

Then versus Now: Brand Positioning Strategy in the 21st Century

by Brenda Taulbee | Nov 11, 2020 | 0 comments



Brand positioning has become increasingly important—and challenging—since the start of the 21st century. What used to be a slow dance between brands and consumers has evolved into a crowded parade akin to **Carnival festival**. Now consumers have more choices than ever, and every brand is dressed in their flashiest attire vying for attention.

With social media and online publishing platforms that allow anyone to reach everyone, we've seen a massive increase in content creation without the strategy to make it effective. And we get it—everyone's chasing the golden egg of virality. But what happened to strategy?

But first, what is brand positioning?

If you're a business owner or entrepreneur, you've probably heard about the concept of **brand positioning**. Simply put, brand positioning is precisely that: a concept. Due to its conceptual nature, it can feel abstract and difficult to define. Instead of recreating the wheel, let's take a look at how the advertising legends define positioning.

In his book, *Ogilvy on Advertising*, David Ogilvy writes: "This curious verb [positioning] is in great favor among marketing experts, but no two of them agree what it means. My own definition is 'what the product does and who it is for.'"

Similarly, marketing author and professor Philip Kotler defines brand positioning as "The act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market."

Both definitions converge around the *what* and *who* of a brand, which sounds simple enough. However, it can take a significant amount of research, analysis, and strategizing to arrive at this seemingly simple outcome—especially in today's crowded digital marketplace. Brand positioning can range from a single, pithy statement to a 20-page strategy document. Whichever route you take, the goal is to arrive at the heart of a brand's key differentiating factor.

Brand positioning strategy is more important today than it was yesterday

Brand marketing today is not what it was in the 20th century. Leading up to the turn of the century, household internet was mostly non-existent (or limited to shoddy dial-up access for the lucky few with a personal computer). In place of household internet, we had household brands—a handful of names, like Coca-Cola and Campbell's—that claimed their market share and recognition with consumers early on. Then, the internet changed everything.

Nowadays, the competition is seriously tough. In a sea of cookie-cutters and copy cats, we see startups competing with startups and new brands replicating old brands. There are micro-influencers, online marketplaces, and niche brands for anything you can imagine. Competing brands simply can't afford *not* to take a stand. And the best way to take a stand is to stand for *something*. A brand positioning strategy is the ticket to making your mark on the hearts of today's consumers.

How to carve out your place in any market

There are countless ways to position your brand. The key is to take a position that stands apart from any other brand in your industry. Take **Yellow Tail**, for example. Visit almost any wine aisle in America, and you'll find a bottle of the Australian wine brand on the shelf. But how did they go from a small Australian brand to one of the most widely recognized and fastest-growing wine brands halfway across the world? Brand positioning had a lot to do with it.

Yellow Tail used the **Blue Ocean Strategy** to break into the highly competitive U.S. wine market. By nature, the Blue Ocean Strategy is a form of positioning that allows brands to create new market space and make competition obsolete. First, it requires analyzing the competitive landscape and identifying what others are doing in an existing marketplace. Armed with insight into what everyone else is doing, the next step is to create an uncontested market space by doing something entirely different.

For Yellow Tail to enter the U.S. market saturated with high-end premium wines targeted toward wine aficionados, the brand needed a non-traditional twist. Instead of competing with an already competitive market, Yellow Tail positioned itself as an easy-going social drink for everyone (not just wine drinkers). Ultimately, the brand redefined itself as the anytime, anywhere wine that's fun, adventurous, and easy to select and drink. No tasting notes necessary.

The results? Yellow Tail exceeded their first-year sales goals ninefold and quickly became the number one imported wine. Within four years of entering the U.S. wine market, the brand overtook California, French, and Italian brands as the overall best selling 750ml red wine. Cheers to a smart positioning strategy.

The best brand positioning takes time

There's something seductive about hitting 'publish' on a tangible piece of content. A sense of accomplishment, if you will. But don't let the seductress of instant gratification steal you away from steadfast strategy. A brand position that garners best-selling status (and the customer loyalty that comes with it) requires an initial investment in understanding your market, audience, and angle. Embrace the time when nothing gets published and nothing goes to market. Because when go-time comes, your brand will be well-equipped for sustainable success.

Rushing to market might feel productive, but marketing without a strategy is a fast-track to the content treadmill. Growing a brand is a marathon, not an occasional trip to the gym. Many of the household brands we know and love today have been at it for a century or longer.

When you're ready to position your brand above the rest, **Savy can help**. We've been creating multifaceted strategies that put modern brands on center stage since '07.

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