

UNDERSTANDING BRAND STRATEGY: A REVIEW

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Abstract: This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out by literature study of various articles related to brand strategy, brand space, brand equity distribution, and digital brand strategy. The purpose of this study is to understand more about brand strategy by reviewing several articles related to brand space, brand equity distribution, and digital brand strategy. Brand strategy is an important aspect for the success of a company that aims to differentiate itself in a competitive market and increase the value of the company. Given that digital platforms are currently in demand by the public, companies also need to adapt in implementing digital brand strategies. The results of the literature study show that companies need to have a strategy in creating brands to avoid dilution of brand equity because it can cause loss of brand recognition, loyalty, and revenue. Therefore, it is important to provide a strong experience to consumers and different from brand extension. In addition, changes in consumer behavior and market dynamics make the existence of brand space increasingly important. Brand space functions to evoke emotions, convey brand values, and provide a unique and memorable experience for its consumers. When implementing a brand strategy using a digital platform, what needs to be considered is determining target customers, knowing which social media is widely used by consumers, and defining competition.

Keywords: *Brand Strategy, Brand Space, Brand Equity, Digital Brand Strategy.*

Submitted: 2024-09-04; Revised: 2024-09-24; Accepted: 2024-09-29

1. Introduction

Brand strategy plays an important role in the success and competitiveness of companies, especially small and medium ones, by creating differentiation, increasing brand awareness, and building brand equity (Li et al, 2013). One of the advantages of a strong brand is the ease of acceptance of brand extensions. When a new product is launched using the brand name, consumers are already familiar with the brand (Keller & Sood, 2003). Effective branding can also increase brand awareness, perceived product quality, and customer satisfaction, leading to positive evaluations and increased sales volumes (Brzaković et al, 2018).

Although this is important, there is still little literature review research that discusses brand strategy in depth (Keller & Sood, 2003; Joiner & Loken, 1998; Loken & John, 1993). Several issues discussed related to brand strategy in general, but brand space, brand equity, and digital brand strategy have not been discussed. The interaction between brand space, brand equity, and digital brand strategy is increasingly important in today's competitive landscape. The digital environment not only facilitates brand communication but also enhances consumer engagement, which ultimately affects brand equity. Brand space serves as an important

platform for brands to interact with consumers, requiring a strong communication strategy that leverages social media and online channels (Latyshev et al., 2023). As digital branding evolves, organizations must adapt to consumer expectations for co-creation and active participation in brand narratives.

Keller & Sood (2003) discuss brand equity and its relation to brand equity dilution. When implementing a brand strategy, there is a possibility of brand equity dilution. Brand equity dilution as a situation where the value and strength of a brand can decrease due to various factors. This can occur when customers feel that a company is taking advantage of its brand name by introducing a different extension, such as when there is a strong experience with the brand extension that is agnostic and inconsistent with the parent brand experience. Meanwhile, Berthon et al (2003) only discussed brand space. A brand can be closely related or not depending on a particular product or service. Brands can emphasize what a product or service can do, or the meaning behind it. These two aspects together define the brand space, which is a conceptual tool for more effective brand management. As time goes by, brand management has become an increasingly complex and challenging task where today's world has experienced many changes, so that traditional marketing methods are no longer effective (Holbrook & Hulbert, 2003). The internet has opened many new opportunities for companies to implement branding strategies (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Many companies utilize the internet, including social media, as part of their marketing and brand development activities (Gallaughan and Ransbotham, 2010). Considering that, it is important to examine how the right digital strategy is and avoid brand equity dilution and implement brand space in the digital era. Based on this, this research will discuss brand strategy, brand equity dilution, brand space, and digital brand strategy.

2. Research Methods

This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe a phenomenon. Data collection in this study aims to reveal specific characteristic events studied (Lambert, 2012). In this study, data collection was obtained from reviewing articles related to brand strategy, brand space, brand equity, digital brand strategy. The main objective of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of brand strategy by analyzing several relevant literatures from several sources that are in accordance with the topic of this study.

3. Result and Discussion

Brand Strategy

Brand strategy includes the development and implementation of a plan that defines how the brand will position itself in the market to achieve its goals. This involves creating a unique identity, communicating effectively with consumers, and building long-term relationships to increase brand equity (Guo & Xu, 2023). Today's successful brand strategies emphasize empathy and humanity, requiring companies to make strategic decisions based on consumer feedback and behavior while using personalized communication tools (Khvorostyanaya, 2023). Brand strategy is considered the most important marketing skill, surpassing analytics and digital commerce in importance, and involves developing a clear roadmap for building a brand that aligns with consumer values and aspirations (Lubin, 2022).

Keller & Sood (2003) say that when a company decides to expand its reach beyond the national market, whether to regional or global markets, the question is the availability of resources. Companies have their own financial resources, or they can seek funding from

external channels. Companies can choose one or more combinations of strategies to suit their needs over time. The three brand growth strategies include (Keller & Sood, 2003):

a. Organic growth strategy

Organic growth strategy is an approach in which a company expands its brand portfolio without using brand equity from other parties. The company seeks to grow organically by expanding into the same or new markets, while maintaining full control over its brand management. This approach has its own advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of this strategy is that because the company is the sole owner of the brand, this gives the company a lot of freedom to decide on its positioning and personality. This also gives the company the freedom to invest and continue to manage the brand.

The disadvantage of this strategy is that the company may have difficulty expanding its brand to various product categories and market segments due to high resource requirements. This makes launching a new brand difficult as it requires large investments. Additionally, because brands establish a certain personality in the minds of consumers, expanding reach into different product lines can be challenging, depending on the amount of resources required to build and communicate them.

b. Alliance growth strategy

Alliance growth strategy is an approach in which companies collaborate with other companies in strategic alliances. In this strategy, both companies benefit from their combined strengths, and the products or services offered use the brand names of both companies.

This strategy has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that when two companies combine their brands or brand portfolios, both parties gain access to new markets, distribution channels, customer segments, and products. However, disadvantages include the risk of confusion in positioning and less effective brand identity management, especially if the two brands represent different things in the market and serve different customer groups.

c. Acquisition growth strategy

A growth alliance is a strategic step where a company partners with another company in a strategic alliance. The aim of this strategy is so that both parties can benefit from the synergy generated by this collaboration. The products or services resulting from this collaboration can then benefit from the brand reputation of both companies.

The advantage of this strategy is that when two companies decide to combine two different brands (or brand portfolios), they both gain access to a wider market, better distribution channels, more customer segments, and new products. However, the drawback lies in the risk of confusion in positioning and less effective brand identity management. This risk arises especially when the two brands represent different concepts in the market and serve two different customer groups.

Brand Equity

Brand equity is an important concept in marketing, representing the value a brand has in the eyes of consumers and its ability to generate higher returns based on brand recognition and perception (Adrian, 2011, Gartner, 2014). It is a significant intangible asset for the company, influencing consumer decisions and loyalty (Adrian, 2011). Brand equity plays an important role in maintaining a brand's position in the market, especially during environmental turbulence, as it can help protect the brand from negative impacts and threats, highlighting its significance in business success (Maulvi et al, 2022). Brand equity is formed when consumers

change their views about the parent brand because of a strong experience as opposed to a brand extension. Where this is influenced by 3 things:

- a. Strength
Only a strong enough extension experience can cause brand dilution.
- b. Diagnostic
Experience will only influence consumers' evaluation of the parent brand, if they feel that the performance of the additional product/service reflects the quality of the parent brand in some way.
- c. Inconsistency
Extension experiences that align with the parent brand's image are less likely to change consumers' views. However, if the experience does not match expectations, there is the potential for a change in consumer perception.

While brand equity can enhance competitive advantage, it is important to recognize and mitigate its potential drawbacks to ensure a balanced approach to brand management. Some of the challenges in brand equity are:

- a. Negative Consumer Reactions
High performance expectations from a strong brand mean that any failure can result in a drastic decline in customer evaluations, highlighting the risks associated with maintaining high brand equity (Brady et al., 2008).
- b. Misalignment with Market Needs
In certain sectors, such as healthcare, brand equity does not always translate into loyalty. For example, brand awareness and local perceptions may not positively influence patient loyalty, suggesting that high brand equity is sometimes misaligned with consumer expectations (Sinuraya et al., 2021).
- c. Financial Reporting Risks
Companies with high brand equity may also face increased scrutiny regarding financial practices. Pressure to maintain a strong brand image can lead to earnings management and irregularities, posing risks to long-term desires (Ismail et al., 2021).
- d. Brand Equity Dilution
Keller & Sood (2003) define brand equity dilution as a decrease in the value of a brand caused by the introduction of new products or services that are not in line with existing brand values or messages. This can lead to loss of brand recognition, loyalty, and ultimately, revenue.

Brand equity dilution can be effectively managed through strategic approaches that strengthen brand integrity and consumer perceptions such as:

- a. Consistency in Marketing
A consistent message across all marketing channels is essential to maintaining brand image and equity. Inconsistency can confuse consumers and skew brand perceptions (Buchanan et al., 1999). the importance of understanding brand associations and customer loyalty to avoid damaging brand equity through short-term promotions (Aaker, 1991).
- b. Careful Brand Extensions
Brand extensions must be aligned with core brand values to prevent negative impacts on consumer attitudes. Misaligned extensions can dilute the parent brand's equity (Morris & Jacoby, 2000).
- c. Proactive Brand Assessment

Regular brand assessments help identify potential dilution risks and inform strategic decisions about marketing investments and brand management (Abratt & Bick, 2003). This process ensures that resources are allocated effectively to enhance brand value.

While this strategy can reduce dilution, some argue that brand equity can also be enhanced through calculated risks, such as innovative extensions or collaborations, which may initially seem counterintuitive but can ultimately strengthen brand perceptions over time (Luo et al., 2010). Therefore, the need to build a strong brand with high brand equity not only opens opportunities for further growth, but also helps protect against the risk of failure in the brand extension strategy. Brand extensions can drive sales and strengthen consumer understanding of the parent brand by strengthening brand associations in consumer memory and providing additional benefits through advertising campaigns. If a brand extension experiences "market failure" due to poor distribution or lack of consumer awareness, it usually does not have a negative impact on the parent brand because consumers may not yet be aware of the product or service. However, in the event of a "product failure," where the brand extension is deemed inadequate due to performance issues, this tends to influence negative opinions of the parent brand.

Brand Space

McManus (2019) defines brand space as a physical environment or location that is designed and arranged with the aim of communicating the essence of the brand to consumers. These spaces are strategically created to evoke certain emotions, convey brand values, and provide a unique and memorable experience for visitors. This ultimately contributes to the overall perception and image of the brand. Brand space plays an important role in modern branding strategies, evolving into a critical component of brand identity and consumer engagement (Sonnenburg & Baker, 2013).

According to Berthon et al (2003) brands can shift in this space over time due to changes in consumer behavior and market dynamics. The brand space concept helps in guiding companies to expand their brands into new product categories without damaging their existing brand equity. Berthon brand categories are based on four dimensions, namely:

- a. Abstraction
Abstraction refers to the process of moving from physical, tangible things to thoughts, ideas, or feelings. This involves a transition from concrete objects to more conceptual or symbolic representations.
- b. Enacted
Enacted refers to the process of actively creating or making something happen, rather than just passively experiencing it. In branding, enactment involves consumers playing a role in building the relationship and experience they have with the brand.
- c. Functional
Functional focuses on the function of a product itself and not its meaning.
- d. Reified
Reified focuses on brands that are closely identified with their products.

Holbrook & Hulbert (2003) say that the concept of brand space can help companies manage brand extensions by understanding the potential impact as the brand expands to cover a wider range of products and services, requiring managers to have a sophisticated understanding to extend it successfully without cause damage.

The Role of Brand Equity and Brand Space in Digital Era

Brand equity in the digital age involves modifying traditional models with online elements such as trust emphasis, website enhancements, and manufacturing to create value for online-based companies. The role of brand equity in the digital age has been discussed such as (Dropulic et al, 2022):

- a. Long-term loyalty
- b. Influence customer perception and brand management strategies in the digital landscape.
- c. Emphasizing brand culture and collective memory within brand communities, guiding brand management in a connected world.

Brand equity in the digital landscape has become increasingly significant, especially as consumer interactions shift to online platforms. The digital landscape requires brands to modify traditional equity models, incorporating online elements and emphasizing consumer trust to create lasting brand value (Dharmawan & Hendrayati, 2019). Brands transition online, understanding and leveraging brand equity becomes essential to maintaining a competitive advantage. A strong digital presence is essential to building brand equity, with a focus on user experience, emotional connection, and trust (Cruz & Karatzas, 2020). Social media platforms are particularly effective tools for building brand awareness and equity, as they allow companies to engage with customers directly and analyze shifting attitudes (Steenkamp, 2020).

On the other hand, in the digital era, brand space is critical for effective communication and positioning. Brands must leverage digital channels to innovate and adapt brand management strategies to engage consumers effectively (Mongaji, 2021). The role of brand space in the digital age has been discussed by several studies such as (Shams et al, 2024; Adinugroho, 2018):

- a. Developing brand identity and sales strategy.
- b. Marketing communication strategy, enabling industry to reach public attention effectively through online media such as social media.
- c. Building a strong online presence, increasing customer engagement, and managing reputation.

Digital Brand Strategy

Brand strategy can involve leveraging technology to gain competitive advantage, shaping the brand in market strategy, and optimizing the brand portfolio to maximize brand capital and company profitability (Khurdei et al, 2023). Effective digital brand strategies in the industry 4.0 era include SEO, content marketing, social media, influencer marketing, and data analysis, with a focus on content quality, consistency, and targeting to increase brand awareness (Aman et al, 2024). Digital brand strategy involves leveraging the digital economy for deep consumer interactions, personalized recommendations, precise data analysis, and rapid dissemination of brand messages to increase brand loyalty and market competitiveness (Li, 2024).

There is a role components of digital brand strategy:

- a. Digital Marketing Integration
An effective digital marketing strategy significantly increases brand awareness and profitability, especially for e-commerce companies. Leveraging methods such as SEO, content marketing, and social media engagement is essential (Rose et al., 2024; Aman et al., 2024).
- b. Consumer Engagement

The digital economy fosters deep interactions between brands and consumers, enabling personalized marketing and data-driven insights that enhance brand loyalty (Li, 2024).

c. Sustainable Development

Continuous investment in high-quality digital content and consistent messaging is critical to sustainable brand development. Engaging customers through multiple digital channels ensures long-term brand success (Azhar, 2024).

Social media is a platform that companies use to carry out digital brand strategies because more and more people use social media to express their views about services and products (Chen, 2023). Social media measurement has become popular among companies and researchers (Oztamur & Kara-kadilar, 2014). Many companies have adopted social media to actively create business value in society, increase popularity, loyalty, return rates through content, increase public satisfaction, and strengthen brand awareness and reputation (Pitt et al., 2019).

To provide brand space in customers and avoid brand equity dilution. According to Oztamur & Karakadilar (2014), manager can use several steps in using social media as a marketing tool, namely:

a. Determine target customers

This is related to the demographic characteristics of consumers, the specific location where they are located, consumer desires, and the products they currently purchase.

b. Know which social media consumers use

Related to which social media channels consumers like, what blogs consumers often read, what articles interest consumers, and what videos consumers like.

d. Define competition

Related to understanding the main players in the market, including Ad-Words advertisers and top-ranking owners in similar content creation.

The important thing when a company uses social media as a digital brand strategy is the content (Juntunen et al, 2020). According to Chen (2023), there are several things that need to be considered in digital brand strategy, including:

e. Content

Content denotes various forms of material published on social media, including text, photos, sound recordings and videos. Text information on social media platforms is more important than data information because it provides important insights through images, videos, and even emoticons, a characteristic that adds information value to text mining (Bag et al., 2021). Social media content has been conceptualized into three main categories by Chen (2023): rational content (information, function, education, and current events), interactive content (experience, personal, brand community, and users), and marketing content (gifts, brand resonance, and promotion).

f. Use of text and competitor analysis.

Text usage involves extracting relevant words and sentences from text and converting them into structured data using various techniques such as machine learning and information mining. Using appropriate text can be used to identify various trends that are occurring.

Additionally, companies monitor not only their own social media but also their competitors' social media to understand public opinion, product promotions, and market trends, which helps them improve their brand strategy and overall performance. Thus, obtaining competitive intelligence allows organizations to recognize their own strengths

and weaknesses and improve social media marketing efficiency and public satisfaction (Maier et al., 2015).

g. Verify social media behavior.

Behavior is defined as activity driven by interaction (Bowden et al., 2017). Social media user behavior, such as liking, commenting, and sharing, can be used to measure content performance (Wallace et al., 2014). Attention (likes), engagement (comments), and recognition (shares) represent a steady progression of user participation.

Despite the strategic advantages of using digital platforms, digital strategies also have several challenges, such as (Nipa & Chowdhury, 2024; Ustik et al., 2023):

a. Organizational Resistance.

Many companies experience resistance from senior management regarding digital transformation, often due to concerns about ROI and the rapid pace of change.

b. Technology Barriers

Outdated systems and limited budgets hinder the integration of new digital marketing tools, making it difficult for brands to adapt.

c. Information Overload

The vast amount of information available online increases competition, forcing brands to continuously innovate to capture consumer attention.

d. Reputation Management

Increased consumer interactions can lead to potential reputational risks, requiring brands to be vigilant in their digital communications.

e. Data Privacy Issues

Navigating the regulatory framework and building consumer trust around data use remains a significant challenge.

4. Conclusion

This research is descriptive research which aims to understand more deeply about brand strategy by reviewing several articles related to brand space, brand equity, and digital brand strategy. A brand is the promise and the assets of all of us. It should be well-designed and well-positioned and needs to be a critical element in a modern business strategy. Companies can choose a brand strategy between organic, alliance, or acquisition growth strategy. Before a company carries out a digital brand strategy, the manager needs to first understand brand space, and brand equity. Brand equity is the value a brand has in the eyes of consumers and its ability to generate higher returns based on brand recognition and perception. The role of brand equity can help company maintaining a brand's position in the market, especially during environmental turbulence, as it can help protect the brand from negative impacts and threats, highlighting its significance in business success. When it comes to brand equity, managers must be prepared to face challenges such as negative consumer reactions, misalignment with market needs, financial reporting risks and brand equity dilution. Brand equity dilution occurs when a new product or service is introduced that is not aligned with the brand's existing values or message. As a result, this can lead to reduced brand recognition, loss of customer loyalty, and ultimately decreased revenue. On the other hand, the concept of brand space can help companies manage brand extensions by considering the potential impacts as brands expand to encompass a variety of products and services, requiring managers to have a deep understanding to successfully expand without risking harm. In addition, the development of digital technology

makes it necessary for a brand to do proper branding on the company's social media to attract consumers.

In digital era, brand equity plays a critical role, significantly influencing consumer perception and loyalty. Likewise, brand space in the digital era functions for effective communication and positioning. Implementing a branding strategy in digital era can provide several benefits such as creating business value in society, increasing popularity, loyalty, return rates through content, increasing public satisfaction, and strengthening brand awareness and reputation. The development of digital technology means that a brand needs to carry out appropriate branding on company social media to attract consumers. Digital platform provides a variety of functions, such as interacting with individuals from all over the world, creating, sharing, and disseminating content, accessing and searching for information on an endless number of topics, and staying up to date with the latest developments. To provide brand space in the minds of consumers and avoid dilution of brand equity, managers can use several steps when using social media as a platform, such as determining target consumers, knowing the social media used by consumers, and determining competition. The benefits of using a digital brand strategy include digital Marketing Integration, Consumer Engagement, and Sustainable Development. Although digital platforms offer many strategic advantages, implementing digital strategies still faces various challenges. Therefore, companies must remain careful.

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