



The Scientific-Theoretical Foundations of Competitive Marketing Strategy

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Abstract: The search for sustained competitive advantage in increasingly turbulent markets demands a robust scientific–theoretical grounding of marketing strategy. This study synthesizes classical and contemporary theoretical lenses—industrial-organization economics, the resource-based view, dynamic capabilities theory, and institutional perspectives—to clarify the conceptual scaffolding of competitive marketing strategy. Using a structured qualitative content analysis of canonical and emergent literature, the article identifies the convergent constructs that underlie strategic positioning, differentiation, and value co-creation. Results reveal that effective competitive marketing strategy rests on the integration of market orientation with firm-specific learning routines that continuously reconfigure resources in anticipation of environmental shifts. The discussion elaborates a multidimensional framework linking advantage mechanisms (cost, differentiation, relational, and innovation-driven) to measurable marketplace outcomes and offers implications for scholarly research and managerial practice.

Keywords: Competitive advantage; market orientation; resource-based view; dynamic capabilities; strategic positioning.

Introduction: The notion of competition is intrinsic to marketing thought, yet the theoretical foundations of how firms craft and sustain marketing strategies that confer advantage remain contested. Early industrial-organization (IO) economists advanced structure-conduct-performance logic, asserting that market structure determines the range of viable competitive moves. Porter’s typology of generic strategies subsequently reframed competition around positioning within industry forces. However, the

emergence of the resource-based view (RBV) shifted attention from industry conditions to idiosyncratic firm assets. Dynamic capabilities theory extended RBV by stressing the capacity to sense, seize, and transform in dynamic environments. More recently, institutional theory and service-dominant logic emphasized legitimacy and value co-creation. Despite the rich mosaic of perspectives, integrative clarity is limited; practitioners juggle eclectic tools with partial theoretical justification. Addressing this gap, the present study offers a consolidated scientific-theoretical examination that situates competitive marketing strategy at the intersection of IO, RBV, dynamic capabilities, and institutional approaches, thereby explicating how firms translate knowledge into sustained marketplace success.

This investigation adopted a qualitative meta-synthesis design because the aim was explanatory theory building rather than hypothesis testing. The work unfolded in four sequential stages that mirrored best practices for systematic conceptual reviews while remaining compatible with interpretivist epistemology.

First, a comprehensive literature search was executed in Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar to reduce database bias. The query string combined controlled vocabulary and free-text terms for the focal constructs (“competitive marketing strategy”, “market orientation”, “resource-based view”, “dynamic capabilities”, “institutional theory”, “strategic positioning”). Coverage was limited to peer-reviewed works published between January 1980 and December 2024 in English or Russian to ensure both historical depth and contemporary relevance; working papers and trade press were excluded to preserve academic rigour. The initial retrieval of 1 147 records was screened through titles and abstracts against two inclusion criteria: explicit theorizing on sources of competitive advantage in marketing, and presentation of empirical evidence—quantitative, qualitative, or mixed—outside purely conceptual essays. This screening yielded 182 texts.

Second, full-text appraisal employed an adapted version of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme checklist to gauge methodological transparency, theoretical contribution, and contextual richness. Papers scoring below 6 on a 10-point scale were discarded, leaving 67 high-quality sources. The final corpus spanned multiple industries and geographical settings, enabling cross-contextual comparison.

Third, data extraction and coding were performed in MAXQDA 24. An a priori codebook was derived from foundational theories (IO economics, RBV, dynamic

capabilities, institutional theory). Open coding captured emergent concepts such as ambidextrous learning, platformization, and stakeholder legitimation. Through iterative axial coding and memo-writing, concept clusters were refined until theoretical saturation was reached—operationalized as three consecutive papers adding no new first-order concepts. Reliability was assessed by double-coding 20 percent of the corpus; Cohen’s kappa of 0.88 indicated strong agreement.

Fourth, a constant-comparison technique guided synthesis. Segments from different studies were juxtaposed, enabling the identification of recurring causal pathways linking market sensing, resource reconfiguration, value proposition renewal, and positional readjustment. Reflexive triangulation with illustrative case material from longitudinal field studies ensured contextual plausibility. Throughout, an audit trail documented decisions, enhancing confirmability.

Analysis revealed four convergent constructs underpinning competitive marketing strategy. First, positional advantage—rooted in IO economics—remains salient; firms continue to seek defensible niches where bargaining power is favourable and rivalry moderate. Second, resource orchestration—drawn from RBV—explains heterogeneity in strategic outcomes even within similar positions; firms possessing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources outperform rivals. Third, capability dynamization—stemming from dynamic capabilities theory—highlights routines that reconfigure resource bundles as technologies and customer preferences shift. Fourth, institutional alignment—guided by institutional and service-dominant logics—demonstrates how firms secure legitimacy and co-create value through adaptive interfacing with stakeholders.

The interaction among these constructs follows a sequence: market-oriented sensing activities identify shifts in customer expectations and competitor moves; managerial cognition triggers dynamic capability routines that recontextualize resources; reconfigured resources anchor differentiated value propositions; institutional alignment legitimizes these propositions in the eyes of customers, regulators, and partners; finally, positional advantage is renewed or adjusted, restarting the cycle. Empirical studies reviewed confirm that firms exhibiting high synergy among the four constructs report superior growth in market share, brand equity, and margin performance over multi-year horizons.

The findings suggest that no single theoretical perspective sufficiently accounts for sustained competitiveness. Instead, competitive marketing strategy materializes through the continual interplay of

positioning, resources, capabilities, and institutional forces. Positional analyses clarify “where to play,” but without unique resources and adaptive capabilities, such positions erode. Conversely, superior resources unguided by positional logic risk misalignment with attractive market segments. Dynamic capabilities provide the mechanism for recalibration, yet their efficacy is contingent on institutional acceptance of new offerings. Thus, competitive marketing strategy is best understood as an iterative capability-driven alignment process, whereby firms interpret environmental signals, reconfigure assets, and institutionalize new value propositions.

Managerial implications arise. Firms should cultivate learning systems that integrate market intelligence with resource development programs, ensuring that sensing activities directly feed investment in capabilities. Performance measurement should move beyond static financial indicators toward portfolio metrics capturing resource depth, capability renewal speed, and stakeholder legitimacy. For researchers, future inquiries may apply configurational methods to test the proposed multidimensional framework across contexts, particularly in digital platform ecosystems where competitive boundaries blur.

CONCLUSION

A holistic scientific–theoretical foundation of competitive marketing strategy emerges when industrial-organization insights on positioning are fused with resource-based, dynamic capability, and institutional perspectives. Competitive advantage in contemporary markets hinges on a firm’s ability to orchestrate resources dynamically, align with evolving stakeholder expectations, and repeatedly reposition itself within shifting industry landscapes. This integrative lens advances theoretical coherence and offers actionable guidance for strategists navigating complexity and disruption.

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