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POSITIONING STRATEGY IN THE FUNCTION OF IMPROVING THE MARKET POSITION OF BREND: WINE ROADS OF SERBIA

Positioning is the process of creating a perception in consumer awareness of the character of the company and its products in relation to its competitors (Clow & Baack, 2005, p. 48). Keller & Lehmann (2006), under the brand's positioning, implies «the formation of key associations about brand in consumers'minds that differentiate and

establish competitive superiority». If the position of a particular brand in consumer consciousness depends of the brands of competition, it follows that consumers who know several brands from the same product category automatically compare and rank brands according to the differences they perceive among them.

Positioning is based on variables such as product quality, prices, distribution channels, image etc. The goal of positioning is to find the «niche» in the consumer's mind that a particular brand can win. How consumers will positioning a specific brand in relation to the brand of competition is essentially dependent on marketing communications. The challenge is to achieve the desired brand position that will be supported by the real benefits of the product/service, which marketing communications will manage to deliver to consumers.

An effective positioning strategy can be based on different brand benefits, whereby one is best highlighted, thereby avoiding customer confusion.

The *attribute* is a characteristic of a product that separates it from other products. When we think on a brand of some product, first we think of certain attributes of that product. Using *competition* for positioning in consumer mind is another common strategy when one brand is used to show the position of the other. Positioning by *use or application* includes an unforgettable set of benefits from the product. Consumers do not buy properties, they buy benefits. It is necessary to convert features into functional and emotional benefits.

Companies in according with the extreme market price range, often use the model *price-quality* relationship. At the top of the price list are those that emphasize high quality, while at the bottom, those that emphasize low prices. A brand can also be a sign of a particular *culture (nation)*. Identifying a product with a cultural (national) symbol is difficult to achieve, but it can represent a strong competitive advantage for the company. The positioning strategy can be realized in two ways. The company uses national (cultural) symbols in order to identify with a particular culture. Chevrolet uses this type of positioning strategy. It is advertised in public as a distinguished representative of American culture. Apple also benefits from linking to key values of American

culture: independence, freedom, creativity, innovation, quality, and so on. However, it is possible that the nation identifies itself with the corporate symbol and in this way perceive and identify in public with the company's performance. The national (cultural) identity of Germany is recognized worldwide through corporate brands of Mercedes or BMW. Key values of national identity are knowledge, quality, efficiency and innovation (Jaworski & Fosber, 2003). The national identity is determined by the performance of companies that feature top quality, efficiency and precision.

Branding is a long-lasting process, subject of changes and improvements in continuity. An international environment is a challenge in which positioning efficiency determines the brand's success. Often, the positioning strategy used in one country will not has results in the other. Marketing specialists carefully analyze the market and afterwards formulate a positioning strategy.

An example of good practice in positioning agro-food products in Serbia and branding wine destinations is «Wine Roads of Serbia».

Modern tourists look for authenticity and a unique experience while visiting a certain tourist destination. Visits of destinations where grapes are grown and wine produced, in addition to the consumption of wine, visitors can learn about the cultural and historical heritage of a given area, meet people with similar preferences and interests and participate in additional activities related to wine tourism. (Sekulić, et al. 2016).

The districts characteristic for the upbringing of grapevine and wine production, record significant income from numerous tourists who, at the time of grape picking, come to attend many wine festivals. The income is acquired both regarding the sale, i.e. the wine consumption, as well as regarding the expenses that tourists have during their stay at a given destination. The production of many wine brands for which there are nature resources available and wine cellars, too, may attract a great number of tourists, both the domestic and the foreign ones. (Vukotić, Cvijanović & Mihailović, 2015).

Wine tourism is an important channel for attracting tourists and developing rural areas. This type of tourism is located outside city cen-

ters, so it has a positive effect on the economic development of rural areas which are involved in the production of wine. Thus, in these areas increases employment of local population, investments grow, wineries operate with profits, and rises income from sale of other products and services related to wine tourism (Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009). It is therefore necessary to develop a commercial strategy for wine tourism, oriented towards the market, including wineries, cultural institutions, as well as the population that depends on the wine industry, and all those entities and subjects that can contribute to the creation of supply in accordance with the wishes and expectations of potential tourists (Getz, 2000).

In 2011, the Ministry of Economy has initiated a project that has defined nine wine roads of Serbia: Palić – known for wines from sand, Fruška gora – the authentic wine of this region – bermet, Vršac, Šumadija – Oplenac wine road, where is located the winery of king Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, Smederevo and Belgrade, Negotin – known for «Rajačke pivnice» complex of wine cellars of the eighteenth century build of stone, Župa, Niš and Kragujevac, Kosovo and Metohija.

The objectives of the project «Wine Roads of Serbia» are defined in several points:

- Popularization of winery and winegrowers through wine tourism in Serbia,
- Popularization of authentic wine regions in Serbia through the wine route of Serbia,
- Encouraging commercial contacts,
- Involvement of the private and public sector in the overall promotion and placement products and services of the Wine Routes of Serbia,
- Inclusion of the private and public sector in the general promotion and placement of wine tourism in Serbia.

The goal was the mapping, positioning and branding of small wineries, cellars and wine producers in these destinations, in order to create a unified register. In addition, on these roads is built a tourist traffic signalling for marking these wine regions.

In Serbia there are about 700 types of wines, which are divided according to color: white, rose and red. Wines can be: top quality with

geographical origin, quality with geographical origin, table with geographical origin and table wine.

The most common varieties of grapes from which are produced red wines in Serbia are: Cabernet Sauvignon, Game Black, Burgundy Black, Merlot, Pino Nuar, Vranac and Prokupac. White wines are produced from: Italian Riesling, Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Muscat Krokan (unique in the world), Tamjanika, Rhine Riesling, Smederevka etc.

A large number of events related to wine is organized in Serbia. These events are an ideal opportunity to attract tourists and develop wine tourism. «Smederevo Autumn» is the largest and oldest event of this kind in the region. In Subotica there are organized «Vintage Days» to mark the completion of the work in the vineyards. Vintage days known as «Grape ball» have a long tradition in Vršac, where the tavern «At the two keys» held the first exhibition of wine in 1857. «Župska vintage» which is held in Aleksandrovac is known for its «Fountain of wine» which is located on the central city square in the famous «Wine Street». In Irig are held «Pudars days» which are named in the honor guard Pudar vineyards. In addition to these, other significant events are «Oplenac vintage» in Topola, «Karlovac vintage» in Karlovac, «The Day of the young wine» in Novi Sad, the «Festival of wine and brandy» in Belgrade.

In addition to the large wineries Serbia has a large number of small wineries: Radovanović, Mačkov Podrum, Kovačević, Aleksandrović, Zvonko Bogdan, Minić, Spasić and many others. Some of these wineries produce the best Serbian wines marked with a purple tag that is used for labeling high quality wines with controlled and guaranteed geographical origin and quality. Examples of such wines are: Sauvignon Blanc – wineries Zvonko Bogdan, then Chardonnay – Jović, Harizma and Trijumf – Aleksandrović, Chardonnay – Radovanović, Tamjanika – Spasić (Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, 2015).

The project «Wine Roads of Serbia» greatly helped to positioning Serbia, on the wine map of Europe, and made it a recognizable destination for wine tourism. Today small winerys produces wines that have become a recognizable brand on the domestic and international market.

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