



Research paper

Market orientation, positioning strategy and brand performance

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ABSTRACT

As the importance of B2B branding increases, literature has received considerable attention in the recent years. An underexplored area in B2B branding revolves around brand positioning and its antecedents. Towards this end, this study links market orientation (proactive and responsive) with the various positioning strategies. Specifically, we extend the extant literature by (1) exploring the possible connections (and alignments thereof) between market orientation types and brand positioning, and (2) examining the effects of these positioning strategies on brand performance. Based on data collected from individuals responsible for managing B2B brands in various industries, this study finds that both proactive and responsive market orientation types support the development of specific positioning strategies. These positioning strategies, in turn, mediate the relationship between market orientation types and brand performance. Implications for researchers and practitioners are provided.

1. Introduction

The importance of positioning is generally well established in marketing literature, especially where the research focus is on product and brand management (Hooley, Broderick, & Miller, 1998; Hooley, Greenley, Fahy, & Cadogan, 2001; Kotler, 2000, 2003; Shostack, 1987). Marketing textbooks put positioning at the core of strategic marketing, i.e., segmentation, targeting, positioning and marketing plan. Successful positioning helps differentiate the focal brand from its competitors, appeals to customer's needs, and creates enhanced consumer loyalty and consumer-derived brand equity (Katra & Goodstein, 1998; Keller, 2003; Leek & Christodoulides, 2011; Ohmerus, 2009). Positioning, if done properly, is said to affect a firm's long-term competitive advantage (Hooley et al., 2001; Kotler, 2003; Porter, 1996). Effective positioning is also said to be associated with superior performance (Hooley et al., 2001), including profits (Saradi, 2000). In summary, while there has been ample research on positioning, especially brand positioning in business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts (Katra & Goodstein, 1998; Keller, 2003), the topic has received somewhat lackluster research attention in business-to-business (B2B) settings (Jalkala & Keränen, 2014; Kalafatis, Tsogas, & Blankson, 2000; Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

B2B markets are often considered to be sales driven (Baumgarth &

Binkbebank, 2011), and therefore, have not focused on branding elements, including brand positioning (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). This is a concern given that the more recent literature (see He, Huang, & Wu, 2018; Jalkala & Keränen, 2014; Veloutsou & Taylor, 2012) supports the notion that brand management, especially brand positioning can help differentiate a B2B firm's offerings from its competitors. In light of the increasingly competitive environment, where there is a threat of non-traditional competition and movement towards parity of offerings (Jilch & Scholz, 2000; Liu & Anusheva-Gima, 2018; Porter, 2008), differentiating one's offerings becomes critical in B2B markets. Thus, understanding brand positioning types and the potential antecedents becomes necessary from both academic and managerial viewpoints.

A majority of the positioning typologies developed in B2C markets have limited application in the B2B context for a few reasons (Kalafatis et al., 2000). First, most of the positioning strategies in the B2B context take place at the corporate level, and individual brands tend to put an emphasis on firm level values such as trustworthiness and expertise (Jalkala & Keränen, 2014). Second, the personal interactions between buyers and sellers are much more voluminous in B2B markets, underscoring the need for a deeper insight into positioning strategies that involve key capabilities (Davis, Cošić, & Marquardt, 2008; Kalafatis et al., 2000). Third, most positioning typologies in the B2C market have been derived with a focus on the advertising and analytics-related

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Readings In Industrial Marketing

Leon Carroll Marshall



Readings In Industrial Marketing:

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Industrial Marketing Research (RLE Marketing) Nicholas Stacey, Aubrey Wilson, 2014-09-15. The book provides a comprehensive analysis of the techniques and mechanics of the research process and the management implications of industrial marketing research. It reveals not only how to do marketing research but also the full range of its profitable applications and shows how to develop an internal department and how to buy industrial marketing research. When originally published, this was the first book to be published in the UK or USA devoted solely to the important modern management tool of industrial marketing research.

Industrial Marketing Management M. Govindarajan, 2009-11-01. *Industrial Marketing Management* provides a comprehensive review and analysis of industrial marketing issues, practices and strategies with reference to the Indian scenario. The main focus of this book is on building a conceptual understanding for developing industrial marketing strategies. It includes analysis of the caselets which will sharpen the analytical ability of the students.

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readings in marketing DIRKSEN KROEGER LOCKLEY,1968 **The Environment of Industrial Marketing** Donald E. Vinson,Donald M. Sciglimpaglia,1975 **Readings in Marketing Today** ,1985 **Marketing Information Guide** ,1961
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