

Brand Positioning Analysis in Enhancing Customer Loyalty: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

In an increasingly competitive business landscape, establishing a strong brand position is not merely an option but a necessity. Effective brand positioning not only helps brands differentiate themselves from competitors but also fosters a deeper emotional connection with customers. This study aims to analyze the relationship between brand positioning and customer loyalty using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. By reviewing previous research published in indexed journals, this study identifies key factors influencing the success of brand positioning, including product differentiation, customer perception, and brand communication consistency. The findings indicate that brands with a clear and consistent position in customers' minds are more likely to build long-term loyalty. Customers who feel connected to a brand's values and identity are more inclined to remain loyal and even recommend the brand to others. Furthermore, this study reveals that the transition to the digital era has significantly altered how brands establish and maintain their position, with digital marketing strategies and message personalization emerging as critical factors in sustaining customer loyalty. This research underscores the importance of businesses not only in crafting a strong brand image but also in ensuring that customer experiences align with the brand's promised values. By understanding and implementing effective brand positioning principles, companies can foster deeper and more sustainable relationships with their customers while enhancing their competitive edge in the market.

Keywords: brand positioning, customer loyalty, marketing strategy, Systematic Literature Review, brand differentiation

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer loyalty is one of the key indicators of business success, especially in an increasingly competitive and digitalized environment. Loyal customers tend to make repeat purchases, provide positive recommendations, and exhibit higher tolerance for price changes (Oliver, 1999). However, maintaining customer loyalty is not an easy task. Many companies experience a decline in customer retention rates due to rising consumer expectations, increased brand alternatives, and the dynamic changes in shopping behavior.

One of the biggest challenges in maintaining customer loyalty is the low switching barriers that allow customers to easily switch to other brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

The digital era has provided consumers with greater access to information, enabling them to compare products and services more easily before making a purchase decision. Customer trust and attachment to a brand are no longer solely determined by product quality but also by the overall brand experience.

A study by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlights that, in the modern business landscape, a brand's success does not only depend on product competitiveness but also on how strongly the brand is positioned in consumers' minds. Customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands that have a clear identity, consistent communication, and an experience that aligns with their expectations. Therefore, brand positioning is a key factor in creating and sustaining customer loyalty.

Brand positioning is a marketing strategy aimed at establishing a brand's perception in customers' minds in a way that differentiates it from competitors (Keller, 2013). A strong brand position enables companies to build emotional connections with customers, create positive associations, and enhance long-term brand competitiveness (Aaker, 2014). Conversely, companies that fail to define their brand positioning clearly tend to struggle in retaining customers, as consumers do not find a compelling reason to continue using their products or services.

In the context of digitalization, brand positioning plays an increasingly important role in fostering customer loyalty. With the expansion of digital communication channels, customers have become more critical in selecting brands that align with their preferences and values. Social media, data-driven marketing, and personalized digital experiences have reshaped the way brands interact with customers (Kapferer, 2008). Therefore, companies need not only to build strong brand positioning but also to ensure that their strategies remain adaptable to the evolving market dynamics.

Based on these phenomena, this study aims to examine the relationship between brand positioning and customer loyalty through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. By synthesizing previous research findings, this study seeks to identify the key factors that determine the success of brand positioning, its implications for customer loyalty, and how companies can develop more effective and adaptive brand positioning strategies to navigate market changes.

2. THEORY

The Importance of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a fundamental aspect of marketing strategy as it directly contributes to business sustainability and long-term growth (Oliver, 1999). Loyal customers not only make repeat purchases but also act as brand advocates by providing positive recommendations and engaging with the brand over time (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Strong customer loyalty can reduce marketing costs, increase profitability, and provide a sustainable competitive advantage for companies (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

However, building and maintaining customer loyalty is not an easy task, particularly in the digital era, where customers can quickly switch to other brands if they find a more

compelling value proposition. Several factors, such as customer experience, satisfaction, and emotional engagement, play a major role in determining customer loyalty (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). Therefore, companies must ensure that their marketing strategies create deeper relationships with customers to sustain their loyalty in the long term.

Various studies have identified brand positioning as one of the key factors that can enhance customer loyalty (Keller, 2013). With a clear and consistent brand positioning strategy, companies can establish a strong brand identity, increase customer trust, and build significant differentiation from competitors (Aaker, 2014).

Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is a strategic process that defines how a brand is perceived by customers in comparison to its competitors (Ries & Trout, 1981). A strong brand positioning fosters emotional connections with customers, enhances brand recall, and builds trust and long-term customer loyalty (Kapferer, 2008). Establishing a well-defined brand position allows companies to differentiate themselves in competitive markets and create a unique value proposition that resonates with consumers.

According to Kotler and Keller (2021), an effective brand positioning strategy must meet three key elements:

1. **Relevance** – The brand must be relevant to customer needs and preferences to remain competitive in the market.
2. **Differentiation** – The brand must have unique attributes that distinguish it from competitors, giving customers a compelling reason to stay loyal.
3. **Credibility** – The brand must consistently deliver on its promises to build long-term customer trust.

In the context of customer loyalty, strong brand positioning reduces the likelihood of customers switching to other brands. Customers who develop an emotional attachment to a brand tend to be more resistant to competitive promotions and exhibit higher retention rates (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). Therefore, businesses must continuously refine their brand positioning strategy to maintain a competitive edge and sustain long-term customer relationships.

Customer Loyalty and Its Relationship with Brand Positioning

Customer loyalty refers to the tendency of customers to consistently choose and use a particular brand over the long term (Oliver, 1999). This loyalty is built through repeated positive experiences and the alignment between customer expectations and the values offered by the brand. According to Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), customer satisfaction occurs when their expectations regarding a brand are met or even exceeded, ultimately strengthening their loyalty. Several studies have demonstrated that strong brand positioning directly influences customer loyalty. Research conducted by Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) found that brands with a clear and consistent positioning in consumers' minds are more likely to retain customers over time. This is because customers develop greater trust in and an emotional attachment to brands that maintain a stable and well-communicated position (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Consequently, companies must

continuously refine their brand positioning strategies to ensure long-term customer engagement and brand loyalty.

Brand Positioning in the Digital Era

The development of digital technology has transformed how companies establish and maintain brand positioning. In the digital era, customers have greater access to information and can easily compare various brands before making purchasing decisions. This shift requires companies to be more flexible and adaptive in their brand positioning strategies to remain competitive in the marketplace.

According to recent research by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), customer experience plays a crucial role in determining the success of brand positioning in the digital age. Consumers no longer rely solely on traditional advertising; instead, they depend on customer reviews, social media engagement, and direct brand interactions across multiple digital platforms. As a result, companies must integrate digital strategies such as:

- Content marketing to build a stronger brand narrative.
- Social media engagement to enhance direct interactions with customers.
- Data-driven marketing to tailor brand messaging according to customer preferences.

The digital transformation has pushed brands to be more transparent and responsive in developing their positioning. The speed at which companies respond to market trends and customer preferences has become a key factor in maintaining relevant brand positioning in the digital era. Therefore, businesses that leverage technology, personalized marketing, and interactive customer engagement will have a competitive advantage in sustaining customer loyalty and strengthening brand identity.

Relationship Between Variables

The concept of brand positioning is one of the primary marketing strategies aimed at shaping customer perceptions of a brand in comparison to its competitors. This strategy plays a crucial role in building customer loyalty by creating differentiation, strengthening brand identity, and ensuring that the value offered meets customer expectations. Various studies have shown that effective brand positioning can enhance customer loyalty, either directly or through mediating variables such as brand perception and competitive advantage.

Directly, brand positioning influences customer loyalty, where brands with a strong position in the market can more easily establish emotional connections with consumers. According to Keller (2013), brands that successfully embed a consistent image and message in customers' minds have a higher appeal compared to competitors. This aligns with Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), which states that customers tend to remain loyal to brands that fulfill or exceed their expectations. When a brand is clearly positioned and has a unique value, customers are more likely to continue using its products or services, even in highly competitive market conditions.

Furthermore, brand positioning also affects customer perception of the brand, which subsequently plays a role in enhancing loyalty. A study by Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) found that customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands they perceive as having a unique advantage and relevance to their needs. In this case, consistent marketing communication and clear differentiation are important factors in creating a positive brand perception.

Customers with a favorable perception of a brand tend to have a higher level of emotional engagement, which ultimately increases their loyalty to the brand.

Aside from brand perception, brand positioning also impacts a company's competitive advantage, which indirectly strengthens customer loyalty. Porter (1985) stated that companies with a clearly defined competitive advantage find it easier to maintain their customer base over the long term. With a strong brand position, companies can avoid harmful price wars and instead focus on delivering superior value to customers. In this context, competitive advantage gained through product or service differentiation becomes a critical factor in customer retention.

Moreover, a positive brand perception directly contributes to customer loyalty. Customers who have a positive experience with a brand are more likely to continue using its products or services and recommend them to others. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) emphasized that brand loyalty is not solely based on functional satisfaction but also on the emotional engagement built through brand interactions. Therefore, companies must ensure that the messages they convey to customers align with the experiences they provide, avoiding any gaps between expectations and reality that could harm customer loyalty.

With the advancement of digital technology, brand positioning in the digital era plays an increasingly significant role in building and maintaining customer loyalty. A study by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) revealed that customers today have broader access to information, allowing them to easily compare brands before making purchasing decisions. Consequently, companies must implement more effective digital strategies, such as:

- Content marketing to build a stronger brand narrative.
- Social media engagement to enhance direct interactions with customers
- Data-driven marketing to tailor brand messages according to customer preferences.

Through more personalized and transparent interactions with customers, brands can develop stronger relationships and enhance long-term customer loyalty.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that brand positioning is closely related to customer loyalty, both directly and through mediating variables such as brand perception and competitive advantage. Brands with a strong market position tend to establish long-term relationships with their customers, as they can create clear differentiation, provide positive customer experiences, and face competition with more sustainable strategies. Given the changes in customer behaviour influenced by digitalization, companies must continuously adapt to more innovative brand positioning strategies to maintain their competitiveness in the global market.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method to select and synthesize relevant studies on the relationship between brand positioning and customer loyalty. This approach enables the research to be conducted in a systematic, transparent, and replicable manner, ensuring that the findings obtained have high validity and reliability.

In the literature identification process, data were collected from Scopus as the primary source, considering its credibility in providing high-quality academic journals. The initial search resulted in 76 articles deemed relevant to the research topic. Next, a screening process was conducted to eliminate duplicate articles and those that did not meet the selection criteria, resulting in 53 articles for further review.

The screening stage involved reviewing abstracts and topic relevance to the research focus. At this stage, 7 articles were excluded due to inappropriate research designs. From the remaining 46 articles, an eligibility assessment was conducted, where each article was thoroughly analyzed based on its methodological suitability, relevance to the study, and connection to key research variables. As a result of this process, 22 articles were shortlisted for detailed review, with 15 final articles selected as the basis for the synthesis in this study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The selection of articles was based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Articles that discuss the relationship between brand positioning and customer loyalty.
2. Journals published within the 2014–2024 timeframe to ensure relevance to current marketing trends.
3. Articles available in full-text format and sourced from Scopus-indexed journals.
4. Studies using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches with empirical data.

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included:

1. Articles that only discuss brand awareness without any connection to customer loyalty.
2. Studies focusing on branding theory in general without examining its impact on consumer decision-making.
3. Articles with inappropriate research designs, such as conceptual studies without empirical analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was conducted using a thematic and narrative synthesis approach, in which each selected article was categorized based on the key themes identified, such as:

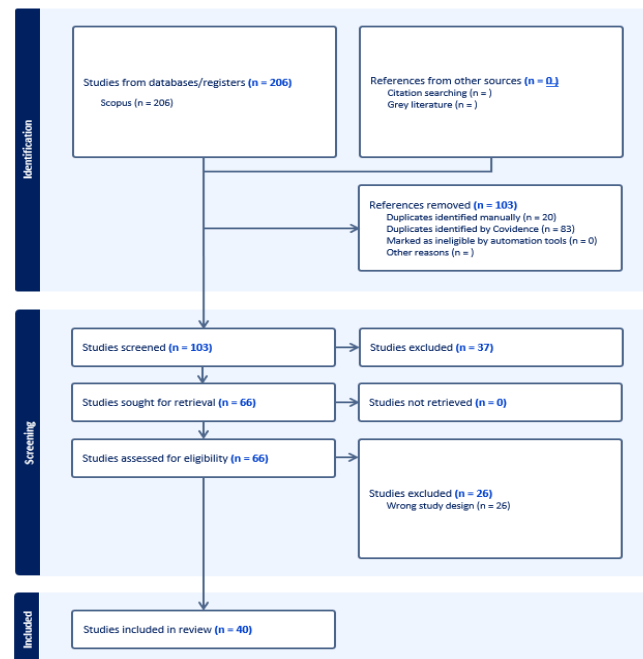
- Factors influencing brand positioning,
- The impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty, and
- The role of digitalization in strengthening brand positioning in the market.

This thematic synthesis allowed for a structured and systematic interpretation of existing research findings, ensuring that insights were drawn from multiple perspectives and methodologies.

3. RESULTS

PRISMA Literature Selection Process

The PRISMA method was used to ensure transparency in the literature selection process. The systematic flow from identification to final synthesis is illustrated in Figure 1 below:



The PRISMA diagram visualizes how the research articles were identified, screened, and selected, ensuring that only the most relevant and high-quality studies were included in the final synthesis.

Key Research Findings

Research on brand positioning and customer loyalty has been a primary focus in marketing studies. Based on the 40 articles analyzed, it was found that brand positioning strategies have a significant impact on customer retention, brand image, and competitive advantage.

One of the key findings from this research is that strong brand positioning helps companies build emotional connections with customers. Customers tend to choose and remain loyal to brands that have a clear identity and offer value that aligns with their expectations. Therefore, companies must ensure that their brand positioning strategies are effectively communicated and well-received by their target audiences.

Furthermore, studies indicate that customer loyalty is not only influenced by rational factors such as price and product quality but also by emotional and psychological factors. Brands that successfully establish deep relationships with their customers through consistent brand communication and positive customer experiences have a much higher chance of maintaining long-term customer loyalty.

In today's digital era, brand positioning strategies must be more adaptive and data-driven. Companies that integrate digital technologies such as customer data analytics and personalized marketing content are better equipped to understand customer needs and adjust their brand strategies in real time. Digitalization not only enhances marketing effectiveness but also helps create more personal and meaningful relationships between customers and brands.

Comparison of Research Findings

The analysis reveals that various approaches have been employed in research related to brand positioning and customer loyalty. The majority of studies utilize quantitative methods, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and linear regression, to measure the relationship between brand positioning and customer loyalty. These methods are widely used because they provide objective and measurable results, making them highly reliable for analyzing consumer behavior trends.

However, some studies adopt qualitative methods, such as case studies and in-depth interviews, to understand how customers perceive and interpret a brand's position. This approach is more prevalent in luxury goods and premium brand research, where emotional association and brand exclusivity play a crucial role in fostering customer loyalty.

Additionally, recent studies indicate that digital marketing plays a significant role in strengthening brand positioning. Brands that actively engage on social media and implement strong content marketing strategies tend to experience higher levels of customer loyalty. Customers who interact with brands across various digital platforms feel more connected to the brand, which ultimately enhances their loyalty to the products or services offered.

Another key difference in research findings is the impact of brand positioning across different industries. Studies conducted in the technology and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industries suggest that innovation-driven and functionality-based brand positioning

is more effective in attracting and retaining customers. Conversely, in the luxury goods sector, exclusivity-based and experience-driven brand positioning strategies are more dominant in building long-term customer loyalty.

Implications of Findings for Brand Strategy

1. Consistent Brand Positioning Strategy

One of the key factors in successful brand positioning is consistency in brand communication. Companies must ensure that the messages conveyed to customers across various marketing channels remain aligned with the brand's values and identity. This consistency builds customer trust and strengthens long-term brand loyalty.

Additionally, brands with a strong and well-defined positioning tend to be more resilient to market trends and changes. In an increasingly competitive landscape, brands that maintain a clear identity are more easily recognized by customers and hold a competitive advantage over rivals. Therefore, companies must regularly evaluate their brand positioning strategies to ensure that their brand remains relevant to customer needs and market dynamics.

2. Leveraging Digital Technology in Brand Positioning

In the digital era, the use of technologies such as Big Data, artificial intelligence (AI), and customer analytics is becoming increasingly important in shaping brand positioning strategies. Companies can utilize customer data to understand behavioral patterns and tailor their marketing strategies more effectively.

For instance, businesses can implement data-driven advertising to accurately target customers. By understanding customer preferences, companies can develop more personalized marketing campaigns, enhance customer engagement, and ultimately strengthen customer loyalty toward the brand. The integration of AI-powered recommendations and predictive analytics further enables brands to provide highly relevant experiences to their target audience, ensuring a more impactful and sustainable brand positioning.

3. Enhancing Loyalty Through Emotional Engagement

Beyond rational factors such as price and product quality, research indicates that customers' emotional engagement with a brand plays a crucial role in strengthening loyalty. Therefore, companies should focus on brand storytelling strategies that build emotional connections with customers.

Effective brand storytelling not only enhances brand appeal but also reinforces positive customer associations with the brand. Brands that succeed in crafting narratives that resonate with customer values and emotions are more likely to achieve higher customer retention rates. A compelling brand story helps customers develop a sense of belonging and attachment to the brand, making them more likely to remain loyal over time.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of 40 Scopus-indexed articles, it was found that an effective brand positioning strategy plays a crucial role in enhancing customer loyalty. The study "Impact of Brand Positioning Strategy on the Financial Performance of Commercial Banks" (Dang Thi Thu Hang & Vu Thi Kim Oanh, 2024) highlights that a strong brand position has a direct correlation with a company's financial performance, particularly in the banking and financial services sector. This reinforces the notion that brand positioning is not merely a marketing strategy but also a strategic element in business sustainability.

In the digital context, the article "The 4Fs Model of Digital Marketing: Its Impact on Brand Positioning" (Colmenares & Saavedra, 2024) emphasizes that digital marketing plays a significant role in shaping and maintaining brand positioning in the modern era. Companies that adopt data-driven strategies, personalized content, and optimized social media engagement are better equipped to build strong relationships with customers and sustain their loyalty in the long term.

Additionally, the study "Linkage of Green Brand Positioning and Green Customer Value with Green Purchase Intention" (Wang et al., 2022) suggests that sustainability-oriented brand positioning significantly impacts customer purchasing decisions. Brands that position themselves as environmentally friendly tend to have higher customer loyalty, particularly among younger generations who are more conscious of environmental issues.

In the luxury goods industry, the article "Image of Luxury Brands: A Question of Style and Personality" (Díaz-Bustamante et al., 2016) highlights that customer perceptions of exclusivity and brand image strongly influence customer loyalty. Customers in this segment not only seek high-quality products but also value the emotional and unique experiential aspects associated with their chosen brands.

From these findings, it can be concluded that an effective brand positioning strategy should focus on three key elements:

1. Consistency and Clarity of Brand Identity → A brand must have a clear and memorable positioning to remain relevant in a competitive market.
2. Utilization of Digital Technology → Digitalization enables brands to adapt to constantly evolving customer behavior and build more personalized relationships.
3. Emotional Branding → Customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands with a strong emotional connection, whether through sustainability values, customer experiences, or brand exclusivity.

Overall, this study confirms that brand positioning is not merely a marketing tactic but a strategic element that can enhance customer loyalty, business competitiveness, and financial performance in the long run. Therefore, companies must continuously evaluate and adjust their brand positioning strategies to ensure they remain relevant to market dynamics and evolving customer expectations.

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