



SHIFT IN BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGY DURING PANDEMIC IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines for changes that occurred in consumer behavior during COVID 19 pandemic, brands must anticipate consumer behavior during this worldwide crisis to maintain a competitive edge. Brands need a shift in positioning strategy that supports and in a way help people, communities, consumers. Brands use the words immunity and safe and protect strategically to position their brands in mind of the consumers during pandemic.

Key words: Brands, Positioning, Perception, Strategy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID 19 has proven to be a truly global pandemic, affecting people around the world. The COVID 19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns have caused substantial disruption for individuals, communities, brands and companies (Agarwal, 2020). The lockdowns to fight Covid 19 has reformed consumers purchase decisions with higher spending on health and hygiene products, adjusting to limited product availability and favoring home deliveries over store visits (F.E., 2020) The present crisis is affecting the brand and category choices, spending behavior. Brands must remember that with great power comes great responsibility. Unfortunately, there will be many brands that won't have the capacity to change their business model to persist during COVID 19. The brands that are able to be profitable, must do what they can to help (Furman, 2020). Brands have always sought to be related to users but this needs to be turned around. A new question has arisen how can brands make people feel appropriate in a decade of never normal? This relates to both consumers and employees. What is required is a proper shift in viewpoint. Brands purpose will only be relevant if it aligns with people own purpose (Accenture,2020). There is need for brands to make a shift in positioning strategy that supports and in a way help people, communities, consumers. They need to strategize during pandemic period such that they will remain in the minds of consumers and create a feeling that brands support them in crises.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brand positioning strategy has been studied by different researchers from different perspectives. Carol and Carl (2003) investigated the product attributes model that uses three components namely attribute ratings, budget constraint and indifference curves. The key advantage of this investigation over perceptual maps is the ability to incorporate the effect of price into valuation of the brand's positioning. Fuchs, C., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2010) results indicate that the type of positioning strategy used influence the positioning feat of a brand. They confirmed that benefit based positioning outperform feature based positioning strategies along the three effectiveness dimensions. The findings also demonstrate that no distinct strategy beats all the others on all dimensions. Dou et al. (2010) established that when internet user implied beliefs about the meaning of the exhibited order of search engine results are activated, they will have better ability to remember for an unknown brand that is displayed before well known brands in search engine results pages. Further those with low internet search abilities tend to assess the unknown brand more favorably along the certain brand characteristic that triggers the search engine ranking schema. Janiszewska and Insch (2012) identified the prime elements which establish the structure of the positioning claim which results from the brand positioning process. At the analytical stage positioning shows the scope areas and research issues surrounding an analysis of competitive activity and behavior of target groups. Positioning also supports the planning process and is a useful instrument in validating and hierarchizing particular types of activity with reference to the reliability and clarity of the brand idea. (Adina et al, 2015) analyzed the probable effects of country of origin controlling aspects on brand positioning bases. They reviewed the managerial inferences of country of origin controlling factors on brand positioning strategy and suggested enhancement for positive country of origin associations and making an optimum comparison between the country of origin and the brand positioning components. Fayvishenko, D. (2018) suggested that the brand positioning is a process of creating its identifiable image, distinct properties, positive associations and values in consumer mind for creating a viable trademark image and ensure consumer attachment to this trademark. He also suggested that development and execution of the company strategy of positioning comprises nine stages. Aronczyk (2020) examined the disconcerting logic of digital media ecosystems which undervalue socially pertinent information to maintain brand reputation. At a time when the value of news to deliver essential and reliable information is made dramatically visible and advertising technologies honor the safety of brands over the safety of individuals.

3. SHIFT IN BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGY

In this crucial unexpected scenario, consumers are more thoughtful that affects consumption patterns and future is uncertain, there is no one solution for all brands. Brands that usually aimed at increasing their share of voice will now have to reconsider on how to increase share of empathy. Think of healthier ways to engage that in turn boosts brand immune system (Rungta ,2020). With the shutting of major retail stores, there has been a growth in searches for essentials and brands providing home delivery. Fascinatingly near me searches have seen a huge uptick. As health and wellbeing become main concern, enquiries in this category have pivoted towards immunity up 500 percent (Chamaria and Dasgupta ,2020). Bottled water brand Bisleri engrossed on how vital it is to be well hydrated and to boost immunity with its product that contains added minerals (Warc ,2021). Horlicks campaign highlighted how the health drink containing of immunity supporting nutrients like Vitamin C, Zinc and Vitamin D could help support the body's defenses (ET ,2020). Dabur reported a seven fold jump in its Chyawanprash range as demand for immunity boosting products has observed a sharp surge during the coronavirus pandemic. Dabur Chyawanprash reported a growth of over 694 percent during the

quarter Q1(Gupta ,2020). Disruption in the supply chains has created enormous openings for the local and organic brands. SMEs would need to take swift actions to respond to this recent phase and reflect to build their brands by adopting new announcements and connecting with their consumers closely. Because of budget limitations, most of the SMEs would select digital ad campaigns to build their brands (Nandi ,2020). Experts say that brands shouldn't go dark as meaningful relationships can be made and retained even during a crisis. Indian dairy brand Amul communicated with a series of messages encouraging individuals to wash their hands and greet others with namaste and to work from home. The work was featured by the famed Amul girl (Ragavan, 2020). Table 1 shows Shift in Brand Positioning Strategy during Pandemic.

Table 1 Shift in Brand Positioning Strategy during Pandemic

Pre Pandemic Positioning	Brand	Shift in Positioning during Pandemic 2020
Immunity Expert	Dabur Chyawanprash	Immunity Booster
New Places to dine out	Zomato	Safe Delivery
Pleasurable nourishment drink	Horlicks	Immunity supporting nutrients drink
Daag, No Dhabba Easy Clean	Berger Paints	Protection from Bacteria, Viruses, Pollutants
Khushiyon Ka Rangmanch	CenturyPlywood	Technology that Kills viruses upon contact
Precision cooling	Bluestar	Filter system that boasts virus deactivation technology

Source: Author

As from Table 1. Brands use the words 'immunity' and 'safe and protect' strategically to position their brands in mind of the consumers. They use these words to not only attract consumers but also to send message to key players that you are not alone. We are with you in this fight and together we will beat this pandemic.

4. CONCLUSION

The response by brands to pandemic was anticipated. Brands imitate and shape the conditions of their existence as lifestyle symbols. Brands will always assess their own reputation over and above any other obligations. In this situation brands should to be true to their intent and communicate with their clients, stakeholders, suppliers, consumers to build deeper relationship that will benefit all key players and strengthen the brand.

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