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CONCEPT OF POSITIONING IN BRAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Today, branding is the main link between production and a consumer. That is why more and more successful companies are developing a detailed brand management strategy to maintain strong competitive positions in the market and future growth. In the process of developing a brand management strategy, the key element is the concept of positioning, which encourages the further development of all marketing communications that come out of the brand.

According to J. Trout and E. Rice, positioning is an operation on the minds of potential buyers. Positioning creates a certain dogma in the mind of a consumer. Positioning is the influence on the image of consumers' opinions (the product is positioned in the mind of the consumer) [2, p. 307].

The concept of brand positioning is a system of approaches and ways of knowing the phenomena and processes of forming possible brand positions depending on its benefits and advantages and the relevance of this position for the target segment of consumers [1, p. 40].

Brand positioning determines the direction that is needed for concentration of a company's strategic efforts. It happens under the influence of the environment and should not be done without the brand itself. Thus, brand positioning is at the same time the main source of internal and external development of the company [1, p. 40].

In the process of brand positioning, the first (main) step is to find and choose the right strategy. This stage determines the ability of the brand to be better than competitors, to attract the customers’ attention, to establish loyalty to the brand and the enterprise itself.

According to the research, eight main strategies of brand positioning in the market were identified: 1) Competition-oriented positioning; 2) consumer-directed positioning; 3) price positioning; 4) positioning aimed at prestige; 5) positioning oriented to the development of a specific type of goods; 6) customer positioning; 7) positioning depending on the situation; 8) positioning oriented to unique properties.

Competition-oriented positioning is a confrontation with a competing brand in order to get a relevant market share. The brand can be positioned as something completely new, unlike the brand of potential competitors, or with an emphasis on higher quality compared to competing products. This strategy is based on assessing the status of market leaders and identifying their weaknesses, and also based on finding the unmet consumer needs.

When choosing a competitor-focused strategy, you need to remember your own reputation. In order not to lose customer trust, the company needs to focus on the strengths that really exist. It should not try to gain new market share by providing consumers with false information.

Examples of applying this strategy are such well-known brands as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, which constantly compete with each other, changing the shape of the bottle, the taste of the drink and its sugar content. In addition, with regard to McDonalds, KFC, for example, often positions itself as an institution with a larger assortment, better quality and lower price. For example, when a McDonald's advertisement showed a horn promotion, KFC offered the consumer three types of horns at an even lower price.

Consumer-oriented positioning is justified only when the company wants to attract the attention of a specific target audience to a certain type of product. This strategy can also be used by small businesses that specialize in the production of a specific type of product with specific properties. As a rule, the advertising of such products contains phrases «made for...», «for those who...», for example: Skoda advertises a new car brand under the slogan: «Created for those who want to be different» and Kiwi finishes advertising the new TV with the words: «For those who understand».

Brand positioning by price has a specific feature: it can take on three different values, moving in one of three directions: the same, but cheaper; great value – great opportunity; lower cost – low cost.

«The same, but cheaper» strategy is used mainly by those companies that do not have a stable consumer audience and rationally assess their market share. As a rule, such companies are not well known compared to their competitors and their brand is still under-formed. Therefore, without being able to sell the product more expensive due to the lack of high level of popularity, firms often make analogues of branded products that already exist on the market, and sell them at times cheaper. This type of positioning is usually targeted at low-income segment of consumers and uses the following slogans: «At home, only cheaper»; «Like everyone else, only cheaper»; «If you can't see the difference, why pay more?».

Positioning «Great value - great opportunities» usually works for those consumers who want to emphasize their own status or want to look like those «who can afford it». In this case, the customer pays not only for the product itself, but also for the popularity of its brand, image and prestige.

The concept of «Less Opportunities – Low Cost» positioning is typical of companies whose target audience does not want to pay extra for what they can do without. Thus, firms offer customers a product at a low price but lower quality, for example, Aushan launched its own line of products – «Every Day», which cannot be described as «high quality» products, but at the same time have a lower price, compared to analog products, which may be of interest to a certain category of consumers.

Prestige positioning is somewhat similar to price positioning, namely on the principle of «Great price – great opportunity», but the positioning of prestige does not focus on the price of the product, but only on its brand.

This positioning is used by companies that are really well known in the market, whose products are luxury, premium, elite; it arises where people are willing to pay for the opportunity to «rise in rank». This applies not only to precious jewelry and expensive homes or fashionable clothing, and is often reflected in food and goods of everyday demand. Companies, that use this positioning strategy, often create a number of stereotypes in society, among which, for example, such as: «if the clock, then Rolex», «if the perfume, then Chanel», «if the pens, then Parker», etc.

Positioning directed to the development of a particular type of goods is based on the promotion of the brand as a leader at the expense of a particular type of products. This strategy is often used when entering a new market. This kind of positioning is justified only in the situation in which the company can offer an innovative approach to existing problems, a product with unique properties or a new solution for the market.

An example of applying a brand positioning strategy for the development of a particular type of product is the Xerox company, which in 1949 invented the first ever copier, creating a completely new market. Even today, the company is a leader in the market for photocopiers, and the word «photocopier» has become a leading name for all its analogues.

The strategy, which is based on consumer requirements, is characterized by two directions of benefits: emotional (desire to be better than others, self-realization that means becoming more visible, etc.) and rational (spend less money, have a good appearance, improve your health, etc.) . This positioning automatically asks the consumer: «What needs can this product meet?». But such a strategy, as a rule, is only relevant in the monopoly market, in conditions of low competition, because competitors often copy each other, which leads to the loss of value of the proposed benefit. For example, «Crest» toothpaste tries to stand out due to the rapid fight against caries, but today, almost all pastes use this advantage.

When a brand is positioned depending on the situation, the purchase of a particular product is underpinned by a specific situation, which influences the choice of the customer so that he will consume the necessary product in this situation. It is important to remind that consumer preferences are constantly changing, and their behavior is changing in new color, which can lead to an «aging» situation. An example is the «Coca-Cola» drink, which in winter is positioned as a festive Christmas drink.

A strategy aimed at positioning a brand by unique attributes focuses on the distinctive features of the brand. This strategy is the most widespread and involves not seeking to differentiate from competitors with better characteristics, but the search for unique qualities of the product that make it completely special. For example, «Rud» company has become a leader in the Ukrainian market due to the appropriate certification of quality and taste, as well as through a wide range of products and the opportunity to see the process of production with your own eyes, pre-registering for a tour; and the Pillsbury brand began identifying flour as «flour that has ideas» by simply attaching the recipe to the package.

Therefore, brand positioning is a complex and time-consuming process of building a brand reputation, image and characteristics in such a way that it is easy for target consumers to distinguish it from the competitors’ brand. There are several brand positioning strategies, but really successful is one with a long-term perspective. Choosing the right positioning strategy will allow the company not only to determine its own place in the market, but also to strengthen its competitive position in the market.

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