

Impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to generate theoretical knowledge that would contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty. This analysis reviewed the literature using the PRISMA methodology, opting for a qualitative approach methodology, framed in the basic type. Applying the keywords, 82 publications were found in ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost and Web of Science, in which 21 relevant articles were analyzed for evaluation. The findings show that a clear and consistent brand positioning strengthens customer loyalty by building trust and encouraging repurchase. The review shows that consistent brand positioning strengthens customer loyalty by building trust. In addition, technology and global strategies are crucial to maintain brand relevance.

Keywords: Reliability, brand loyalty, service quality, business success.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business world, brand positioning has become a crucial element for success of any organization (Urrutia & Napán, 2021). It refers to way a brand differentiates and establishes itself in the minds of consumers compared to its competitors (Macias et al., 2021). Effective positioning not only helps a brand stand out in a saturated market but also plays a pivotal role in building customer loyalty (Solorzano & Parrales, 2021). Exploring how brand positioning influences customer loyalty is essential to ensure the long-term success of any business (Rodríguez et al., 2023).

Brand positioning involves defining the unique value proposition a company offers compared to its competitors (Cruz et al., 2022). This is where marketing plays an essential role as well-designed marketing strategies can develop a strong connection with consumers. When a brand manages to establish an emotional connection through effective marketing strategies, it becomes more than just a product; it transforms into an integral part of the customer's life (Duque & Ramos, 2023). This emotional connection is a determining factor in customer loyalty, as consumers tend to prefer brands that they feel understand their needs and values (Silva et al., 2021). Consumer loyalty is a key goal for many companies, as loyal customers tend to repeat their purchases and recommend the brand to others, however, achieving this loyalty is no easy task (Muñoz et al., 2023). It requires understanding the customer's needs and for the company to anticipate in order to meet their expectations in the delivery of a service or product (Silva et al., 2021). When a brand manages to position itself effectively, it creates an emotional connection with its customers, which strengthens their loyalty to the brand (Duque & Ramos, 2023).

An important aspect of brand positioning is the clarity and consistency in communicating the brand's values and attributes (Corredor, 2020). Consumers look for brands that not only offer quality products, but also share their values and principles, achieving an optimal correspondence with brand (Mejía & Arcos, 2020). This alignment of values can generate a strong emotional connection, which in turn fosters customer loyalty (Jara et al., 2022). Furthermore, a well-positioned brand can differentiate itself from its competitors, which is crucial in highly competitive markets (Jurado, 2021).

Trust is another critical factor in customer loyalty, and market positioning plays a vital role in building this trust (He et al., 2022). When an organization communicates clearly and consistently, and delivers on its promises, customers develop a sense of security and trust in company (Silva et al., 2021). This trust is the foundation on which long-term relationships are built (Peralta, 2023).

On the other hand, the digital environment has transformed the way brands position themselves and relate to their customers (Peralta, 2023). Social media and online platforms allow for more direct and personalized interaction, which can further strengthen customer loyalty (He et al., 2022). Digital marketing strategies and social media advertising are powerful tools that brands can use to build communities around their products (Mera et al., 2022). These communities not only increase loyalty, but also drive positive word of mouth (He et al., 2022). In this context, brand positioning becomes a dynamic and evolving process, which requires constant attention and adaptation to the changing needs of consumers, ensuring audience maintains its affinity with brand (Mejía & Arcos, 2020).

In addition, brand positioning can influence customers' perception of quality. A brand that positions itself as a leader in quality and excellence can attract customers who are looking for the best in the market. This perception of quality not only attracts new customers, but also retains existing ones, as they feel they are getting the best value for their money (Siguenza et al., 2020).

Recent studies highlighted that 92.3% of users stay on social media all day, and 63% look for relevant information, highlighting the importance of effective brand positioning to foster customer loyalty (Solís & Gutierrez, 2021). Likewise, studies on impact of brand positioning on purchasing decisions have shown that strong positioning not only differentiates a brand from its competitors, but also builds trust and credibility in consumers, which in turn fosters loyalty (Muñoz et al., 2023). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in a world where consumers are more likely to switch brands, highlighting the importance of a well-defined positioning strategy to maintain customer loyalty (Melo, 2021).

The present systematic review is justified by need to comprehensively understand how brand positioning influences customer loyalty in an increasingly competitive and digitalized environment. Since customer loyalty is a crucial factor for long-term success of any brand, it is essential to analyze and synthesize the existing evidence on branding strategies in positioning have proven to be suitable (Maza et al., 2020). In addition, this study seeks to fill gaps in literature by providing an updated theoretical framework that allows companies to design more precise marketing strategies tailored to the needs of their customers, thus ensuring their continued loyalty and satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The study is framed within the scope of basic research, whose objective is to generate theoretical knowledge that contributes to a deeper understanding of impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty (Tomayo, 2004). The qualitative approach focused on providing a detailed and in-depth description of the phenomena and not only deals with analyzing and synthesizing the existing literature on the impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty but also with thoroughly describing the related phenomena, for which it uses methods based on epistemological principles such as interpretation, contextual analysis and the inductive approach (Palacios, 2020). Likewise, a systematic review based on principles of previous fundamental research was considered, which allows the formulation of theoretical concepts that serve as key sources (Hernández et al., 2014).

For this review on the impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty, the points pre-established by the PRISMA methodology were followed, facilitating the location and identification of the most relevant articles for the current literature review (Barquero, 2022). Indexed research from the last 5 years was considered, being reviewed by blind peers. Likewise, studies in Spanish and English were taken into account, generating a wide variety of documents. In addition, they must be research articles and these must be publicly accessible. On the other hand, articles that do not address topic of brand positioning and customer loyalty were left out, as well as those that have low relevance in terms of academic impact and research not available in open access. This rigorous selection process ensured that only those studies provided solid and relevant evidence for the development of a deeper understanding of the impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty were included in the review.

The search for studies was developed in databases such as ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost and Web of Science. Research terms with keyword combinations such as “Brand positioning”, “Customer loyalty”, “Brand impact”, “Customer retention” were considered. Time limits were established in indexed studies from January 1, 2020 to July 31, 2024, in order to guarantee the inclusion of recent and relevant research that reflects current trends and developments in the field.

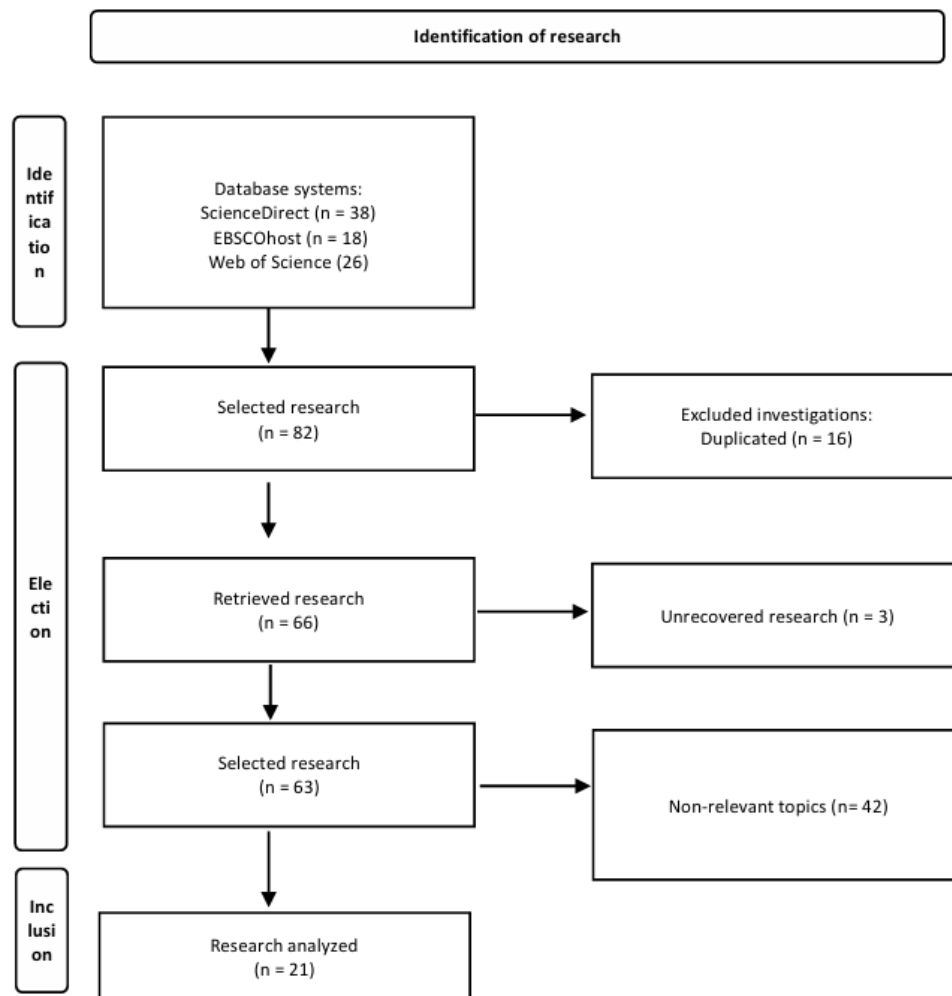


Figure 1: Selection flowchart

Cod.	Author	Year	Title	Summary	Database
01	Akram, M.; Malhotra, N.; Shakir, M.; Shareef, M.; Malik, A y Lal, B.	2022	User engagement on global social networks: Examining the roles of perceived brand globalness, identification and global identity	The perception of globality of a brand on global social networks, such as Facebook, influences user identification with the brand and community, which, in turn, significantly affects customer loyalty and engagement.	ScienceDirect
02	Al Masud, A.; Ahmed, S.; Tanvir, M.; Hossain, B.; Shimu, M. y Fakhrul, M.	2024	Unveiling brand loyalty in emerging markets: Analyzing smartphone user preferences: Robustness of structural equation modeling (SEM) and simultaneous equation modeling (SEMs)	The paper underlines that brand loyalty is a critical factor for business success, especially in emerging markets.	ScienceDirect

03	Anderson, E.; Chen, C.; Israeli, A. y Simester, D.	2024	CanaryCategories	The availability and correct representation of customers' preferred brands within an assortment is crucial for customer loyalty.	Web ofScience
04	Castro, S. y Ríos, Elimari	2021	Management Strategy to Achieve Competitive Advantages in Commercial Companies and Improve Productivity, Employee Loyalty and Customer Service Quality: Spirituality in the Work Environment.	A work environment that promotes spirituality can have a significant positive impact on customer loyalty, supporting the idea that brand positioning can also influence consumer loyalty.	EBSCOhost
05	Cristancho, G. y Cancino, Y.	2023	La motivación, la lealtad y compromiso como precursores de las comunidades de marca.	A clear and consistent differentiation strategy strengthens consumer loyalty and maintains a competitive advantage in the market.	EBSCOhost
06	Fazeen, A. y Balakrishnan, J.	2024	Innovating for retention: strategies for enhancing customer retention in theme parks	Consumer innovation not only strengthens customer loyalty, but also enhances the brand's ability to create meaningful social communities and connections.	Web ofScience
07	Gam, A.; Bahri-Ammari, N. y Soliman, M.	2022	Intelligent Customer Experience and Behavioral Brand Loyalty: Empirical Evidence from the Commerce Environment.	Intelligent customer experience positively influences brand loyalty through satisfaction, trust and brand attachment, highlighting the importance of brand positioning in customer loyalty.	EBSCOhost
08	Godadaw, S.; Ambachew, B. y Getnet, B.	2023	Examining the effect of electronic banking service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty: an implication for technological innovation	Positioning the quality of your service or product can directly influence customer loyalty, which is the secret to being competitive and successful in the industry.	EBSCOhost
09	Jin, R. y Chen, K.;	2021	Impact of Value Cocreation on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty of Online Car-Hailing Services.	Brand positioning significantly influences customer loyalty, directly linking to service quality and perceived experience.	EBSCOhost
10	Ladeira, W.;	2024	Fostering conative	It is essential to	Web ofScience

	Lim, W.; Santini, F.; Rasul, T.; Rice, J. y Azhar, M.		loyalty in tourism and hospitality loyalty programs: an eye-tracking experiment of reward timing, fairness perception, and visual attention	cultivate customer loyalty through carefully designed loyalty programs, as well as to understand the different mechanisms that influence reward behavior.	
11	Mazhar, H.; Asad, J.; Samar, H. y Muhammad, Y.	2024	Pillars of Customer Retention in the Services Sector: Understanding the Role of Relationship Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty	Proper customer relationship management improves both customer satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately increasing customer retention.	Web ofScience
12	Marvi, R.; Zha, D. y Foroudi, P.;	2024	Elevating B2B branding in a global context: Integrating existing literature and proposing a forward-thinking conceptual framework	Effective business-to-business not only strengthens business customers' trust and decision-making, but also fosters loyalty and differentiation in competitive markets.	ScienceDirect
13	Rego, L.; Brady, M.; Leone, R.; Roberts, J.; Srivastava, C. y Srivastava, R.	2022	Brand response to environmental turbulence: A framework and propositions for resistance, recovery and reinvention	Brands that differentiate themselves and maintain a strong connection with their customers, especially in turbulent environments, can endure, recover, and reinvent themselves, thereby strengthening customer loyalty and protecting their brand value in the long term.	ScienceDirect
14	Shao, Q.; Liou, J.; Weng, S.; Jiang, H.; Shao, T. y Lin, Z.	2024	Developing a comprehensive service quality model for online to offline e-commerce platforms using a hybrid model	Factors such as empathy, social interaction, and recommendation quality are essential to improving customer loyalty.	Web ofScience
15	Sharp, B.; Dawes, J. y Victory, K.	2024	The market-based assets theory of brand competition	Brand positioning theory has dominated marketing education for decades.	ScienceDirect
16	Sun, H.; Dai, Y.; Jeon, S.; Lee, R.; Wang, H.; Shi, X.; Sun, L. y Wang, Y.	2024	The impact of brand authenticity on brand attachment, brand loyalty, willingness to pay more, and forgiveness - For Chinese consumers of Korean cosmetic	The study indicates that brand authenticity, assessed through factors such as consistency, naturalness, originality, and reliability, significantly influences consumers' emotional	ScienceDirect

			brands	attachment, with this attachment reinforcing brand loyalty.	
17	Tutek, N.; Najdanović, Z. y Palić, M	2022	Customer satisfaction with banking services in bosnia and herzegovina.	The results show that customers positively value staff friendliness, which generates high satisfaction and a strong inclination to recommend the entity, thus reinforcing brand loyalty.	EBSCOhost
18	Wang, F.; Wang, Y.; Han, Y. y Cho, J.	2024	Optimizing brand loyalty through user-centric product package design: A study of user experience in dairy industry	The study shows that sensory, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive experiences influence brand image, which affects trust and, in general, brand loyalty.	ScienceDirect
19	Wang, Y. y Chen, P.	2024	Official online brand stores or online marketplaces? exploring innovation in consumer intentions	Searching through multiple channels decreases the intention to select a particular channel, but brand loyalty and price advantages strengthen it.	ScienceDirect
20	Zephaniah, C.; Ogba, I. y Izogo, E.	2020	Examining the effect of customers' perception of bank marketing communication on customer loyalty		ScienceDirect
21	Zhu, L.; Ye, W. y Zhang, H.	2021	How Salesperson Improves Their Customer Stewardship Behavior in the Mobile Internet Era.	Advertisers foster customer loyalty through strong brand positioning and a deep understanding of their audiences.	EBSCOhost

RESULTS

In the present study, 21 articles were recorded from a total of 82 publications found under the search premises established in the ScienceDirect (9), EBSCOhost (7) and Web of Science (5) databases. These articles were selected for their importance in addressing issues related to impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty. The studies taken showed a myriad of perspectives on different market fields showing customer loyalty, brand love, favorite brands and brand preference, analyzing from the effectiveness of promotional campaigns to the influence of the support of international entities on consumer loyalty towards the products or services provided by the brand.

This section of strictly selected articles ensured that the analysis and synthesis of findings were robustly representative, contributing to a better comprehensive understanding of the impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty.

This section, built from strictly selected articles, ensured that both the analysis and synthesis of results were representative and robust, thus favouring a deeper and more detailed understanding of the impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty, also allowing for identification of key patterns and significant trends in consumer behaviour.

The results reveal brand positioning has a significant impact on customer loyalty. It was identified that brands that achieve clear and consistent positioning are perceived more favourably by consumers, which strengthens their loyalty. Furthermore, it was found that clarity in communicating brand values and consistency in delivering on its promises play a crucial role in building customer trust, which in turn fosters loyalty. The studies also

highlight that effective brand positioning not only increases the likelihood of repurchase, but also promotes positive word of mouth, consolidating a loyal customer base that acts as brand ambassadors.

DISCUSSION

In the discussion on brand positioning strategies, Sharp et al. (2024) indicate that STP strategies are important for market differentiation, and customer growth and loyalty depend more on the mental and physical availability of brand than on significant differentiation. Akram et al. (2022) mention that global positioning strengthens user identification with brand and its community, which increases both active and passive engagement, key elements to foster customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction, trust, and emotional attachment are key to strengthening loyalty and improving brand positioning, which can be enhanced with smart technologies (Gam et al., 2022). A strong positioning and a well-managed brand, which can withstand, recover, and reinvent itself in the face of turbulence, is more likely to maintain and increase customer loyalty (Rego et al., 2022).

The discussion on factors that influence customer loyalty shows both coincidences and differences in the results obtained by various authors. Zephaniah et al. (2020) report that marketing communication tools play a fundamental role in creating and maintaining customer loyalty. Furthermore, Shao et al. (2024) indicate a quick and concise response to customer queries demonstrates interest in them, reinforcing brand image and maintaining customer loyalty. Distinctive brand values are essential to improve customer perception, contributing to greater loyalty (Cristancho & Cancino, 2023). Finally, Marvi et al. (2024) report that strategic management of global B2B branding strengthens customer loyalty by improving brand consistency in international markets.

Zhu et al. (2021) confirm strong brand positioning reinforces employee commitment to brand, which in turn increases customer loyalty by aligning salespeople's goals with customers' long-term interests. Jin and Chen (2021) confirm companies that focus on improving the quality of service provided reinforce customer loyalty. On the other hand, Anderson et al. (2024) underline lack of availability of a preferred brand not only affects immediate purchase, but also decreases the likelihood of customers returning in the future, underlining importance of consecutive availability to maintain customer loyalty. Likewise, brands that manage to establish and maintain a relationship of trust with their customers, especially in emerging markets, not only improve perception of the service offered, but also strengthen long-term customer loyalty to the brand (Al-Masud et al., 2024).

Sun et al. (2024) underlines the importance of brand authenticity that generates a significant impact on customer loyalty, influenced by factors such as consistency, originality, reliability and naturalness. In addition, Wang et al. (2024) report improving the visual and emotional experience of consumers through effective design strategies can strengthen brand positioning. Complementing the approach, Wang and Chen (2024) highlight how different brand positioning factors influence customer loyalty depending on the sales channel used, which is key to developing effective loyalty strategies in various sales contexts. On the other hand, Fazeen and Balakrishnan (2024) indicate innovation in brand positioning, whether from a hedonic, functional, social or cognitive approach, plays a crucial role in creating memorable experiences that, in turn, strengthen customer loyalty.

Godadaw et al. (2023) underline importance of service quality, especially in responsiveness, reliability, system availability and speed, due to its impact on customer satisfaction. Castro and Rfos (2021) add satisfaction is influenced by service quality, which must exceed expectations to generate loyalty. In addition, Ladeira et al. (2024) mentions immediate rewards generate significantly higher conative loyalty compared to delayed rewards. On the other hand, Mazhar et al. (2024) indicate that effective customer relationship management improves satisfaction and strengthens loyalty, which is crucial to maintaining the customer base and ensuring sustainable growth in competitive markets. Finally, Tutek et al. (2022) emphasize that emotions and quality perception influence loyalty, suggesting that prioritizing service quality and personalized attention is essential to strengthening customer loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature review regarding impact of brand positioning on customer loyalty highlights several effective strategies and approaches in different contexts. The importance of a clear and coherent brand positioning is evidenced as a key factor in strengthening customer loyalty. Brands that consistently communicate their values and meet expectations build relationships of trust with their customers, which translates into greater loyalty.

Furthermore, the integration of smart technologies and global branding strategies stand out as essential tools to improve customer perception and consolidate customer loyalty. A brand's ability to adapt and reinvent itself in contexts of high competition or economic turbulence is essential to maintain its relevance and emotional connection with consumers, thus ensuring a loyal customer base.

The analysis also reveals customer experience, from service quality to brand authenticity, plays a crucial role in creating long-term loyalty. Factors such as product availability, response to queries and creating memorable experiences are key to establishing conative loyalty turns into active and positive customer recommendations.

Brand positioning not only influences consumer preference, but also acts as an essential driver for customer loyalty. Companies that manage to articulate and maintain a strong positioning, aligned with the expectations and needs of their customers, are better positioned to build lasting relationships and thrive in competitive markets.

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