

Repositioning: Marketing in an Era of Competition, Change and Crisis

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Jack Trout, and Steve Rivkin (2009). Repositioning: Marketing in an era of Competition, Change and Crisis. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-hill Education Private Limited, pp. 224, ISBN: 978-0-07-163559-2.

Author's profile: Jack Trout apparently is a personal tutor for every young marketer. He is one of the world's chief marketing strategists and his first book was published long back in the late 1960's. He has popularized many marketing concepts, which subsequently became the building blocks of those subjects. The concept of positioning is one such example; it started its journey as an article, written by Jack Trout titled "Positioning is a game people play in today's me-too marketplace."

Steve Rivkin is the founder of Rivkin & Associates LLC, a marketing and communications consultancy in Glen Rock, New Jersey. He is a naming expert with Trout & Partners and Coauthor of three books with Jack Trout.

An overview of the Book: The subject matter is intriguing, as these concepts are so extensively used in the real world. The reader can get influenced by the way the author intends to relate the concepts with current marketing environment. Right in the book Trout mentions how heavily these concepts are used in practice and a simple Google search of these concepts resulted in 37163 citations in the year 2008.

Repositioning is the third book coauthored by Jack Trout under the "positioning" concept. The concept of Repositioning was introduced for the first time in that book, more as a strategy to cope with competition. His second book "New Positioning" was an updated version of his original work and the concept of Repositioning as a competitive strategy, was illustrated at length with case studies.

The concept of repositioning is the focus in the present book. The concept of repositioning has been extended beyond the strategy to combat competition. As mentioned in the book "Repositioning is how organizations adjust perceptions, whether those perceptions are about the competition or the organization itself."

Review: The book is based on the premise that corporate environment has drastically changed and that the competition is becoming fierce. While the consumers are becoming savvier and the communication is getting faster, repositioning as a concept will win over competition, change and crisis. The book is divided into the following sections:

Competition: The underlying concept of repositioning against competition as discussed in this section is "hanging a negative" on competitors' brands. A brand gains "share of mind" by pointing out the similarity between its competitors and clearing out a distinctive positive space for itself. This section iterates the considerations that the marketers must ponder upon before going for repositioning.

Many examples have been cited, the most interesting one is about two Chinese brands of herbal tea. Through the discussions, the authors point out how one of the brands hangs a negative of being "unnatural" on the other brand to eat more market share.

Change: This section talks about the rapid changes that are happening in technology and its impact on established organizations. With the help of appropriate examples, the authors have cited some tricks for repositioning in the changing environment. The authors also point out how the size of an organization (if large) works as a detriment to repositioning/evolution. The authors also point out when not to evolve.

Crisis: The authors stress that the world is going beyond the unpredictable to the unthinkable. It suffers from micro and macro crisis. They claim long term planning to be a passé as the world is full of wrong predictions about the future. They also iterate the ways to combat crisis.

They support the ideas by quoting examples of Wal-Mart, Southwest airlines, Charles Schwab, and the PC market. This section also lists out the strategies to be followed by the organizations dealing with luxury brands to adapt to the economic slowdown. One of the example quotes the case of C.F Martin & Co, a guitar making company. In the event of slowdown the company was unable to sell their expensive guitars which made them to revive their 1930's guitar to a no frill guitar called "1 Series", which became a hit.

Repositioning takes Time: This is the final section of the book. This section starts off by explaining what repositioning is all about. According to the authors, repositioning is the readjustment of people's perception and not changing those perceptions. Therefore the whole process is time consuming and the authors list out the steps to be followed while going for repositioning. Finally, the authors explain the role of leadership during repositioning.

The book, despite having heavily drawn many flavors from the previous books, is relevant to current scenarios. The vanilla concepts have been aptly molded to make them usable by the marketers facing stiff competition or for coping with change. The Book clearly iterates the dos and don'ts associated with repositioning.

This book is a unique piece, as it brings forth the concept of repositioning and its usability in the present context. This concept is often cited in many research papers and articles. A small search highlighted how often the concept is used in research papers. Some noteworthy papers are given below:

Effects of brand name : Suggestiveness on Recall Advertising -KL Keller, SE Heckler - Journal of Marketing, 1998 -This paper uses the concept of repositioning as a strategy to increase advertising recall

of a brand in the event of changing consumer needs, competitive actions, or any other changes in the marketing environment over time. They suggest that managers may need to reposition their brands through new marketing communication campaigns.

Should you brand where the action is? - DA Aaker - Harvard Business Review, 1997-The article is essentially on the vertical extension of brands in the context of stiff market competition and declining brands. The author suggests repositioning the entire brand as a strategy if launching a new brand is not an option; managers need to consider ways to leverage the power of their existing brand.

Brand origin: conceptualization and review, Mrugank V. Thakor, Chiranjeev S. Kohli-Journal of Consumer Marketing, 1996-This paper questions whether transplanted products or products from different origins should build association of the brand with its place of origin. Here too the authors have used the concept of repositioning to strengthen their points.

Other books written on the subject do not bring out the conceptual clarity in a general context. Some books use the concept of repositioning in a broad framework. For example: while talking about repositioning in Asia, Philip Kartajaya, highlights the understanding of the transformation of Asia's economies and enterprises. Similarly, in Cyber Space & Repositioning of Corporation, S. Shiva Ramu provides an overview of the changing scenario of technology and its impact on restructuring.

The concept of reposition is not only relevant but also critical in today's scenario. This book is certainly worth reading at least by the marketers to sustain their competitive advantage.

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