

Brand Positioning Strategy in Improving the Image of Technology Startup Companies

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the brand positioning strategy implemented by technology startup companies in an effort to improve their brand image amidst the increasingly competitive digital industry competition. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data was obtained through in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and observations of branding activities at certain technology startups. The focus of this study includes the main elements in brand positioning such as the uniqueness of the value proposition, determining the target market, and consistent and relevant brand communication. The results of the study show that the right *brand positioning strategy* can significantly improve the image of technology startup companies. By understanding the target market, building a unique selling proposition (USP), and maintaining brand identity consistency across platforms, startups can differentiate themselves from competitors and attract the attention of the right consumers. This study also found that startups that successfully implement strong brand positioning tend to find it easier to build customer loyalty, increase market trust, and strengthen competitiveness in the highly competitive technology industry.

Keywords: Brand positioning, corporate image, technology startup, brand strategy, brand communication.

Introduction

In an era of intense competition in the startup world, especially in the technology sector, brand differentiation is a crucial element to win market attention. The emergence of new ideas that continue to develop requires every startup to not only have product innovation, but also a strong and targeted communication strategy (Husnayain & Mawardi, 2018). Therefore, brand positioning becomes more than just a marketing strategy, but a strategic need to build a relevant and competitive identity. Amidst the rapid flow of information and abundant product choices, companies that are able to position their brands clearly in the minds of consumers have a greater chance of creating customer trust and loyalty (Suryati, 2015).

Brand positioning is not just a visual appearance such as a logo or tagline, but rather about how a brand is perceived in the minds of the target audience compared to its competitors. This concept includes the value offered, the core message conveyed, and the emotional impression built through consumer experiences (Sujan & Bettman, 1989). An effective brand positioning is able to communicate the uniqueness of the company's value proposition, explain

the fundamental differences from competitors, and align the brand identity with the needs and aspirations of customers. In the context of technology startups, this becomes increasingly important given the rapidly changing market dynamics and high consumer expectations for innovative solutions (Kusno et al., 2007).

A well-integrated brand strategy, especially one that aligns business practices with the values and expectations of modern consumers, plays a vital role in building sustainable competitive advantage (Swasty & Nita Nur, 2021). In today's context, where consumers are increasingly aware of social, environmental, and ethical issues, brands that demonstrate a real commitment to sustainability not only gain trust but also long-term loyalty from the target market. This alignment includes various aspects, ranging from the use of environmentally friendly materials, supply chain transparency, to active involvement in corporate social responsibility activities (Sahetapy, 2012).

Strong brand positioning plays a vital role in helping startups stand out in a competitive and dynamic marketplace. By establishing a clear and relevant position, startups can create a positive perception in the minds of consumers and demonstrate the added value they offer compared to competitors (Rode & Vallaster, 2005). Effective positioning makes it easy for target audiences to understand what makes a startup's product or service unique and why they should choose it. When brand messaging is delivered consistently across multiple channels—whether through product design, marketing communications, or customer experience—it strengthens brand identity and builds deeper emotional connections with consumers (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010).

More than just a marketing tool, brand positioning also provides strategic benefits in creating customer loyalty. Consumers who feel that a brand reflects their values and needs tend to have long-term relationships with the company, even becoming promoters through word of mouth (Juntunen, 2012). In addition, with a clear position, companies are able to target the right market segments more efficiently, optimize resources, and focus product development

according to audience expectations. On the other hand, brand positioning also helps differentiate companies from competitors, especially in markets that offer many similar choices (Widodo & Maryama, 2021).

Research on brand positioning has been conducted mostly in the context of large companies and established brands. However, in recent years, attention has shifted towards the implementation of positioning strategies in start-up companies, especially in the highly competitive and dynamic technology sector. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), brand positioning is the process of strategically implanting a brand image and identity in the minds of consumers so that the brand has an advantage over competitors. Meanwhile, Trout & Ries (2001) stated that effective positioning can be a key factor in creating differentiation and competitive advantage in a crowded market.

Several previous studies have shown that brand positioning has a significant effect on consumer perception and loyalty. Research by Ghodeswar (2008) emphasizes the importance of consistency in brand elements such as vision, values, and communication in forming a strong positioning. In the context of startups, research by Keller and Lehmann (2006) highlights how new companies must build brand equity from the start with a positioning strategy tailored to the needs of the target market. In addition, a study by Iglesias et al. (2019) found that consumer emotional involvement with a brand that has a strong position can significantly improve the company's image and reputation. However, there is still a gap in research that specifically examines how technology startups, which have limited resources but high levels of innovation, implement brand positioning strategies to build company image.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring in depth the approach and effectiveness of brand positioning in forming a positive image of technology startups amidst tight market competition. The benefits of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for technology startup actors in designing and implementing effective brand positioning strategies to improve their brand image. In addition, theoretically, this study

enriches the academic literature on brand positioning in the context of startups, especially in the digital era. This study can also be a reference for policy makers, business consultants, and marketers in understanding the importance of building a strong brand perception from the early stages of company establishment.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the brand positioning strategy implemented by technology startup companies in an effort to improve their brand image. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena contextually and comprehensively, in accordance with the realities in the field (Yulianah, 2022). Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews with key informants, namely founders, marketing teams, or brand managers from several technology startups that have actively implemented brand positioning strategies. In addition, secondary data was also collected through documentation studies, such as internal company reports, publication media, official company websites, and digital content relevant to their brand strategy. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, namely by identifying patterns, main themes, and narratives that emerged from the results of interviews and documentation. This process includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To ensure the validity of the data, researchers triangulated sources and methods, and confirmed the results with informants (member checking). With this approach, the study is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of how positioning strategy can influence brand perception and image in the context of technology startups.

Results and Discussion

In building a strong brand image, consistency is a key element that cannot be ignored. Branding through visual elements such as logos, colors, and graphic designs, as well as non-visual elements such as the tone of communication and the message conveyed, must always be in line with the desired business position. This consistency not only forms an easily recognizable identity but also helps instill trust in the minds of consumers. When audiences

receive a uniform message that is in line with their values, they tend to feel more trusting and emotionally connected to the brand (Yulianah, 2021). Therefore, all communication channels — be it social media, websites, or direct interactions with customers — must reflect the strategically designed positioning.

This becomes even more important in the context of startups that are still in the early stages of forming a brand identity. Startups are often under pressure to grow quickly and attract market attention, but without brand consistency, they are vulnerable to losing direction and audience trust. By creating a brand image that is aligned with the company's core values and relevant to the target market, startups can build a solid foundation for long-term growth. The right visual and messaging alignment, as well as authentic and consistent communication, will strengthen the public's perception that the startup has a clear identity and purpose (Suryani & Rosalina, 2019). In the long term, this will not only strengthen the business's position in the market, but also increase customer loyalty and increase the chances of success amidst fierce competition.

Consistency in building a brand image is the main foundation for the sustainability and credibility of a business, especially for startups that are still in the early stages of growth. This consistency creates a unified brand experience, which in turn strengthens consumers' memory of the brand and builds a deeper emotional connection (Marta & Pratama, 2019). For startups, which often rely on uniqueness, speed, and innovation, the ability to maintain alignment between visual identity and core business values will be a competitive advantage that sets them apart from other players in the industry. When consumers feel the integrity and fit between the brand promise and the actual experience they receive, trust will grow naturally — and this is important capital that will support long-term loyalty and strengthen the brand's position in a dynamic and rapidly changing market (Nadia & Wahyuningsih, 2020).

An important aspect of this is developing in Improving the Image of Technology Startup Companies providing exceptional service and support. The steps that can be taken are as follows:

1. Conducting Market Research

Every effective and sustainable business strategy always begins with a deep understanding of the target customer. This process involves systematic market research to identify who potential buyers are, what their needs and preferences are, and how consumers behave in the context of the product or service offered. By understanding the characteristics and demographics of the target market, companies can design more targeted products, services, and marketing strategies, so that the chances of business success can increase significantly. In addition, this research also helps in identifying the most profitable market segments and allows companies to focus resources optimally.

In addition to focusing on customers, market research also emphasizes the importance of studying competitors and overall market conditions. Through competitor analysis, companies can identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities that can be utilized to gain a competitive advantage. Market analysis provides an overview of industry trends, changing consumer needs, and market dynamics that can affect business strategies. Thus, companies not only react to market changes but can also innovate and adapt proactively to stay relevant and competitive. This is very important, especially in the digital and globalized era, where changes occur very quickly and are often unexpected.

2. Create a Unique Selling Proposition concept

A unique selling proposition (USP) is a fundamental element that differentiates a business, product, or service from competitors in the market. USP becomes a special identity that highlights the advantages or added value that competitors do not have, so that it becomes the main reason for consumers to choose the product or service. In the context of a price-based positioning strategy, a brand can position itself as the most affordable option for a customer

segment that is very sensitive to price. This approach not only attracts the attention of consumers with limited purchasing power, but also provides a strong argument for why they should choose the brand over other alternatives that may be more expensive or less competitive in terms of price.

The existence of a strong USP plays an important role in building brand awareness and strengthening the brand's position in a competitive and crowded market. With a clear USP, a company can attract an audience that matches the values and advantages of the product offered, thereby increasing the chances of conversion and customer loyalty. In addition, an effective USP can create a deep and lasting impression in the minds of consumers, strengthen differentiation, and simplify the marketing communication process. In a market full of choices, USP functions as a determinant of consumer trust and preference, while spurring business growth through the formation of closer and more relevant relationships with the target market.

3. Determining the Target Market

Building a brand that can attract the attention of the market is not only about reaching as many people as possible, but more about deeply understanding the unique characteristics and needs of the target audience. In the context of a market full of diverse consumer preferences and behaviors, each individual has a different background, interests, and motivations in making purchasing decisions. Therefore, an effective marketing approach is one that is able to read the "rhythm" of the market - understanding clearly what consumers are looking for, why they are interested in certain products, and how they interact with the brand. This strategy emphasizes the importance of market segmentation and adjusting brand messages to match consumer values and expectations.

A smart business person will strategize based on this understanding, rather than simply following general trends. When this approach is done with empathy and the right strategy, the brand will not only be seen as a provider of products or services, but also as a relevant solution to consumer problems. This creates trust and a strong emotional connection between the brand

and the consumer. In the long run, this trust will develop into active engagement and loyalty, two important factors that are the foundation of sustainable business growth in an increasingly competitive market.

4. Analyzing the business competitive landscape

Competitive landscape analysis is a strategic step that is critical to the success of a business. Without a deep understanding of who the competitors are in the market and how they position their brands, a company will have difficulty setting the right strategic direction. This process includes examining the strengths and weaknesses of competitors, including aspects of product, price, distribution, and marketing communications. By knowing how competitors attract and retain customers, a business can identify untapped gaps or advantages in the market, while avoiding approaches that have proven to be less effective.

Moreover, understanding the position of competitor brands allows companies to map industry trends and dynamics as a whole. This knowledge is invaluable in anticipating market changes, responding to shifts in consumer behavior, and finding new opportunities for innovation. Continuous competitive analysis also strengthens strategic decision-making, whether in developing products, determining prices, or designing more relevant and sharp marketing campaigns. Thus, companies not only survive, but also have the potential to strengthen their positions and build sustainable competitive advantages amidst fierce competition.

5. Develop a Brand Positioning Statement

Every business is rooted in a brand positioning statement, which is the foundation for building identity and perception in the minds of consumers. This statement is not just a formal declaration, but rather a reflection of the brand's values, uniqueness, and promise to its target market. A strong brand positioning strategy helps businesses do more than just grab attention—it creates an emotional connection with their audience, builds loyalty, and encourages consumers to become brand advocates. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, being clear

about who a company is, what it offers, and how it differs from its competitors is critical to building long-term credibility and trust.

Without a clear and compelling positioning statement, a business risks losing its way in conveying its brand message, making it difficult for the target audience to see the added value offered compared to competitors. This statement serves as the foundation of all marketing and communication activities, as well as a guideline in the Company's strategic decision-making (Susanto & Wijanarko, 2004). Therefore, creating a strong and authentic brand positioning statement—which highlights competitive advantages and aligns the business mission with market needs and expectations—will greatly determine a brand's success in creating differentiation and occupying relevant space in the minds of its consumers.

An effective brand positioning strategy can have a significant impact on the image of a technology startup company, especially in forming a positive perception in the minds of consumers. In the early stages of a business journey, startups really need a strong and easily recognizable identity in order to compete with more established players (Dewi et al. 2022). Through clear brand positioning, startups can accurately convey the unique values and solutions they offer to their target market. This not only strengthens the brand's appeal but also increases credibility in the eyes of investors, business partners, and potential customers.

The next impact is increased customer loyalty. When consumers feel that a startup has values that are in line with their needs or aspirations, an emotional bond will form. Consistency in brand messaging, visuals, and user experience that align with positioning will encourage customers to return to using the product or service, even recommending it to others. In a digital context, this is very beneficial because it can create a viral effect that organically raises the brand's reputation and visibility.

In addition, strong brand positioning also plays an important role in differentiating a company from its competitors. In a technology market full of innovation, differentiation is key. Startups that successfully position themselves as relevant, unique, and trusted solutions will

have an advantage in attracting media attention, customers, and top talents who want to join. With the right positioning, startups not only stand out, but are also able to withstand market dynamics and build a sustainable brand foundation.

Finally, a strong brand image resulting from a positioning strategy can open up opportunities for business expansion. When a positive reputation has been established, it will be easier for companies to enter new markets, expand customer segments, or launch additional products that continue to receive positive responses. A good image also strengthens the startup's bargaining power in strategic collaborations, both with investors and other industry partners. Therefore, a brand positioning strategy is not just a marketing tool, but a strategic asset that has a direct impact on the growth and sustainability of technology startups.

Therefore, in the future, technology startup companies will also face a number of challenges in maintaining and developing their brand positioning strategies. One of the main challenges is the rapid changes in consumer trends and preferences, especially in the dynamic technology industry. Startups must be able to make agile adjustments without sacrificing the consistency of the brand that has been built. The inability to respond to market changes can cause brand positioning to become obsolete or no longer relevant to the target audience.

The next challenge lies in the consistency of brand communication across channels. In today's digital era, consumers interact with brands through multiple platforms — social media, websites, apps, and customer service. Maintaining consistent messaging, visuals, and user experience across all of these touchpoints requires a well-thought-out communication strategy and a well-trained team. If not managed properly, inconsistency can blur brand identity and reduce public trust in the startup.

In addition, limited resources are also often an obstacle for startups in implementing optimal positioning strategies. Many startups still operate with limited budgets and small teams, so they have to choose priorities between building a brand or strengthening product development. In fact, both are equally important. Therefore, an efficient and creative strategy

is needed to convey brand value to the maximum without having to sacrifice other resource allocations.

Equally important, the challenge of competition is also a factor that must be faced. The increasing number of technology startups means that competition for consumer attention is getting tighter. Continuous efforts are needed to maintain uniqueness, relevance, and competitive advantage. Startups must periodically evaluate their brand position and innovate to stay at the forefront. Therefore, brand positioning strategy is not a one-time effort, but rather an ongoing process that requires analytical acumen, courage in decision-making, and a commitment to continue to evolve with market dynamics.

Conclusion

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that brand positioning strategy has a very important role in building and improving the image of a technology startup company. In the midst of fierce competition and dynamic market changes, startups are not enough to just have innovative products, but also need a strong, consistent brand identity that is relevant to consumer needs and values. Through the right positioning approach - such as understanding the target market, unique selling proposition (USP), and consistent brand communication - companies can grow customer trust, build loyalty, and strengthen their position in the market. However, in its implementation, brand positioning strategy also faces a number of challenges. Changes in consumer trends, limited resources, inconsistent brand messages, and high competitive pressure are factors that must be anticipated strategically. For this reason, startups need to conduct regular market research, evaluate brand positioning, and adaptively adjust strategies to industry dynamics. Only with consistency, strategic accuracy, and a deep understanding of the market can startups make brand positioning an effective tool in building a long-term reputation and creating sustainable competitiveness.

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