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Contemporary Methods in Strategic Planning for the Development of Premium International Consumer Brands with High Added Value

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ABSTRACT—*This article explores contemporary strategic planning methods for developing premium international consumer brands with high added value. The primary objective is to outline key planning stages, focusing on strategic positioning, business insights, and environmental analysis. The study establishes a framework to help international organizations achieve sustainable growth and maximize their premium brands' potential in diverse markets. The findings highlight that effective strategic planning, complemented by continuous evaluation, is crucial for long-term success in a competitive global environment.*

Keywords— strategic planning, premium consumer brands, international markets, business development

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic business environment, successful positioning and competitiveness are essential for developing premium international consumer brands with high added value. Strategic planning is crucial for achieving organizational goals and ensuring long-term business sustainability.

The object of this study is premium international consumer brands with high added value. The subject focuses on modern strategic planning methods, emphasizing key stages, processes, and success factors in brand management. The goal is to analyze and present effective strategic planning approaches that support premium brand development. The study addresses how to craft a successful strategy, determine strategic positioning, gain business insights, and set measurable goals.

To achieve this, the research tasks include:

- Analyzing the theoretical aspects of strategic planning for international brands,
- Examining the key stages of planning for high-value brands,
- Evaluating models for strategic plan revisions and business performance measurement.

The findings provide valuable insights for international organizations, offering recommendations for optimizing business strategies, managing processes effectively, and maximizing brand potential across various markets.

2. STAGES IN STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PREMIUM INTERNATIONAL CONSUMER BRANDS WITH HIGH ADDED VALUE

2.1 Strategic Positioning

Strategic positioning involves a deep understanding of a brand's business performance, competitive landscape, and external environment, including key market dynamics. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is an essential tool in this process (Smith, R. D., 2017). However, the strategic planning process must remain dynamic and adaptable. A full SWOT analysis is not necessary every year; instead, organizations should conduct periodic high-level reviews to reflect significant market shifts (David, F. & David, F., 2021).

Environmental Analysis and Business Insights

The first step in the planning process is identifying strategic challenges and the most promising growth opportunities. An effective environmental analysis goes beyond merely understanding market trends and should uncover actionable insights about consumer behavior, competitive strategies, market developments, emerging trends, distribution channel dynamics, and other external factors that influence business performance.

2.2 The Importance of Business Insights and Strategic Knowledge

Data collection is fundamental to strategic planning, but raw data alone has little value unless translated into actionable insights (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Organizations must develop the capability to convert data into meaningful business intelligence. The process consists of four levels:

1. Data – Raw or structured data with no analysis (Mason & Patil, *Data-Driven*, 2018). Example: The percentage of men aged 30–40 in France who purchased a new French car in a given year.

2. Information – Processed data revealing behavioral patterns (MacKay, 2003). It identifies such patterns based on multiple data points.

3. Business Insight – Contextualized data explaining consumer motivations (Malhotra & Dash, 2017). For example, in the case of car purchases, an insight may show that men in Spain aged 30–40 are moving from seeking "modern and innovative" cars towards "appreciating and supporting local brands" in the automotive category.

4. Strategic Knowledge – Validated insights leading to long-term decision-making (David, 2021). Example: Recognizing that Volkswagen key strength lies in being perceived as an authentic German car brand, and leveraging this perception in marketing, innovation, PR, and customer communication to drive business growth.

As data progresses toward strategic knowledge, the volume of raw data decreases, as millions of records are distilled into actionable recommendations. Achieving this level of insight requires historical analysis of past successes and failures and a deep understanding of consumer behavior, brand identity, and the organization's business strategy.

2.3 Comprehensive Environmental Analysis

An in-depth environmental analysis should assess multiple aspects, systematically structured through a SWOT analysis (David & David, 2021). The following key areas should be examined:

- Consumer Review – Understanding shifts in brand loyalty and emerging consumer trends:
  - Are consumers switching to, or away from the brand? If so, why?
  - Are consumers shifting between product categories? What are the underlying reasons?
  - What are the prevailing consumer trends, and how do they impact brand performance?
- Buyer Review – Assesses the brand's market performance from a buyer's perspective:
  - Are buyers shifting toward or away from the brand?
  - Are buyers transitioning between product categories?
  - What market trends influence buyer behavior and overall business performance?
- Category and Market Review – Examing industry trends, sales evolution, and competitive dynamics:
  - Is the category experiencing growth, or decline? What factors contribute to these changes?
  - Which brands are gaining, or losing market share? What factors contribute to these changes?
  - What are the emerging retail and distribution trends, and how do they impact sales performance?
- Financial Performance Review – Analyzes the brand's financial health and profitability:
  - Has the brand achieved its financial targets? If not, what are the key reasons?
  - What are the primary drivers and barriers affecting future financial growth?
- Brand Growth Framework Review – Evaluating the brand's current positioning within an organizational growth model (Kotler & Keller, 2016):
  - Mental Availability – How effectively does the brand engage with consumers? Does it maintain strong recall, relevance, and distinctiveness?
  - Physical Availability – Does the brand have adequate market presence, distribution coverage, and an optimized pricing strategy?
  - Summarizing these insights into a one-page dashboard helps set business goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), ensuring strategic alignment for future planning.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis represents the first outcome of an environmental assessment, helping to define a brand's strategic position by identifying internal and external factors that impact performance:

- Internal Factors:
  - Strengths – Competitive advantages that contribute to business success.
  - Weaknesses – Internal limitations that hinder performance.
- External Factors:
  - Opportunities – External trends or conditions that can accelerate brand growth.
  - Threats – Market challenges that may obstruct the achievement of business goals.

Since conducting a full-scale environmental analysis can be resource-intensive, several methods can help streamline the process:

- Align recommendations with SWOT insights – Every strategic recommendation should correspond to a SWOT factor. For instance, can a strength be leveraged, a weakness minimized, an opportunity seized, or a threat mitigated?
- Data Deep-Dive Workshops – Organizing cross-functional workshops with market research agencies can help identify key growth drivers and obstacles. These findings can be consolidated into the SWOT analysis.
- Automated Reporting – Partnering with data agencies to develop automated reports that provide real-time updates on environmental conditions.
- Focused Yearly Analysis – If no significant environmental changes occur, a lighter review may be sufficient, ensuring continuity in planning without adding unnecessary complexity.

By structuring the brand planning process around strategic positioning, insightful data interpretation, and a comprehensive SWOT analysis, international premium brands can enhance their market relevance, optimize their growth strategies, and strengthen their competitive positioning over time.

2.4 Setting Objectives for the Individual Business Unit - Brand

The process of setting objectives involves defining vision, overarching goals, and sub-goals to establish a clear roadmap for business unit growth. For internationally represented brands, strategic planning must follow a cascading approach: aligning corporate and global objectives with regional, market, and brand-specific strategies. This sequential formulation ensures that the organization is collectively moving toward achieving the desired outcomes. It is essential for goals and tasks at the business unit level to be interconnected and time-bound (McDonald & Wilson).

For most brands, an effective approach is to set broad three- to five-year business objectives, typically including:

- Net Sales Revenue targets
- Brand Profitability Goals, as the fundamental purpose of business operations is to generate value rather than merely increasing volume.

Under these overarching objectives, additional annual targets may include: expanding distribution, increasing brand awareness, acquiring new consumers, and driving 12-month consumption growth.

Key Elements in Setting Annual Business Growth Goals

A comprehensive business environment analysis along with the identification of key elements within the brand growth framework, plays a crucial role in setting annual targets. These elements typically include: Market penetration, Brand awareness, Consumer product experience, Meaningful differentiation, Distribution and visibility. By setting a clear vision, specific goals, and actionable tasks, companies can align strategic plans with long-term growth objectives. Once the organization defines the desired brand trajectory, the next step is determining how to achieve it. The subsequent sections of the business unit plan outline strategies and initiatives that directly support these objectives.

Strategy: Defining the Path to Business Unit Success

The strategy outlines how business unit plans will support the organization's ambitions, overarching goals, and specific objectives. It serves as the guiding principle that defines what the business unit will do and will not do to achieve its objectives. A well-crafted strategy should be comprehensive yet focused, guiding teams toward the three to four most critical areas that will drive business growth (David & David, 2021). A strong strategy achieves business objectives with limited resources, while a great strategy inspires teams, exceeds expectations, and lays the groundwork for long-term growth and sustained performance.

The Need for Unique Strategies per Business Unit

Strategies should not be copied and pasted across brands, as each business unit has a distinct strategic position and requires a customized approach for effective growth. Identifying which aspects of strategic positioning are most critical for driving brand growth is at the heart of strategy formulation. Each business unit faces unique challenges, which vary significantly from others. To define the right strategy, organizations must carefully analyze their SWOT findings, identifying key growth drivers and obstacles to ensure that efforts are directed toward the most impactful areas. Many companies use SWOT summaries to highlight key strategic issues and opportunities, serving as the foundation for their strategy development.

Examples of Business Growth Strategies

Depending on the business unit's strategic position, strategies may vary significantly. Some potential strategies include:

- Reversing margin erosion trends in specific sales channels
- Revitalizing brand growth and strengthening market relevance
- Enhancing presence and accessibility through new retail formats
- Leveraging brand distinctiveness through in-store activations
- Expanding the consumer base via emerging channels
- Increasing market penetration through new product variations or packaging formats
- Developing more accessible formats for existing and new markets
- Strengthening the iconic nature of the brand to appeal to younger generations
- Enhancing distributor focus and engagement
- Defending market leadership and securing top shelf positioning in key retail channels
- Prioritizing key retailers to drive distribution of core portfolio products

The key to a successful strategy is selecting the most appropriate growth-driving approach for each unique business unit (Cohen, *Business Planning*, 2012). A well-structured strategy depends on the specific challenges faced by the brand. For example: A strategy focused on distribution and visibility may not succeed if profit erosion is caused by unfavorable trading terms with key accounts. Similarly, a growth strategy centered on new product may fail if core product's volume, profitability, and market significance are declining. Given time and resource constraints, a crucial aspect of strategic decision-making is prioritizing focus - determining what to exclude and directing energy and investment toward the areas with the greatest impact (Parnell, 2017).

Roadmap Development: Translating Strategy into Execution

Once business unit strategies are defined, initiatives (sometimes referred to as tactics) serve as practical actions that implement strategy in real-world settings. This stage becomes easier as the strategic focus areas have already been established.

Key characteristics of initiatives:

- Specific and detailed – Initiatives translate strategy into concrete actions..
- Time-bound – Each initiative has a clear start and end date.
- Geographically relevant – Specifies where and how the initiative will be implemented.
- Cost-associated – Execution requires a predefined budget allocation.
- Real-Time Plan Validation - Budget Allocation Guidelines

Organizations typically define budget allocation frameworks for brand initiatives. Business plans must be reviewed to ensure financial resources are aligned with growth objectives. At a minimum, for example, media investments should correspond proportionally to the brand's growth targets.

Communicating and Validating the Plan

Once a draft plan is created, it should be shared with relevant teams for review, alignment, refinement, and finalization. The final plan should then be communicated to stakeholders and execution teams, with the goal of inspiring action and commitment. While multiple planning meetings take place within an organization, it is crucial to involve key teams in the decision-making process to incorporate diverse perspectives and gain broad support. This does not require large-scale meetings with 50+ participants to define strategies and initiatives. Instead, selecting representatives from various teams to contribute to critical planning sessions is a more effective approach..

Therefore, at this stage, the planning process focuses on:

- Finalizing the draft plan with key stakeholders and team members.
- Effectively communicating the plan to motivate engagement and execution.

Activation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

A business plan has no value unless it is properly executed. Many strategies fail due to poor implementation (Bossidy & Charan, 2002). The activation phase brings the strategic plan to life, commercializing it and driving business growth. This requires meticulous attention to detail and continuous monitoring to optimize business outcomes.

Key Practices for Activation and Monitoring

- Aligning initiatives and activations with a master calendar – Ensuring activities complement each other with built-in checkpoints.
- Defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – "What gets measured gets achieved" (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities – Clearly assigning tasks across teams, agencies, and distributors.
- Identifying potential challenges early – Addressing possible roadblocks in advance.
- Managing expectations – Defining success parameters at different project phases.

At the conclusion of each initiative, a comprehensive evaluation is essential. In some cases, completion can be more valuable than perfection (Anon). The evaluation process should involve multiple teams to assess return on investment, both short-term and long-term, and determine the initiative's overall effectiveness.

In an international business context, different teams may employ varying methodologies for initiative evaluation. Some of the most common approaches include:

- Developing a standardized evaluation framework – Establishing a consistent assessment methodology helps compare initiatives across markets and ensure objective analysis.
- Fostering a culture of evaluation – Encouraging engagement by creating a centralized repository for evaluations improves accessibility and collaboration.
- Conducting regular initiative review meetings – Once an evaluation framework is agreed upon, key teams should participate in scheduled review sessions to discuss findings and establish future recommendations.
- Leveraging external agency data – Many activations are executed in partnership with agencies. Sharing KPIs and evaluation criteria before the program launch ensures that agencies provide relevant post-implementation data for analysis.

By implementing these structured evaluation methods, organizations can refine their strategic approach, optimize future activations, and drive sustainable growth through data-driven decision-making.

3. METHODS FOR PLAN REVISION AND MEASURING BUSINESS ACTIVITY EFFECTIVENESS

3.1 Plan Review

Like any other organizational process, the effort invested in strategic planning must justify its potential return. The same principle applies to developing effective strategic growth plans. Throughout the planning cycle, it is essential to carefully evaluate the time and resources spent on developing a plan against the expected results it aims to achieve.

For this reason, a complete revision of a business unit's strategic plan is rarely conducted annually. For most brands, a full revision takes at least three years to allow for a comprehensive strategy reassessment. Long-term success cannot be achieved without balancing short-term performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2000). Meanwhile, real-time performance monitoring against the strategic plan are recommended to identify areas requiring immediate optimization.

To determine which aspects of the plan require focus and revisions, the following key questions can be helpful:

- Has the brand undergone a full strategy revision recently?
    - If yes, major changes in the business environment are unlikely to require a strategic repositioning of the brand. Only the necessary sections of the plan should be revised.
    - If no, and if the brand has not undergone a strategy revision for three or more years, a full review is recommended.
- Has the brand missed its objectives?
    - If yes, it is essential to analyze where and why goals were not met. Were the strategies, activations, or SWOT analysis misaligned?
    - If no, and if the brand is performing in line with the plan and there are no external environmental changes, there may be little need for plan modifications.
- Is the business unit critical to the organization's overall success?
    - If yes, even if performance is aligned with objectives, real-time monitoring of activations, strategies, and the SWOT framework should be prioritized.
    - If no, there is little need for major revisions, and focus should be directed toward areas with greater potential for improvement.

3.2 Business Activity Performance Measurement

Measuring and evaluating business activities is a critical component of an organization's learning process. It enables continuous improvement in both planning and activation quality (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Allocating time upfront to establish performance measurement frameworks is essential for identifying what works, what does not, and how future activities should be assessed.

The ability to extract insights from past activities and apply them to future initiatives is a fundamental business discipline. This approach facilitates the replication of successful strategies and allows for the rapid transfer of best practices across markets.

A well-structured business activity measurement framework ensures a flexible, streamlined and transparent evaluation process while supporting local markets in their execution efforts. Key components include:

- Defining key business activity indicators and how they should be applied.
- Establishing clear measurement methodologies.
- Codifying best practices into the evaluation toolkit.

It is important to note that business activity measurement differs from pre-market testing. When refining a strategy or activation before implementation, different tools should be used, such as: market opportunity assessments, advertising pre-tests, promotional mechanics validation.

Thus, business activity measurement is only applied after an initiative has been executed, focusing on evaluating performance and its market impact. This process helps in documenting and codifying best practices, such as: Tracking the effectiveness of newly launched campaigns, Assessing the impact of new merchandising programs.

3.3 Steps for Measuring Business Activities

The business activity measurement process follows an iterative cycle, ensuring continuous improvement. The three key steps include:

1. Defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Critical Success Factors (CSFs)
2. Measuring Business Activity Execution
3. Evaluating Activity Performance

Business activity measurement should be an ongoing and adaptive process, meaning that all initiatives undertaken by the business unit should be assessed against key performance factors. Based on these evaluations, initiatives should either be refined, repeated, scaled, or discontinued in future planning cycles (Parmenter, 2010).

Once an activity is deemed a best practice, it should be codified, documented with all relevant insights and shared organization-wide to drive consistent organizational learning and optimization.

Measuring Business Activities: What and How to Measure

1. Defining Key Performance Factors and Critical Success Factors

The first step in business activity measurement is establishing KPIs and CSFs at the brand or business unit level. These objectives must align with the desired changes the company aims to achieve, whether in consumer behavior, buyer engagement, or product performance. Examples of potential outcomes include increased brand awareness, acquisition of new light users, or expanded product distribution.

The KPI framework quantifies the anticipated change based on the size and impact of the activity (Parmenter, 2010). For instance, if an initiative is designed to attract new light users, the KPI would be the percentage or absolute number of new users acquired within a set timeframe. It is essential to consider the brand's current stage of development, as shifting KPIs from low to moderate levels is generally easier than transitioning from moderate to high levels, especially for brands approaching market saturation.

Most importantly, KPIs measure the desired outcomes, not the actions taken—they reflect results rather than inputs. Inputs, in contrast, are defined as Critical Success Factors (CSFs), representing the specific actions required to achieve a desired result. CSFs should be determined during the brand planning process.

For example, in a campaign targeting new light users, CSFs may include:

- Expanding product distribution
- Executing price and promotional strategies
- Running an effective advertising campaign
- Implementing product sampling initiatives for target consumers

2. Measuring Business Activities and Initiatives

Where possible, measurement should occur before, during, and after an initiative (Kanji & Asher, 2006). The goal is to validate that CSFs have been properly activated, as only then can activities be evaluated against KPIs to determine if they have driven meaningful change. For ongoing initiatives, such as annual campaigns, measuring performance during execution allows for corrective actions if necessary. To facilitate this, interim performance checkpoints should be established throughout the activity timeline.

For international brands, success is typically measured across two key areas:

- Business and Brand Performance Metrics
- Return On Investment (ROI) and Cost Efficiency

Tracking these metrics helps identify activities that can be classified as best practices and scaled across international markets.

Setting SMART Goals for Business Initiatives

To ensure effective goal setting, objectives should adhere to the SMART criteria, which help drive practical execution and measurable impact. A well-defined goal should be:

- Aligned – Supports the organization's overarching strategy
- Specific – Clearly defined, outlining what constitutes success or failure
- Measurable – Objectively assessed using quantifiable data
- Results-Oriented – Focused on outcomes rather than processes
- Realistic – Challenging yet achievable within the current environment and resources
- Time-Bound – Includes a clear start and end period

3. Evaluating Business Activities

The evaluation process should always begin by assessing Critical Success Factors (CSFs). If CSFs were not executed correctly, evaluating the initiative's results becomes ineffective — unless the goal is to understand failure points for future corrective actions. Activities with misaligned CSFs should be excluded from further evaluation (Neely, Adams & Kennerley, 2002).

The evaluation process consists of three key steps:

- Assessing Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Results
- Understanding the Drivers Behind Success or Failure
- Recommending Improvements for Future Initiatives

Global organizations with strong marketing expertise should position themselves as self-learning entities, leveraging opportunities to capture and disseminate best practices from successful initiatives. Establishing a structured framework for best practices enables organizations to operate with greater flexibility, simplicity, and transparency across markets.

The outlined business activity evaluation method is a powerful yet straightforward tool that enables companies to efficiently assess their marketing and business initiatives. It can be applied at any level of brand strategy execution. By consistently using this methodology, international organizations can position themselves among the world's highest-performing brands.

4. CONCLUSION

Developing successful strategies and growth plans for premium international brands is a challenge for any business seeking to establish a strong presence in the global market. To achieve long-term success, a brand's strategy must be distinctive, meaningful, contextually relevant, and clearly define the scope of actions the business unit will pursue - and avoid.

This study has examined modern strategic planning approaches for the development of high-value consumer brands. The research aimed to explore the key stages of the strategic planning process that international organizations can apply to successfully develop and manage their brands. The primary objective was to strengthen long-term business growth and maximize opportunities for premium brand success across multiple markets.

The analysis in this paper covered the theoretical aspects of strategic planning processes for international brands, including an understanding of the business environment. Additionally, the study explored the key planning stages for high-value brands, including strategic positioning, the significance of business insights and strategic knowledge, comprehensive environmental analysis, and objective-setting for individual business units. These elements form a fundamental part of achieving the broader objectives outlined in the dissertation research.

In conclusion, strategic planning - along with periodic plan revision - is essential for success in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment. Measuring business activity effectiveness plays a critical role in assessing and improving outcomes. By systematically implementing modern strategic planning approaches and methodologies, organizations can develop effective brand growth strategies, resulting in sustainable profitability and market expansion over time.

The findings of this study will benefit business development professionals and marketing strategists seeking to improve brand performance and high-value business operations in the global market. Through a structured and data-driven approach, companies can optimize strategic planning, brand positioning, and business execution, ensuring long-term success for premium international consumer brands.

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