

Ergo-Iconical Value Positioning Strategy to Improve Pharmaceutical Company Performance

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Apr 01, 2024

Revised Apr 12, 2024

Accepted Apr 25, 2024

Keywords:

Market Potential

Supply Chain

Competitive Advantage

Knowledge Organisation

Market Leader

ABSTRACT

The pharmaceutical distribution industry in Indonesia is currently growing rapidly with the increasing number of Large Pharmaceutical Companies (PBF), both state-owned companies, private companies and foreign companies that acquire private companies. The number of large pharmaceutical companies in Indonesia according to BPOM data in 2018 is 2,232 PBFs. This makes competition and competition tighter to get distribution appointments from drug principals or manufacturers and to become distribution companies that become market leaders. Another impetus is the increasingly tight distribution margin pressure caused by the government's lower pricing for BPJS products so that drug principals or manufacturers reduce distribution fees to distributors and there is competition for lower distribution fees. Some of these factors make large pharmaceutical companies must be able to manage company operations properly and have a competitive advantage in order to survive and become the distributor of choice for principals and customers. Currently, there are quite a number of large pharmaceutical companies that cannot withstand the pressure of the distribution fee margin and have resulted in the pharmaceutical company going out of business.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, there are many pharmaceutical distribution companies and they compete for a larger market share than other companies (Kusuma, 2015). During the covid-19 period, many companies experienced setbacks, unable to compete with similar companies. This is allegedly not having a competitive advantage, the effect is that the company cannot develop and even cannot operate anymore (Andiyanto et al., 2017; Damarwulan et al., 2018). This condition also occurs in pharmaceutical distribution companies, competition for the amount of distribution fee margins is getting tighter, the company's operating costs are getting bigger and not all pharmaceutical companies have reliable IT systems so that they are less effective and efficient (Siswanti et al., 2020). According to (Madhani, n.d.; Wadud, 2018) explains that in every industry there will be competition and a generic strategy is needed, namely how to profit above competitors and a reliable leadership strategy is needed, have a distinct advantage and focus on ensuring growth.

According to Hooley et al., (2020) the company's choice of target market and the differentiated value proposition offered based on the needs of the target. According to (Kotler et al., 2021) positional

strategy is an action that is designed to offer value and corporate image in order to get a different place in the minds of target markets. so that it has differentiation that adds value to customers. Research results related to previous positional strategies are as follows

Table.1. Previous research on positional strategy

Researcher	Research findings
Iyer et al., (2019)	Focussed and differentiated positional strategies significantly increase brand equity, customer loyalty and market share. Effective positional strategies were also found to reduce the price elasticity of demand.
Mohsen et al., (2020)	A strong market orientation, both responsive and proactive, contributes positively to the development of positional strategies that are sharper and resonant with target customers. Market orientation also helps adapt strategies as the dynamics of consumer preferences change.
Chen & Lamberti, (2021)	Shows that positional strategies that emphasise exclusivity, status and prestige are more effective than those that focus on product functionality. However, aligning strategies with local cultural values is also important for brand resonance.
Mostafa & Arnaout, (2022)	Optimal positional strategies for green products in the Egyptian market. Results show that positional strategies based on functional attributes (such as energy saving, recyclability) and emotional benefits (contribution to earth sustainability) are the most effective. Meanwhile, premium price-based positioning has less of a positive impact.
Yen et al., (2022)	Brand positioning that emphasises ethical practices, such as fair trade and environmentally friendly production, can increase brand preference and willingness to pay a price premium, particularly among socially and environmentally conscious consumers.
Ozcan et al., (2023)	A company's ability to quickly adjust its positioning in line with technology trends, shifting digital consumer behaviour, and fierce competition is key to success.
Nguyen & Tran, (2023)	Positioning that focuses on specific benefits, natural ingredients, and healthy lifestyle support positively influences brand perception and purchase intention. The study also highlights the importance of endorsements from health experts in strengthening positional credibility.

Handayani et al., (2017) The strategy implemented by the pharmaceutical company is in accordance with the opinion explaining that in order for a company to develop rapidly, the company must be able to innovate the products it markets, have a specific competitive advantage and also have a strategy in effective and efficient marketing. The research gap from this research is that there is research mentioning that positional strategy will be effective if it focuses on differentiation, segment focus, and clarity of value proposition (Aaker & Shansby, 1982) . The research was continued by (Urde & Koch, 2014) who mentioned that if this is done, it allows the company to achieve the desired position in the market. Other research states that the implementation must be appropriate and in line with the company's capabilities to produce optimal performance (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010).

According to (Nguyen & Tran, 2023) positioning that focuses on specific benefits, natural ingredients and healthy lifestyle support will positively impact brand perception and purchase intention. It is also important to focus attention when endorsements are related to health experts in strengthening positional credibility. The importance of repositioning based on new insights, additional

indications, or enhanced formulations. The research also highlights the key role of proper segmentation and targeting in revitalising existing drug brands. According to (Patel & Shah, 2023) This research offers to solve research problems with the Ergo-Iconical Value Positioning Strategy approach. This strategy is expected to increase sales value. The pharmaceutical company's strategy is also in accordance with the opinion (Riswandi, 2020). explaining, that with knowledge management, the company identifies and increases the knowledge owned by the company including increasing the knowledge of each individual in the company and utilising it to improve performance and produce various innovations and creativity. With knowledge management, each individual can better understand the job function, job description and KPI (Key Performance Indicator) that must be carried out and fulfilled (Rismawati & Mattalata, 2018).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Nurhayati & Andriyansah, (2024) The method used by the author in this research is a qualitative method, data obtained by means of interviews, observation and documentation. The author conducted direct research at PT Anugrah Argon Medica, Bekasi branch, which is located at Jl. Prof Muh. Yamin 138, Duren Jaya village, East Bekasi. Bekasi city.

Data sources were obtained by interviewing directly to employees of PT Anugrah Argon Medica Bekasi branch, namely Mr Lukman Nulhakin as head of the logistics section, Mr Rismiyadi as sales supervisor and Mrs Dian Andriyani as Quality Supervisor, interviews were conducted from July 2022 to September 2022.

Researchers made direct observations from each department, including the sales department, logistics department and finance department. The observed process starts from the process of product procurement from the main warehouse, the process of receiving goods, the storage process, the process of receiving orders from relations, the process of product release, market exploration activities, Customer relationship management activities, the billing process, the knowledge organisation process and the application of values and corporate culture.

Other data was obtained from new employee induction material documents containing company introduction material, corporate culture and PT Anugrah Argon Medica's competitive advantage material. The author also takes additional expert opinions, literature reviews and other sources to support the research conducted (Andriyansah, Ginting, et al., 2024).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Pudjiarti et al., (2023) The pharmaceutical industry is one of the industries that has a very important role for the community and the state, namely managing the availability of drugs and medical devices to ensure the implementation of health services for the community. The public needs the availability of quality drugs, ease of obtaining health services, low costs for obtaining health facilities and supervision from regulators, namely the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM) and the health office to ensure that pharmaceutical products in circulation comply with the requirements for making drugs or Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and also Good Drug Distribution Practices (GDDP).

Andriyansah & Rulinawaty, (2023) During the Covid 19 pandemic which occurred starting in 2019 and its peak in 2020 to 2021, namely the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants which resulted in many deaths, the pharmaceutical industry played a role in obtaining medicinal products for covid 19 treatment. Pharmaceutical companies in Indonesia compete with domestic companies and pharmaceutical companies from other countries to obtain products related to Covid 19.

Ningsih et al., (2022) Competition between large pharmaceutical companies (PBFs) to obtain drug principals or manufacturers is very tight and currently there is a tendency for competition in the price of distribution fees, namely offering small distribution fees to attract principals. Quite a lot of PBFs are unable to compete with these very low distribution fees and cannot cover operational costs so that eventually the PBF is closed and can no longer operate. In line with this opinion, (Wijaya & Simamora, 2022) explain that changes are very rapid starting from technological advances and every organisation uses technology to manage operations. With these conditions, every company must be able to improve both internal and external performance in order to compete with similar companies in its field.

Every pharmaceutical distribution company in order to develop rapidly must have a unique competitive advantage that cannot be imitated by other companies and be able to carry out effective and efficient operational management. To increase sales, pharmaceutical companies must also have a reliable marketing strategy that is included in strong market exploration, in line with this, (Simamora, 2020) explains that marketing can be divided into three, namely mass marketing, product variety marketing and targeted marketing. Meanwhile, to maintain customer loyalty, it is necessary to carry out programmes from CRM that make customers loyal.

Pharmaceutical companies carry out distribution directly to customers, both pharmacies, hospitals, laboratories, health offices, (Large pharmaceutical companies (PBF), large medical device companies (PBAK), clinics, Modern trade Independent (MTI), including local stores or supermarkets such as Tokma, Naga, National key Account (NKA) such as Alfamart, Alfamidi, Indomaret, Carefour with the aim of being more effective and being able to explore the potential to the maximum and so that relations can feel the superiority of these pharmaceutical companies in providing direct services to relations. This is in line with the opinion of (Simamora, 2020) that the distribution of products from producers to consumers can be done directly or through intermediaries and the choice of pharmaceutical companies studied makes direct sales to customers.

The pharmaceutical companies studied have different competitive advantages compared to other pharmaceutical companies and with these competitive advantages, they are able to compete and become one of the large pharmaceutical companies that are effective and efficient in operations. Anik, M. (2015) explains that an organisation will have an effective competitive advantage if it can carry out cost efficiency, ensure quality products, manage effective and efficient order delivery and be flexible in operations. And according to the data obtained from the Bekasi branch of a large pharmaceutical company from year to year, it experiences significant sales growth. The pharmaceutical company has a competitive advantage model that can be explained according to Figure 1 below.

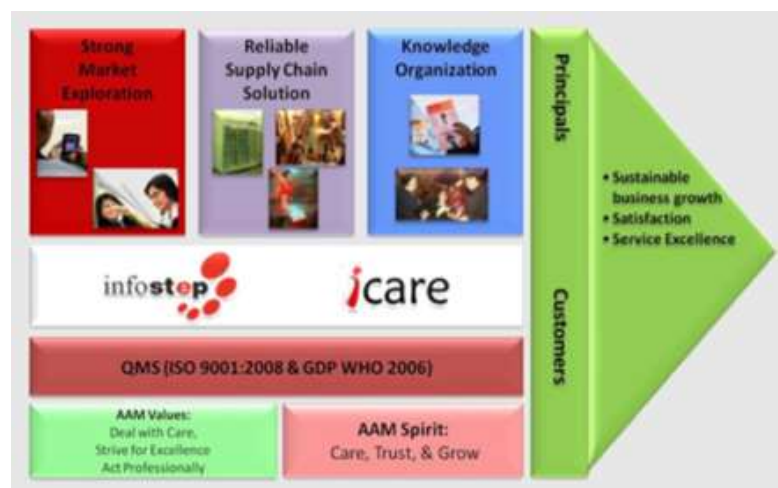


Figure 1. Competitive Advantage Model
Source: PT Anugrah Argon Medica, (2021)

The competitive advantages of pharmaceutical companies are divided into several categories according to Figure 1 above and can be explained as follows.

Excellence in exploring market potential

as a source of growth and utilise it to improve the company's performance through market know-how and networking capability. Having the most reliable and aggressive ability to explore market potential and grow the business of a product so that it becomes a differentiator in providing significant added value to principals and customers. Always strive to deliver more than what is expected, through

opening channels in areas that have not been mastered by principals and customers before. Some Market Exploration activities: Classification of relationships based on Chanel is done so that it will facilitate the cultivation and determination of strategies for each channel and also classification based on business. By doing this classification, it makes the work more focused and also the team that works on it can be classified as well. In line with the opinion of Bilson Simamora (2020), it is stated that a company must be able to identify strategies for growth, namely being able to choose one of three growth strategies, namely Corporate strategy, Business Strategy and Functional Strategy.

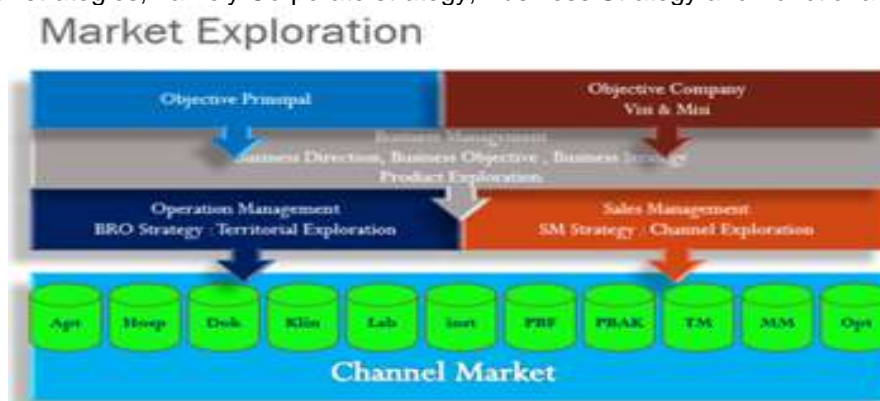


Figure 2. Market Exploration based on channel
Source: PT Anugrah Argon Medica, (2021)

The existence of a work programme to increase the purchase item of the relationship as a control tool for success in market exploration, each salesman has been determined by the target purchase item of the relationship that must be pursued in that month and weekly monitoring is carried out, if the purchase item of the relationship increases, sales will automatically increase, the increase in purchase items is obtained by ensuring that each relationship orders in that month and asking the relationship to add purchase items. In line with the strategy to increase purchase items, (Andriyansah, Fatimah, et al., 2024) explains that there are several kinds of strategies to increase the competitiveness of the organisation, one of which is a concentration strategy in a particular business or channel, a market expansion strategy by optimising every potential that exists including working on areas that have not been worked on, a product expansion strategy by ensuring increased product coverage and competitor product acquisition programs.



Figure 3. Relationship purchase items
Source: PT Anugrah Argon Medica, (2021)

Figure 3 explains that every pharmaceutical company salesman must increase the purchase items of the relationship by extensification or increasing the number of buying relationships and also by intensification, namely cross up selling or adding purchase items and quantity. The results of the author's observations of the programme to increase relationship purchase items are monitored daily

by the supervisor and discussed in breafing every morning and evening and can be proven by the increase and achievement of sales targets.



Figure 4, I-Scaps

Source: PT Anugrah Argon Medica, (2021)

Integrated discount submission from each branch to the principal using an online system, and the principal can approve or reject wherever they are. This can benefit the principals because not all pharmaceutical companies can provide this system. Another benefit is that every order from a relationship that requires a discount request can be fulfilled more quickly.

A superior pharmaceutical company is one that is IT-based and uses technology to be more effective and efficient, the IT system used by the pharmaceutical company studied is Oracle, one of its advantages is in the reporting system which functions to find out the development of sales on time and is integrated into all branches. With this system, principals get very significant benefits, namely in addition to knowing the sales recap on time, it can also be used as an evaluation material to determine strategies and action plans (Setiawan et al., 2019).

MultiChannel ordering system, (Mulatsih et al., 2017) argues that the implementation of information technology (IT) can increase the effectiveness of processes in the organisation, time efficiency because information can be accessed quickly and can be one of the competitive advantages. (Andriyansah et al., 2017) One form of service for customers from pharmaceutical companies, namely to facilitate orders and to increase service levels, convenience and several alternatives are given to send orders, namely: Order via telephone to CSO who is ready to serve customers. Order via salesman when the salesman visits the relationship or via telephone to the salesman, already divided by business and area. Fax and email. Orders via B2B are prioritised for Modern channels and private hospitals, relationships that can order via B2B are relationships that are internal to the relationship making POs using the system, the mechanism is that the relationship PO is uploaded to the pharmaceutical company's FTP and the pharmaceutical company system downloads automatically every 10 minutes and the relationship order is automatically entered in the pharmaceutical company's system. Order via an application that can be downloaded from Playstore, prioritised for pharmacies, labs, clinics, relationships just download the application and can place orders independently

Reliable Supply Chain Solution

Suharto, R. J. (2013) explains that one form of competitive advantage is how to manage the supply chain effectively, with the integration of systems in the organisation starting from the manufacturing process, the distribution process to the relationship, the company's goal of having a competitive advantage will be realised. Pharmaceutical companies provide reliable distribution solutions through responsive, effective, efficient and sophisticated supply chain management. Product procurement, product storage and product distribution are managed with an Oracle-based system that is integrated

from the main warehouse to each branch so as to minimise the risk of loss and improve performance in distributing to relationships.

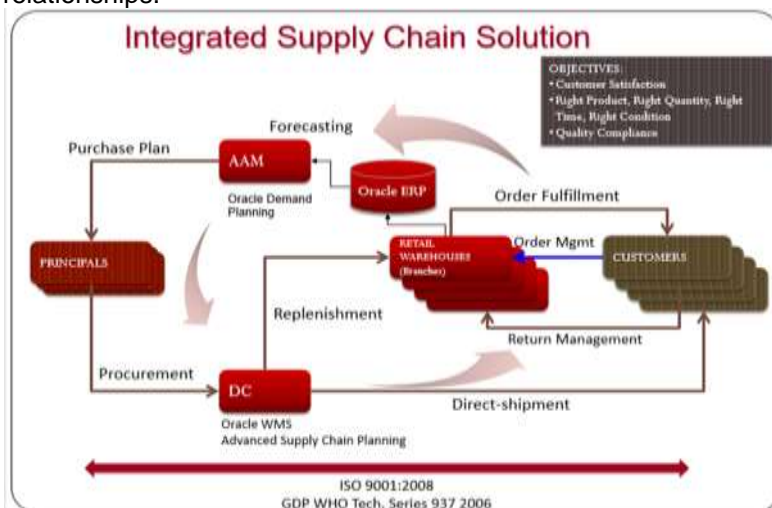


Figure 5. Integrated Supply Chain Solution
Source: PT Anugrah Argon Medica, (2021)

Knowledge Organization.

Andriyansah et al., (2019) The results of interviews and literature review found that Operational Activities, among others: Having management in managing knowledge in the organisation so that the organisation works based on a qualified knowledge base to support principal and customer satisfaction. Having a culture of learning and sharing knowledge and experience, both within the organisation and with business partners for the purpose of mutual progress. The knowledge management program carried out by the pharmaceutical company is in line with the opinion of Kusuma, F. S. D. (2013), which explains that with knowledge management, organisations or companies can identify the knowledge they have and use it to improve performance and produce various innovations that become one of the company's competitive advantages.

Spirit and Values of corporate culture

Sumarni et al., (2022) In addition to the three strategies described above, pharmaceutical companies also strongly emphasise the importance of understanding and applying the spirit and culture of the company. The embedded corporate culture and values will be shown, through how employees work and by what means the Company achieves its goals, Culture can build a company's REPUTATION.

The strategies applied by the pharmaceutical companies described above are to have competitiveness and advantages that are unique and cannot be imitated by competitors, the strategies applied by pharmaceutical companies are in line with the opinion of (Andriyansah et al., 2020) which says that the strategies commonly applied to deal with competitors are Cost leadership, Differentiation, Focus, Innovation, Alliance, and Growth strategies and with the competitive advantages described in detail above if applied by other pharmaceutical companies, it will be able to provide enormous benefits to grow, develop and become one of the market leaders. (Fandika et al., 2024)

4. CONCLUSION

In every industry, including pharmaceutical distribution, there must be competition between every company in the industry. Some companies can take market share well and survive, even become market leaders, but some companies have difficulty competing and in the worst conditions the company goes out of business. Referring to the results of the author's research, in order for a pharmaceutical distribution company to develop, take a good market share and become a market leader, it does not only compete in providing low distribution fees but requires a unique competitive advantage that cannot be imitated by other companies. These competitive advantages include:

Having a unique strategy to assist principals in market exploration, namely the classification of relationships based on channels, the ease of relationships to order using applications and technology, DIMAS easy and fast discount submission system, monitoring of relationship purchases with the IBR programme, Call Plan management, recovery minus growth programme and add on acquisition programme. Provide reliable distribution solutions through responsive, effective, efficient and sophisticated supply chain management. Knowledge Organization, Always be creative and innovative and carry out continuous development by optimising knowledge as the basis for operational implementation that provides added value benefits for its business partners. With the above strategies, pharmaceutical companies can grow well and become one of the market leaders in pharmaceutical distribution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Terbuka for giving me the opportunity to explore marketing science and thank the company PT Anugrah Argon Medica where I work for giving me the opportunity for further study and research.

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