and brand positioning strategies. The study holds significance due to its potential contribution to the existing literature and its provision of practical recommendations for firms aiming to enhance their brand image.

Keywords: Brand İmage, Brand Management, Branding Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, where the science of marketing is rapidly evolving, the progression from a production-based marketing paradigm to the emergence of relational marketing has demonstrated to marketers that the markets in which they offer services and products are not homogeneous (Temporal, 2010). This situation indicates the necessity of market segmentation, the imperative for firms to differentiate themselves from their counterparts when addressing their target audience, and the insufficiency of merely catering to the target audience's needs. Furthermore, it highlights the need to appeal to the emotional dimension of individuals to establish a relationship based on loyalty (Keller, 2025). This trajectory underscores the increasing importance of the brand concept.

A brand is a name, symbol, term, design, or a combination thereof that differentiates a product or service from its counterparts. Brands function as both tangible and intangible assets for

companies. Beyond generating business opportunities, they communicate the corporate identity to the public (Yazid & Kawiryan, 2023). A brand is not merely a logo; it is also the image that products and services leave in the minds of individuals (Barrenechea, 2025). A brand enables the target audience to recognize the product they desire and need, and to obtain information about that product's reputation. Through brands, firms establish emotional relationships with their target audiences, and these relationships result in the formation of loyal customer segments for their products and services within the markets they operate. For firms striving to endure in highly competitive markets, the brand concept represents a crucial tool for differentiating themselves from equivalents and securing a favorable position in the minds of the target audience (Rahman, Langner, & Temme, 2021).

The achievement of market success and sustained brand performance are fundamentally contingent upon the efficacy and quality of the brand's strategic management framework. Brand management primarily involves the strategic deployment, enhancement, and maintenance of the value proposition extended to the target market. This managerial function encompasses the determination of the brand's positioning and its subsequent market presentation. Furthermore, the establishment of effective brand positioning is fundamentally tied to the brand image as perceived by the target audience (Alić, Činjarević, & Agić, 2020). Possessing a robust brand image provides numerous advantages compared to competitors, such as securing the target audience's trust, strengthening their loyalty, and enhancing reputation (Shaikh, 2024). It can be asserted that building a favorable brand image is directly related to developing a successful brand strategy. There is a substantial body of literature dedicated to brand strategies (Zahirov, 2022; Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2020; Fayvishenko, 2018; Barrenechea, 2025; Zulfikar, 2022). In light of the existing literature, branding can be recognized as an indispensable method employed by companies to reach broad audiences, establish emotional connections, and secure loyalty (Kaptanoğlu, Kılıçarslan, & Tosun, 2019). The objective of the current study is to delineate the conceptual framework of brand concepts and brand positioning strategies. The study holds importance due to its potential contribution to the existing literature and its provision of practical recommendations for firms aiming to enhance their brand image in practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In line with the process of change and transformation brought about by technological and scientific advancements on societies, human needs, demands, and expectations are diversifying daily, just as they have throughout history. Particularly in the first quarter of the 21st Century, where this process has accelerated, it has been realized that merely satisfying people's physical needs for short-term profit is not sustainable. The changes resulting from the comprehension of the importance of emotions in marketing have demonstrated to companies the necessity of establishing emotional bonds with their target audiences (Bagozzi, Romani, Grappi & Zarantonello, 2021). The attitudes of the target audience have gained significance for companies, and the image that firms project in the minds of their target audience has become of critical value for market competitiveness (Abbas, Islam, Hussain, Baqir & Muhammad, 2021). Branding, being one of the primary tools for gaining mindshare with the target audience, stands out by providing numerous advantages for firms, such as establishing emotional connections, creating loyalty through long-term relationships, and increasing trust in the product or service (Zulfikar, 2022). To elaborate on brand concepts and positioning strategies, the following sections will first explain brand concepts, followed by the concept of brand strategy, and finally, positioning strategies.

2.1 Brand Concepts

The brand concept can be considered a marketing tool that delineates the difference between companies and firms and their counterparts in the markets they serve, secures a place in the

minds of the target audience, and shapes the purchasing and decision-making process by establishing emotional bonds between people and the brand (Rai, Goel, Kyal & Surana, 2024). Branding aims to establish long-term, emotional relationships with the target audience. It focuses on differentiating products and services in line with the target audience's desires and demands, and on creating a positive image in their minds. A brand is not merely a name, term, symbol, or design; it signifies identity and meaning as well as the product itself (Swaminathan, Sorescu, Steenkamp, O'Guinn & Schmitt, 2020). Brands that focus on their target audiences operate with the goal of generating value in addition to producing goods or services. Social responsibility projects are an example of this approach (Monfort, Vazquez, & Morillas, 2025).

Research indicates that, in addition to considering rational attributes during the purchasing process, people's buying decisions also occur at an emotional level. Brands aim to mobilize the emotions of their target audience by creating perceptions of loyalty and trust in their minds. The process of emotional brand relationships consists of the following stages: Awareness, Information Acquisition, Regard, Trust, and Loyalty. In the Awareness stage, the target audience is informed of the brand's existence through the use of marketing tools. In the Information Acquisition stage, they gather data about the brand in line with their needs. Following several purchases, feelings of regard (respect) and trust develop toward the brand within the target audience. At the end of this process, brand loyalty can be achieved. Brands approach their target audiences as a friend and aim to build long-term relationships rather than focusing on achieving short-term profits (Temporal, 2010).

Brands necessitate a detailed management process to survive and succeed in highly competitive markets (Lee, James, & Kim, 2014). This process necessitates outside-in thinking; in other words, brands must conduct their activities according to the demands and needs of the target audience. Stated differently, it can be argued that the true owner of the brand is its target audience (Temporal, 2010). Brands endeavor to develop strategies in line with their target audience's needs and demands and to fulfill the promises they make. To determine Brand Strategies, it is necessary to understand the psychology of the target audience (Shaikh, 2024). Psychological analysis holds great importance for brands. Since a brand's existence can only be sustained by occupying a place in the minds and hearts of its target audience, brands that fail to accurately analyze demands and needs may struggle to respond to desires, potentially leading to long-term failure. Companies and firms plan their operations accordingly based on the situational analyses conducted during the brand creation process (Barrenechea, 2025).

Every brand possesses a brand identity that is closely associated with its target audience. Brand identity is understood as a perception that ensures differentiation from similar products, conveys consistency and assurance to the audience, and, in summary, dictates how individuals evaluate the brand (Lee, James, & Kim, 2014). Brand identity is composed of several elements, namely: brand name, symbol and logo, slogan, colors, and packaging and wrapping elements (İnce & Uygurtürk, 2019). The brand name can be regarded as a message that communicates brand values and promises to the target audience, integrating the product's features with its value proposition. Characteristics of a brand name include being brief, easily recallable, meaningful, distinctive, and relevant. Symbols can be defined as visual imagery that ensures the brand's presence and recognition in the mind, while logos can be assumed to express the brand's formal appearance. A slogan can be viewed as a message that describes the brand or firm, highlights its distinctiveness, guides the consumer toward its objective, and evokes a feeling of excitement and experience (Şahin & Gültekin, 2017). Colors play a role in securing the brand's placement in the mind and establishing the desired perception. When selecting colors, it would be beneficial to design with consideration for the emotional equivalent of the intended perception and the message to be conveyed. Packaging and wrapping, in addition to their function of protecting the

products, can also attract audiences through their external appearance (Rahman, Langner, & Temme, 2021).

Brand personality can be defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997). Based on Aaker's definition, it can be stated that brand personality is an expression of the brand encompassing human traits. Since it is inherently more difficult to establish emotional bonds between people and organizations, brands aim to create more genuine and emotionally based relationships with their target audiences by developing personalities that highlight human characteristics (Shaikh, 2024). One of the factors that drives audiences toward a brand and secures loyalty is brand attitude. Brand attitude is related to what message the brand personality conveys to the audience and how this message is communicated to them, being a direct result of communication. For brands to establish effective communication with their target audiences, brand personality must be matched with customer personalities and attitudes (Temporal, 2010).

Brand image can be expressed as how the brand is perceived in the minds of the target audience as a result of promotional activities. "Advertising plays a critical role in shaping this perception by communicating the brand's features, benefits, and unique selling propositions" (Rai et al., 2024: 855). Brand image is a combination of the associations that the target audience links with the brand. "These associations may include elements such as product attributes, product design, social programs, quality, user image, product variety, global reach, innovation, system solutions, personality, and familiar symbols" (Aaker, 2025). The brand image resulting from the communication between the brand and its target audience underscores the great importance of accurately transferring the brand identity to the receiving party. When communication is insufficient or erroneous, gaps may remain in the target audience's perception of the brand, potentially leading to misunderstandings (Temporal, 2010). When planning the brand creation process, it is correct to consider potential future perception gaps and to avoid definitions that might cause misinterpretations. For a positive brand image to form in the target audience's mind, the brand identity must align with the target audience's personality (Aaker, 1997). It will benefit brands to accurately analyze the personality, needs, and desires of their target audience in the markets they serve and to determine the brand positioning strategy accordingly (Barrenechea, 2025).

2.2 Brand Strategy

The success of brands can be attributed to how effectively they are managed. Successful brands exhibit characteristics such as personification, emotional appeal, continuous development, effective communication, the creation of deep trust, the establishment of loyalty and friendly relationships, and the delivery of memorable experiences (Loureiro, 2023). As these traits suggest, brands can be built upon the foundation of human relationships. Since relationships are nurtured by emotions, the relationship between the brand and the target audience is shaped, sustained, or terminated according to their emotional state. Brands aiming to forge long-term relationships with their target audiences must embody personality traits that the audience finds appealing (Temporal, 2010). It is not always feasible for brands to satisfy the entire target audience in the markets where they offer goods and services. Therefore, brands may employ market segmentation to enter a specific segment of the market that aligns with their identity. The brand strategy can then be formulated based on research conducted for the chosen market segment (Lee, James, & Kim, 2014).

2.3 Brand Positioning Strategies

Brand strategies encompass the research and plans concerning how the brand will be positioned and managed. Brand positioning can be viewed as the process of creating an impression about the brand in the minds of the target audience. According to Brzaković, positioning relates to the target audience's rationale for preferring a specific brand over others. An effective positioning strategy clearly articulates the perception the brand aims to establish in the market by emphasizing the brand's unique attributes and highlighting elements that distinguish it from competitors. The objective of positioning is to maximize the benefit by ensuring the brand secures a place in the minds of its target audience (Brzaković & Brzaković, 2022).

Studies in the literature indicate that brand positioning strategies vary depending on the concepts with which they are examined in research (Brzaković & Brzaković, 2022; Zahirov, 2022; İnce & Uygurtürk, 2019; Özbey, 2012; Gul, Liu, Jamil, Baig, Awan & Liu, 2021; Temporal, 2010). It is observed that strategies possessing specific characteristics are named under different classifications in various studies. Considering these characteristics, Table 1. has been created, which includes brand positioning strategies and their explanations.

Table 1. Positioning Strategies

Positioning Strategy	Description
Positioning Focused on Product Attributes and Associated Benefits	Focuses on highlighting one or several features among all attributes of a product or service that address the target audience's needs and may influence their preferences, by associating these features with the product or service and emphasizing the benefits they provide.
Positioning Based on Price – Quality Balance	Aims to emphasize the price level or the quality of the product or service being offered.
Positioning According to Purpose of Use and Usage Situation	Involves defining a usage purpose for the product or service that the target audience can adopt and that differentiates it from competitors, or involves highlighting the existing usage features. It focuses on when, how, and in what manner the product or service will be utilized.
Target Audience Focused Positioning	In this positioning strategy, the brand focuses on understanding the characteristics and needs of its target audience. It aims to establish strong relationships with the target audience.
Positioning According to Product Class or Category	This strategy foresees the categorization of the product or service in question by placing it within a specific class.
Positioning Relative to Competitors	This strategy allows positioning based on the current situation by analyzing the market position of competitors. It focuses on differentiating the offered products or services from their rival counterparts and establishing superiority.

Positioning Strategy	Description
Market Leadership Positioning	The market leadership positioning strategy attempts to create a perception of market leadership, aiming to increase target audience awareness, convey trust, and secure loyalty.
Unique Positioning	In this strategy, the product's unique characteristic is emphasized by making it stand out among similar product groups based on a distinctive feature.
Positioning Based on Corporate or Manufacturer Image	This strategy anticipates gaining an advantage by utilizing the existing image that well-known brands, which already hold a specific market standing, have established in the minds of their target audience, thereby enabling the products they manufacture and services they offer in different segments to succeed.
Positioning Based on Cultural Symbols and Values	This strategy aims to secure a place in the target audience's mind by associating the offered products and services with the customs, traditions, and values adopted by that audience.
Positioning via Naming (Name-Based Positioning)	Beyond carrying identity, the brand name is a way for the target audience to perceive and understand the brand. This naming-based strategy emphasizes that the product or service should be designed to highlight its fundamental features or those that differentiate it from its counterparts.
Positioning Based on Product Line / Production Branch Expansion	A strategy aiming to increase market share within the served market by introducing new products and services to the markets where the brand currently offers goods or services.
Service-Oriented Positioning	A service delivery-focused strategy that aims to provide superior service tailored to the needs of the target audience.

(Created by the author based on the studies of Brzaković & Brzaković, 2022; Zahirov, 2022; İnce & Uygurtürk, 2019; Özbey, 2012; Gul et al., 2021; and Temporal, 2010.)

As can be understood from the Table, there are multiple brand strategies that vary according to the prevailing situation. Brands are able to choose one or more of these strategies based on their current market position.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the first quarter of the 21st Century, marked by the prominence of consumer emotions and needs, establishing emotional and long-term relationships with the target audience has become a necessity for companies and firms. Branding, as one of the methods for forming emotional connections with the target audience, has become a preferred approach for firms and companies due to the advantages it provides and its capacity to ensure long-term relationships (Rahman,

Langner, & Temme, 2021). The essence of the brand concept lies in the goal of creating a positive image in the mind of the target audience by highlighting the distinction of the product or service offered in the market from its counterparts (Aaker, 1997). For brands to forge emotional bonds with their target audience, they must possess a solid infrastructure. Brands require a brand identity that expresses their inherent meaning and values, a brand personality that aligns with the target audience's psychological profile, and a brand attitude capable of responding to the target audience's desires (Temporal, 2010). Brands equipped with a robust infrastructure can create a favorable brand image in the minds of their target audience following a successful management process. This positive image can turn into loyalty, trust, and enduring emotional relationships for the brands (Alić et al, 2020). Under market conditions characterized by limited resources and intense competition, firms and companies focus their existing products and services on specific segments of the markets they enter. The products and services offered by firms and companies are differentiated according to the needs, personalities, and demands of the target audience in the focused market segment (Fayvishenko, 2018). The differentiation moves undertaken necessitate outside-in thinking because they are directed toward the target audience's wants and needs. At this juncture, detailed analysis of the target audience holds paramount importance. Brands aim to position themselves in the minds of their target audiences in alignment with their identities. In light of the analyses conducted and the evaluation of the current situation, firms and companies use brand positioning strategies to guide their brands (Lee, James, & Kim, 2014). In the present study, research focusing on the positioning strategies found in the literature was examined. This examination revealed that brand strategies are discussed under different names and classifications depending on the concepts with which they are collectively addressed. It is inferred that there are a wide variety of brand positioning strategies, and that adaptations can be made to these strategies based on the brand's circumstances and market conditions. It is anticipated that combining compatible strategies in accordance with changing circumstances and the current situation, rather than adhering to a single brand strategy, will be beneficial for brand positioning.

Beyond the study's contribution to the literature, there are certain limitations that must be noted. Since the research aims to delineate the conceptual framework for brand concepts and positioning strategies, it does not include empirical evidence. This constraint may directly impact the generalizability of the research findings. Future studies should focus on the applicability of brand strategies to further contribute to the conceptual framework. Another limitation is that the crucial concepts of brand identity, personality, attitude, and image, which play a significant role in the brand creation process, were addressed only from a conceptual perspective due due to the study's objective. As these concepts and their relationships were only discussed at a conceptual level in this study, it is believed that investigating them in more detail in future research would make a significant contribution to the literature.

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