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Strategic Marketing Planning and Building Credibility in Connection with the Public

Strategic Marketing Planning and the Construction of Credibility in Connecting with the Public

Author: Luana da Costa Ribeiro de Mattos.

Graduated in Advertising and Propaganda, from Estácio de Sá University in Rio de Janeiro.

Summary

This article analyzes the fundamentals of strategic marketing with a focus on building credibility and connecting with the target audience. Based on the premise that strong brands are sustained by the trust they inspire, the text explores planning tools and methods that help convey authentic values and consolidate a coherent image. Storytelling techniques, defining personas, communication funnels, journey mapping, and analytical resources to support data-driven decision-making are discussed. The research is based on classic and contemporary theories, with references up to 2021, providing a solid foundation for professionals and academics who wish to deepen their understanding of the impact of planning on building trustworthy brands.

Keywords: Strategic marketing; Credibility; Planning; Connection with the public; Branding.

Abstract

This article analyzes the fundamentals of strategic marketing with a focus on building credibility and connecting with the target audience. Starting from the premise that strong brands are sustained by the trust they inspire, the text explores tools and planning methods that contribute to conveying authentic values and consolidating a coherent image. Storytelling techniques, persona definition, communication funnels, journey mapping, and analytical resources are discussed to support data-based decision-making. The research is grounded in classical and contemporary theories, with references up to 2021, providing a solid basis for professionals and academics seeking to deepen their understanding of the impact of planning on building trustworthy brands.

Keywords: Strategic marketing; Credibility; planning; Public connection; Branding.

1. The importance of credibility in marketing

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Credibility is one of the central pillars of contemporary marketing, constituting an essential element for the consolidation of trust between brands and consumers. In a scenario marked by an excess of information and increasing competition between similar products and services, the competitive edge lies not only in the objective quality of what is offered, but also in the subjective perception that the public has of the brand. Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasize that a company's credibility is directly associated with its communicational consistency, the coherence between discourse and practice, and the alignment between corporate values and consumer expectations.

The perceived value of a trusted brand goes beyond the rational limits of functional utility.
Studies such as those by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) show that brands considered trustworthy generate greater loyalty from consumers, influencing their willingness to pay more and spontaneously recommending the brand to others. This trust is the result of continuous construction, based on consistent deliveries, positive experiences and transparent communication.
Therefore, developing credibility in marketing requires a long-term strategic vision and an ethical commitment to the customer.

Credibility also mediates corporate reputation, and is essential in contexts of crisis, organizational changes or brand repositioning. According to Fombrun (1996), corporate reputation is the accumulated reflection of a company's actions and interactions with its stakeholders. In other words, credibility serves as a reputational buffer against negative eventualities, giving the brand greater resilience in adverse scenarios. This characteristic is especially valuable in highly volatile markets or when institutional trust is low.

From a psychological perspective, building credibility is linked to the perception of authority, expertise, and benevolent intent. Cialdini (2006) explains that ethical persuasion is supported by the combination of technical competence and communicative empathy. In this sense, brands that demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the sector in which they operate and, at the same time, connect emotionally with their audience, tend to achieve greater credibility. This connection is not the result of chance, but of well-designed strategies that consider the cultural, social, and emotional context of the target audience.

It is important to emphasize that credibility is not automatically transferable from one communication channel to another. Each point of contact with the consumer requires attention to language, visual coherence, institutional posture and tone of the message. Coherence between channels strengthens the perception of authenticity, while inconsistencies can generate distrust. Therefore, integrated management of brand communication is essential to ensure that the credibility built at one point of contact is not undone at another.

Building credibility requires a systemic and disciplined approach that permeates all areas of marketing and organizational culture. Creative campaigns or one-off actions are not enough; brand values must be rooted in the company's daily practices.

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This alignment between purpose, discourse and practice is what sustains long-term trust and allows the brand to be perceived as a reference in its sector. Credibility, therefore, is less a static attribute and more an ongoing process of legitimization in the market.

2. Credibility building techniques

Building credibility in marketing requires a coordinated set of practices and strategies that go beyond traditional advertising. One of the most recognized techniques in this process is content marketing, which seeks to provide relevant, educational, and reliable information to the public. According to Pulizzi (2014), when a brand shares knowledge consistently and free of charge, it positions itself as an authority on the subject, generating trust and engagement. In this case, the content needs to be planned according to the consumer's pain points, desires, and stages of the purchasing journey.

Another key technique is the strategic use of testimonials and social proof. Credibility is strengthened when other people – customers, experts or influencers – publicly validate the quality and reliability of the brand. Cialdini (2006) defines social proof as one of the most powerful principles of persuasion, especially in uncertain environments.
Incorporating reviews, case studies, certification seals and customer satisfaction data are practical ways to demonstrate this external validation and reinforce confidence in the company's positioning. mark.

Building credibility also involves organizational transparency. Brands that share their practices, policies, behind-the-scenes information, and even their mistakes tend to be perceived as more human and authentic. According to Rawlins (2008), transparency is one of the central elements in building lasting relationships of trust, especially in times of crisis or strategic change. This requires an honest communication stance, open to dialogue, and aligned with the values defended by the company.

Ongoing customer relationships, especially through relationship marketing and automation, also help to consolidate credibility. CRM tools, targeted email marketing, and loyalty strategies provide constant, personalized contact, which reinforces the perception of the brand's commitment to the consumer experience. As Grönroos (1994) argues, relationship marketing is more effective than transactional marketing in building long-term value and trust.

Additionally, the coherence of visual identity and language across all communication channels strengthens brand recognition and the perception of seriousness and professionalism.
Each visual element, tone of voice and institutional discourse must reinforce the organization's core values. According to Kapferer (2008), brand identity is a cohesive system of symbols and meanings that helps to consolidate credibility in the consumer's mind, conveying security and consistency over time.

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Finally, strategic alliances and partnerships with institutions of recognized credibility can add value to the brand and accelerate the building of trust. Associations with universities, professional organizations, NGOs or established companies lend the brand additional legitimacy. This is especially relevant for new entrants to the market or for brands in the process of repositioning, which need additional symbolic capital to consolidate their reputation in the eyes of the public.

3. The emotional connection with the target audience

The emotional connection between brands and consumers has become one of the most effective strategies for generating differentiation and loyalty in contemporary marketing. Amidst the abundance of products and the saturation of advertising messages, companies that are able to establish genuine emotional bonds with their audience tend to stand out. According to Gobé (2009), emotional brands not only satisfy functional needs, but also create experiences that resonate with consumers' values, aspirations and identity. This emotional connection is fundamental to building loyalty and transforming consumers into advocates of the brand.
mark.

One of the most effective approaches to creating emotional connection is the use of storytelling. By telling authentic, human and meaningful stories, brands become more relatable and understandable. According to Escalas (2004), consumers project themselves into brand narratives, creating symbolic bonds that go beyond the rational logic of consumption. These stories can be based on the origin of the company, the purpose that drives it, the challenges faced or the transformations that its products provide. The more coherent and emotionally engaging the narrative, the greater the likelihood of generating identification and connection.

Personalization also plays a central role in this process. By adapting communication and value offerings to consumers' individual characteristics and preferences, the brand demonstrates attention and empathy. Studies such as that by Arora et al. (2008) show that personalized experiences significantly increase customer satisfaction and trust, fostering long-lasting relationships. Technology, especially through data analysis and automation, makes it possible to identify behavior patterns and adjust the purchasing journey in a unique way for each consumer profile.

Furthermore, empathy in communication is an increasingly valued attribute. Brands that demonstrate understanding of the feelings, pains and aspirations of their audiences are able to generate deeper bonds. According to Pera et al. (2016), empathy in marketing contributes to humanizing communication and reinforcing the role of brands as agents of support and transformation. This aspect is especially relevant in contexts of crisis, social vulnerability or significant changes in consumer behavior.

It is also important to consider the role of emotions in purchasing decisions. Consumer neuroscience studies, such as those by Damasio (1994), indicate that emotions are decisive

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in decision-making, often overcoming rational arguments. Therefore, branding strategies that arouse positive emotions – such as joy, nostalgia, pride or belonging – have a greater chance of converting and retaining customers. This logic is behind successful campaigns that are anchored in social causes, sensory experiences and promises of personal transformation.

Finally, maintaining an emotional connection requires consistency and authenticity at all points of contact with the consumer. It is not enough to generate a one-off emotional impact; it is necessary to nurture the relationship with coherent actions, empathetic service and a continuous presence. Brands that are able to sustain this emotional bond over time build true emotional ties with their audience, creating symbolic capital that transcends the tangible attributes of products and services.

4. Strategic planning: structure and depth

Strategic marketing planning is the backbone of corporate decisions aimed at achieving sustainable, consistent objectives aligned with the organization's values. This process involves clearly defining goals, analyzing the situation, and identifying opportunities and threats, using tools such as the SWOT matrix, PESTEL analysis, and Porter's five forces model. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), effective strategic planning articulates mission, vision, and values with market demands, providing solid guidance for communication, positioning, and consumer relations actions.

The marketing planning framework begins with internal and external analysis, which involves an in-depth investigation of organizational resources, historical performance, competition, market trends, and consumer behavior. This analysis serves as the basis for strategic diagnosis and the subsequent formulation of SMART objectives – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. According to Mintzberg (1994), strategic planning should be seen as both a deliberate and an emergent process, capable of adapting to the complexities of the business environment.

Next, it is necessary to define market positioning and target audience segmentation. This step involves building value propositions that are perceived as unique and relevant, respecting the brand's competitive advantages. Clarity in positioning is essential to ensure coherence between the brand's various points of contact and consumer expectations. According to Ries and Trout (2001), positioning is a battle fought in the consumer's mind, and it is essential that the brand conquers a clear and consistent symbolic space.

The depth of planning is also evident in the development of marketing mix strategies (4Ps or 7Ps), integrated communication tactics and the definition of digital and offline channels that best engage with the target audience. Each strategic decision must be accompanied by a tactical operational plan that details deadlines, responsibilities, resources and performance indicators. To this end, tools such as the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1996) are used.

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fundamental to aligning actions with strategic objectives and facilitating performance management over time.

Furthermore, it is crucial that planning be flexible and subject to periodic review. The business environment is dynamic, and organizations that do not revisit their plans regularly risk losing relevance. According to Drucker (2001), planning should be more than a forecast – it should be a continuous exercise in learning, alignment, and innovation. In this sense, strategic planning becomes a tool for organizational learning and not just a formal document.

Finally, the connection between strategic planning and building credibility lies in the ability to deliver what was promised, with consistency, authenticity and excellence. Brands that plan in a structured way are better able to align discourse and practice, increasing their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Therefore, planning is not just a technical step, but a lever for trust and lasting brand recognition in the market.

5. Marketing tools applied to credibility

The strategic application of marketing tools is crucial in building and maintaining a brand's credibility. These tools allow for the analysis of the competitive environment, understanding the target audience and measuring the performance of the actions implemented. One of the most widely used is CRM (Customer Relationship Management), which allows for the monitoring of customer behavior, the recording of interactions and the personalization of the relationship. According to Payne and Frow (2005), the effective use of CRM can significantly increase the consumer's perception of value and trust.

Another essential tool is content marketing, which uses the production and distribution of relevant materials to inform, educate and engage the public. Blogs, e-books, webinars and videos are some of the formats used. Pulizzi (2014) states that strategic content positions the brand as an authority in the sector and strengthens its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. When aligned with the consumer journey and the organization's values, content becomes a valuable asset in building trust.

Marketing automation platforms also play an important role in this process. They allow audience segmentation, automated email sending, lead nurturing and tracking engagement metrics. This allows for more accurate, timely and personalized communication, factors that directly contribute to the perception of credibility. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012), marketing automation reduces human errors in communication and provides greater consistency in the delivery of institutional messages.

Data analysis and market intelligence tools such as Google Analytics, SEMrush, and Data Studio provide technical support for planning and evaluating marketing campaigns. The ability to measure conversion rates, dwell time, traffic by channel, and

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User behavior enables decisions based on concrete evidence. For Rust, Zeithaml and Lemon (2004), data-driven marketing increases the effectiveness of actions and provides greater security in the allocation of resources, consolidating the brand's image as technically reliable.

In addition, social listening and reputation monitoring tools such as Hootsuite, Brandwatch or Mention allow you to monitor in real time what is being said about your brand on social media and other digital environments. This constant monitoring provides valuable insights into brand perception and enables rapid responses to crises or engagement opportunities. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), managing your online presence is a key element in strengthening credibility in a digital and hyperconnected era.

Finally, the use of strategic frameworks such as the Value Proposition Canvas and the Empathy Map helps to clearly define value delivery and identify customers' emotional and functional needs. These models encourage empathy and consistency in brand positioning. When these tools are integrated into a robust planning system, they create an ecosystem that is conducive to building solid, measurable and sustainable credibility over time.

6. Defining personas and communication funnel

Defining personas is a fundamental step in strategically directing marketing actions, especially when it comes to building credibility. Personas are semi-fictional representations of ideal customers, based on real data about behavior, needs and consumption patterns. According to Cooper (1999), creating personas helps to humanize the target audience and personalize communication. This process allows us to understand in greater depth what motivates, concerns and influences consumer behavior at different stages of the purchasing journey.

To create effective personas, it is necessary to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods. Demographic, behavioral, psychographic and contextual analyses contribute to the construction of rich and actionable profiles. The use of interviews, questionnaires, observation and analysis of secondary data strengthens the robustness of the personas created. According to Revella (2015), the secret is to understand consumer decisions based on their objectives, obstacles and selection criteria. With well-defined personas, it is possible to align the brand's value proposition with the specific expectations of each segment.

The communication funnel, in turn, represents the stages that the consumer goes through from the first contact with the brand to conversion and loyalty. Traditionally divided into top (attraction), middle (consideration) and bottom (decision), the funnel allows planning of content and relationship strategies appropriate to each stage of the journey. According to Halligan and Shah (2010), a well-structured funnel increases the efficiency of marketing actions and improves the consumer experience, favoring the building of trust at each point of contact.

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At the top of the funnel, the goal is to attract attention and generate interest. Here, educational, institutional, and inspirational content are effective in introducing the brand in a positive and trustworthy way. In the middle of the funnel, it is necessary to deepen the relationship, demonstrating authority and understanding of the public's pain points. Case studies, comparisons, and explanatory materials are useful at this stage. At the bottom of the funnel, the focus is on conversion, through offers, demonstrations, testimonials, and guarantees that reduce barriers to the purchase decision.

The integration between personas and the communication funnel allows for a personalized, empathetic and data-driven approach. Each content, campaign or action can be calibrated according to the needs of the audience at each stage, increasing the relevance of the message and the perception of brand credibility. According to Kotler and Kartajaya (2017), modern marketing must be human-centered and guided by meaningful experiences, and not just by technical or promotional arguments.

Finally, it is important to keep the funnel under constant review and improvement, monitoring the evolution of consumer behavior and the feedback received throughout interactions. The use of tools such as journey maps, A/B tests and performance indicators (KPIs) contributes to the continuous refinement of the strategy. This ability to adapt is essential to maintain connection and trust with an audience that is constantly changing.

7. Mapping the consumer journey

Customer journey mapping is a strategic tool that allows you to understand in detail the customer's interactions and experiences with the brand over time. This practice makes it possible to identify each point of contact, assess emotions and expectations, and detect opportunities to improve the user experience, which is essential for building credibility (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

By mapping the journey, organizations can visualize the customer's path from awareness to loyalty, including consideration, decision and post-sale stages. This integrated view helps identify gaps, friction points and moments of delight that directly influence brand perception (Bitner, Ostrom & Morgan, 2008).

Tools such as the journey map and service blueprint are essential for organizing the information collected, allowing a clear and objective analysis of consumer interactions.
These tools also encourage collaboration between multidisciplinary teams, facilitating the creation of aligned and effective strategies (Rawson, Duncan & Jones, 2013).

The qualitative and quantitative analysis of data from mapping allows us to understand the motivations, needs and emotions of consumers at each stage, enabling the creation of targeted and personalized actions that reinforce the brand's trust and credibility (Verhoef et al., 2009).

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Furthermore, journey mapping helps optimize marketing resources by focusing investments on the stages and channels that have the greatest impact on customer experience. This increases the efficiency of actions and the return on investment, factors that strengthen the sustainability of strategic planning (Edelman & Singer, 2015).

Ultimately, mapping must be a dynamic and ongoing process, revisited and adjusted according to changes in consumer behavior, technological advances and market trends. This adaptability is crucial to maintaining brand relevance and its ability to build and sustain credibility over the long term.

8. Execution planning and budgeting

Execution planning is the stage in which the strategies outlined in strategic planning are detailed and operationalized, transforming objectives into practical and measurable actions. To ensure effective implementation, it is essential to clearly define the tasks, responsibilities, deadlines and resources involved, promoting integration between teams and alignment with the established goals (Kerzner, 2013).

A crucial aspect of this phase is the preparation of the budget, which defines the financial resources available for marketing activities. This budget must be based on careful analysis of costs, return on investment (ROI) expectations and strategic priorities, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and sustainably (McCarthy & Perreault, 2010).

Defining key performance indicators (KPIs) enables continuous monitoring of actions, allowing for agile, data-driven adjustments in the face of deviations or new opportunities. The use of tools such as the Balanced Scorecard helps align execution with strategies, incorporating financial and non-financial metrics that reflect progress in building credibility (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

Furthermore, systematic monitoring of metrics and constant feedback among those involved foster transparency and accountability in the process, facilitating the identification of critical points and the sharing of learning for continuous improvement (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

Finally, flexibility in execution planning and budgeting is essential to respond to market dynamics, changes in consumer behavior, and technological innovations. Companies that incorporate this adaptability tend to consolidate public trust and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016).

9. Monitoring, evaluation and strategic adjustments

Continuous monitoring of marketing actions is essential to ensure that established objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. According to Farris et al. (2010),

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Monitoring metrics allows you to identify deviations and opportunities, enabling informed decision-making that drives the construction of brand credibility.

The evaluation of results should consider both quantitative indicators, such as conversion rates, reach and engagement, as well as qualitative aspects, such as public perception and customer satisfaction. This holistic approach allows for a broad understanding of the impact of actions and contributes to adjustments that promote greater alignment with market expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Integrated analytical tools and dashboards facilitate data collection and visualization, providing transparency and agility in the interpretation of information. According to Davenport and Harris (2007), robust analytical capacity is a competitive advantage, especially in dynamic and digital marketing environments.

The implementation of feedback cycles, involving internal teams and external stakeholders, is essential to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement. Effective communication between those involved reinforces strategic alignment and cohesion in the execution of actions (Argyris, 1999).

Finally, strategic adjustments should be incorporated as a natural part of the planning process, providing flexibility and resilience to the brand. Organizations that adopt this approach are able to adapt quickly to market changes, maintaining credibility and relevance with their target audience (Mintzberg, 1994).

10. Conclusion

Building credibility through strategic marketing is a dynamic, complex and multifaceted process that requires constant alignment between organizational objectives, public expectations and adopted marketing practices. Throughout this article, it has been shown that credibility is not the result of isolated actions, but rather the convergence of a series of integrated strategies that act synergistically to strengthen the brand image and consolidate lasting relationships of trust.

The application of techniques such as storytelling, the precise definition of personas and the detailed mapping of the consumer journey are essential tools for understanding and responding to the needs and emotions of the target audience. These practices promote personalized, relevant and coherent communication, which enhances engagement and loyalty, essential pillars for building credibility.

Furthermore, in-depth strategic planning, combined with a well-structured budget and disciplined execution, enables organizations to implement their strategies efficiently, minimizing risks and optimizing return on investment. Continuous monitoring and systematic evaluation of performance, with strategic adjustments based on data

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concrete, guarantee the necessary adaptability to respond to rapid changes in the market environment.

It is important to highlight that, in a scenario characterized by increasing digitalization and increased competitiveness, flexibility and innovation become decisive factors for maintaining credibility. Brands that demonstrate the ability to evolve and openness to dialogue transparently with their consumers are able to build stronger and more resilient bonds.

Finally, credibility should be viewed as an intangible asset that requires constant investment, both in terms of resources and organizational culture. It is built on authenticity, coherence and a real commitment to delivering value, reflected in all points of contact between the brand and the market. Thus, professionals and companies that incorporate this strategic vision are better prepared to face contemporary challenges, achieve sustainability and stand out in their respective sectors.

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