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Brand Revitalization by Strategic Repositioning: A Case Study of Korando Sports*

Youngsik Shin**

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A growing gap between market needs and the capabilities of the enterprise prompts repositioning (Corstjens and Dolye 1989). This article examines the strategic repositioning of 'Korando Sports' undertaken by SYMC throughout the period from Jan. 2012 to Jun. 2012, to boost sales volume and market share by entering market of active-lifestyle consumers currently occupied by SUVs. SYMC's experience indicates that it is essential to close the gap between the market needs and the ability of the enterprise to make a shift to new consumer segment with a new positioning. The successful repositioning framework(Ryan et al. 2007) were employed in this paper. This framework is comprised of six elements: core strategic values, strategic flexibility/learning capabilities, customer awareness and sensitivity, external orientation, management commitment, and belief in the product and brand. The evaluation based on the successful repositioning framework also confirms that 'Korando Sports' case meets all the requirements of the successful strategic repositioning.

This paper provides some of the managerial implications with the aim of assisting executives in identifying strategic repositioning opportunities. Primarily, the 'Korando Sports' case affirms the repositioning as a viable strategy and indicates that repositioning is a feasible means for strategic change. Second, this case shows the influence of a target consumer shift and SYMC's repositioning to follow consumer preference for a particular attribute. Moreover, we can understand how a product formerly considered weak in attributes can enjoy benefits in other segments with the same attributes.

Key words: Repositioning, Brand revitalization, Positioning, Korando Sports, SSangyong Motor Company, M&M, Mahindra & Mahindra

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I. Introduction

Properly defining benefits and target consumers, an enterprise cannot beat competitors who reinvent the industry only by pursuing incremental improvements such as squeezing last penny out of cost, providing a product to market a little earlier, and responding to customers' inquiries a little faster (Hamel 1996). Great companies do not hesitate to question long-held beliefs about their business and are likely to accept the possibility that a fresh perspective may lead to breakthrough thinking about an opportunity or a problem (Slater and Narver 1995). Also they understand the difference between what should never change and what should be open to change (Collins and Porras 1996). Whilst there is much evidence in the business media, the subject 'repositioning' is underspecified in papers about marketing strategy and empirical studies are rare. The strategic repositioning has been rather studied in the area of 'strategic change' and 'strategic reorientation' under the guises of 'turnaround strategy' and 'strategic innovation' (Hamel 1996; Schoenberg 2003). We could see Park et al. (2010) for Korean repositioning Case and Yi et al. (2011) for the positioning map.

Under the circumstances required strategic repositioning responding to rapid changing consumer needs, it becomes more important than ever for marketers to understand what makes

repositioning strategy successful. Regarding the success factors of repositioning, Turner insisted that the firm should be capable enough to reconcile changing external market needs with internal ability for successful repositioning in his empirical study about the repositioning failure of Cable & Wireless (Turner 2003). And Ryan and his colleagues (2007), by the case study of an Irish company Bulmers Original Cider who successfully executed strategic repositioning work over twelve years, developed a framework for a successful repositioning strategy which is comprised of six elements: core strategic values, strategic flexibility/learning capabilities, customer awareness and sensitivity, external orientation, management commitment, and belief in the product and brand (Ryan et al. 2007).

This article examines the strategic repositioning of 'Korando Sports' undertaken by SYMC throughout the period from Jan. 2012 to Jun. 2012, to boost sales volume and market share by entering the market of active-lifestyle consumers currently occupied by SUVs. It scrutinizes how a commercial pickup truck has sought to transform itself into a leisure utility vehicle by appealing to target consumers through integrated communication activities. At the end of 2011 when 'Ssangyong Motor Company (SYMC hereafter)' was just about to launch a face lift model of 'Actyon Sports', the company faced declining sales and aggravating profitability in pickup truck business due to severe price competition in commercial truck

market where 'Actyon Sports' would be sold, SYMC encountered a "priced higher but less profitable" dilemma derived from price discount and fixed cost burden which were caused by small sales volume. As long as SYMC stays in this commercial market, there seems to be no hope to increase sales and to improve profitability. In this regard SYMC management decided to reposition this brand by entering new consumer segment with competitive positioning concept.

The paper consists of five parts. After the introduction, the concept of positioning and the motivation of repositioning are explored in section two, followed by the introduction of a framework of successful strategic repositioning (six elements) suggested by previous study (Ryan et al. 2007). Section four is a case study about repositioning efforts of 'Korando Sports'. In section five, the evaluation of the case was made on the basis of the six elements. Finally, the conclusion and the discussion of the theoretical implications of repositioning strategy are provided.

II. Positioning and repositioning

Ries and Trout(1986) defined that positioning isn't what is done to the product or brand, but what is created in the minds of target customers. Positioning plays a key role when reaching the potential and existing consumers' desired place

in minds by understanding how consumers perceive products and services, what customers' expectations and aspirations marketers must meet, and which marketing variables consumers deem important(Hutt and Speh 2004). Namely, positioning is "the deliberate, proactive, interactive process of defining, measuring, modifying and monitoring consumer perceptions of a marketable object"(Arnott 1993).

Usually changes occurred in competitive environment force marketers to reposition a product by changing the position holding in customers' minds. In other word, a growing gap between market needs and the capabilities of the enterprises drives repositioning(Corstjens and Dolye 1989). Even a superior, high-share product could lose its relative position and market share if may not be able to respond as effective to changes in consumer preferences (Anderson and Shugan 1991).

However, not only changes in the market, but also the product failures caused by initial positioning mistakes often lead to repositioning (Ostasevičiūtė 2008). Regarding the failure of initial positioning, Brooksbank(1994) stated three causes of inadequate positioning:

- The segment in which it is targeted might have become unattractive because it is too small, competitive, declining or unprofitable.
- Quality and features of the product do not appeal to the targeted market segment.
- The product cost is too high to allow com-

petitive price.

By reviewing various positioning cases, researchers identified four risky product positions in the market: under-positioning, over-positioning, confused positioning, and doubtful positioning (Groucutt, Leadley, Forsyth 2004).

- Under-positioning: Customers have a vague idea about the brand and the brand feature/benefits. Customers may not be aware of anything about the product particularly special points of the brand.
- Over-positioning: Customers may have too narrow view of the brand.
- Confused positioning: Customers are confused about the position of the brand because of too many decisions, or frequent position changes.
- Doubtful positioning: Customers find companies' claims regarding product features, benefits, price and the name of manufacturers hard to believe.

And the execution options for repositioning can be classified as follows(Doyle and Stern 2006):

- Introduce a new brand
- Change existing brand
- Alter beliefs about the brand
- Alter beliefs about the competitive brands
- Alter attribute importance weights

- Introduce new or neglected attributes
- Find a new market segment

Regardless of motivations for repositioning, it is critical to identify what caused repositioning success or failure, to develop a breakthrough idea to cure the problematic business situation. In the study of C&W's failed repositioning case, Turner(2003) concluded that C&W's too myopic view to its core business, far too radical change process, and incompatibility between C&W's internal environment and the needs of the external one were the main causes of their repositioning failure. And defined repositioning as "a conscious act undertaken by enterprises as they adapt to a changing commercial environment" (Turner 2003). In the study of a successful repositioning case of Bulmers Original Cider, Ryan and his colleagues(2007) suggested a framework for a successful repositioning strategy which is comprised of six elements: core strategic values, strategic flexibility/learning capabilities, customer awareness and sensitivity, external orientation, management commitment, and belief in the product and brand(Ryan et al, 2007).

However it is not only important to know how the changes affects the enterprise's capability but also how resources and capabilities sustain the new position(Grant 1991; Collis and Montgomery 2008). From time to time one situation in which a product that was weaker on an attribute had a superior ability to reposition

in response to changing preferences (Anderson et al. 1991).

Often repositioning is required to be small and gradual but in a certain case it should be radical. Thus the speed and scale of change should also be carefully considered when developing the strategic repositioning program. In this context, Corstjens and Doyle identified repositioning as three types: 'Zero, Gradual, and Radical.'

- "Zero repositioning occurs where the company maintains a continued focus on its initial target market segment and competitive advantage despite a changing environment."
- "Gradual repositioning refers to regular, generally small, adjustments the firm makes in its merchandise and methods of presentation to maintain a continuous match between the requirements of the competitive retailing scene and its own offer."
- "Radical repositioning occurs when management makes a major, discontinuous shift into new target markets and/or competitive advantages."

Management prefers gradual repositioning to radical one because they believe it is a low risk option to restore the brand health. But when the positioning gap is too big to be closed by gradual repositioning, radical positioning is necessary (Corstjens et al. 1989).

III. Ryan's framework for a successful positioning strategy

Every business strategy must address the basic questions: "Who to serve: What to offer: and How to deliver" (Markides 1997). Ideas for innovative business strategies may come from the most fundamental questions: "Who should our customers be and what do they really want?" (Schoenberg 2003). Answering those questions, we may identify the factors for successful repositioning which distinguish the firm's offerings from those of competitors.

The Bulmers case study suggested a successful repositioning framework which is comprised of six elements: core strategic values, strategic flexibility/learning capabilities, customer awareness and sensitivity, external orientation, management commitment, and belief in the product and brand (Ryan et al. 2007). In this paper, the six elements of Ryan's successful repositioning framework were employed as evaluation criteria.

3.1 Core, deliberate strategic values

In the Bulmer case, the radical and fundamental changes happened in strategic thinking of management and consumer perception of the product image while other areas left unchanged such as organizational structure and product itself. This reflects the idea of that

“strategic repositioning should be underpinned by purposeful, enduring, fundamental values” (Colins and Porras 1996).

3.2 Strategic flexibility and strong learning capabilities

In many interviews, Bulmer’s management expressed their strategic flexibility by insisting that strategy should be constantly evolving in response to consumer trends and employee input. And the Bulmer case also encapsulates the view that learning capability is a cornerstone of an effective repositioning strategy.

3.3 High consumer awareness and sensitivity

The comprehensive knowledge of consumers and the sensitivity to their needs have Bulmers’ management be confident to take a bold moves to reposition itself.

3.4 Critical external orientation

Bulmer’s repositioning was triggered by recognizing the opportunities from deep understanding of changes in consumer needs and industry trends.

3.5 Top management commitment

In Bulmers, the repositioning was led by top

management with strong commitment which was not undermined in any conditions, same as most successful strategic changes (Nadler and Tushman, 1989).

3.6 Belief in the product and brand

Despite concerns and worries at the beginning, Bulmer’s management took actions proactively and aggressively with the strong belief in their product and brand.

IV. Case Study: Korando Sports

Though SYMC originally intended ‘Musso Sports’ (renamed to ‘Actyon Sports’ in 2006) to position as a kind of leisure vehicle, overtime it had been regarded by customers as a pickup truck for commercial use. And the much aggressively changed face of ‘Actyon Sports’ became an evident barrier for further growth because it doesn’t appeal to the general public. To unlock growth of ‘Actyon Sports’, the existing positioning should be reconsidered to reach a new segment as a source of incremental sales volume. Therefore, SYMC planned to reposition the brand as a lifestyle vehicle to draw demand from active lifestyle consumer who mostly ride SUVs.

4.1 Ssangyong Motor Company

About the history of SYMC, we summarized from Wikipedia(ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/쌍용자동차, 8th Sep. 2012) and SYMC's internet homepage(www.ssmotor.com). The name 'Ssangyong Motor Company' was created in March 1988 with Ssangyong business group's merge of 'Dong-A Motor' which was originally 'Hadonghwan Motor Company' established in 1954. Hadonghwan Motor Company has provided jeeps for US Army as well as trucks and buses since 1964 and started production of Jeeps for consumer sector from 1969. In Sep. 24th 1982, SYMC introduced 'KORANDO' brand which stands for 'Korean Can Do' at 'SITRA(Seoul International Trade Fair) 82'. In 1987 SYMC acquired UK-based specialty carmaker Panther Westwinds and made a technical alliance with Mercedes Benz in 1993. In 1997, Daewoo Motors bought a controlling stake from the Ssangyong Group and sold it off again in 2000. In late 2004, Chinese automobile manufacturer SAIC took a 51% stake of SYMC. But in Jan. 2009, SYMC was put under court receivership. On Aug. 14, strikes staged by factory workers from May

21st was ended and the production commenced again after 77 days of disruption.

Finally in Feb. 2011, 70% share of SYMC was acquired by India's Mahindra & Mahindra Automotive.

4.2 Musso Sports

In Sep. 2002, SYMC introduced a double cabin pickup truck named 'Musso Sports' (Figure 1) under the slogan 'a next generation leisure sports car' (Figure 2). The new car enjoyed more tax benefits such as VAT refund and lower special excise tax than passenger cars due to its registration as a commercial vehicle. Initial response to 'Musso Sports' was highly positive due to its unique features such as usage versatility and economic value. It led to a substantial sales volume reaching 70,000 in total in the first three years.

4.3 Actyon Sports

The initial success of Musso Sports triggered fierce debate about its categorization as a commercial truck. As Musso Sports was registered as

〈Figure 1〉 Musso Sports specification

Musso Sports	
Engine	2.9 Turbo intercooler
Transmission	BTRA 4 A/T
	Borg Warner 5 A/T
Emission	Euro III

〈Figure 2〉 Musso Sports print ads

Head Copy

“1st in Korea”

Main body copy

“Birth of Musso Sports -
Next generation of leisure
sports car”

commercial car, it enjoyed tax benefits. However, the car also appealed to non-commercial users, for instance, who were involved in leisure activities. Finally, a new law was promulgated and took effect from Jan. 2006. The new law set exact criteria for commercial truck such as minimum deck size and payload capacity. Thus, SYMC had no choice but to introduce a new version of Musso Sports with specification and features

meeting the requirements of new regulation in order to protect its tax benefits. This second generation sports utility truck(SUT) was launched in Apr. 2006 with a new brand name 'Actyon Sports'(Figure 3).

Actyon Sports would be unique when positioned as a leisure vehicle but not as a commercial truck (Figure 4). Because it was only a pickup with higher price and less loading ca-

〈Figure 3〉 Actyon Sports specification

Actyon Sports	
Engine	XDI 200 XVT(145ps)
Transmission	BTRAE-tronic 5 A/T
Emission	Euro IV

capacity compared to other brands. But since its launch SYMC shifted its focus of communication message toward customers to more functional benefits like tax refund and fuel efficiency from emotional benefits as a leisure car. This shift made Actyon Sports confront severe price competition and comparison with leading commercial truck brands like Hyundai 'Porter' and Kia 'Bongo'. The misled positioning resulted sales decrease and lowered profitability.

4.4 Project Q150

In 2009, SYMC factory workers staged 77-day walkout while Korean domestic economy

still suffered from the impact of 2008 global economic crisis. The turbulent external situation as well as the inappropriate internal environment effectively altered the nature of SYMC's strategic plan with emphasis on shifting towards ultimate corporate survival. As one of business rebuilding programs, SYMC began a face-lift project of Actyon Sports, called 'Project Q150' in 2010. A concept car was introduced at Geneva Motor Show in Feb. 2011 while M&A deal with Mahindra & Mahindra Automotive got underway.

On Jan. 12th 2012, Q150 was launched at KINTEX(Ilsan), which was supported by full-scale integrated communication under the brand

〈Figure 4〉 Action Sports print ads

Head copy
"Birth of Actyon Sports"

Body copy
"Function should be beautiful, Beauty should be functional"

Head copy
"Pledge of Actyon Sports"

Body copy
"Surely deliver fuel efficiency - tax benefits and subsidy for deck-top installation"

〈Figure 5〉 Korando Sports specification

Korando Sports	
Engine	E-XDI 200 LET(155ps)
Transmission	DSI Etronic 6 A.T
	Hyundai WIA 6 M.T
Emission	Euro V

of 'Korando Sports' (Figure 5).

4.5 Korando Sports

4.5.1 Repositioning Direction

Until the last moment of Q150 product development, SYMC had no doubt that it belongs to commercial truck market segment where the competence lies in economic and functional benefits such as tax refund, low tax rate, spatial deck for commercial use, etc. But because its functional capabilities were not superior to competitors, Hyundai's 'Porter' and Kia's Bongo', actually inferior to them, SYMC should find a growth momentum in the area beyond the requirement of commercial truck market.

In Korea a new trend of active outdoor lifestyle has grown fast recently and has opened new business opportunities to outdoor gear industry including clothing, shoes, and camping equipments. This trend can be a chance to auto industry as well to develop a new product such as specialized vehicles for outdoor life. To sustain the position and market share, product

and services should be able to effectively respond to changes in consumer preferences (Anderson and Shugan 1991). Once a car is seen as 'a vehicle best fit for active outdoor lifestyle' instead of 'a commercial pickup' in the midst of the emerging trend, there can be a big potential for car manufacturers. A recent research found that many consumers compare 'Actyon Sports' with small SUV brands like Hyundai 'Tuscon' and Kia 'Sportage', because they look for a vehicle more fit for their own lifestyle, not for commercial purposes. It implies that consumers looking for cars suited to their lifestyle recognize 'Actyon Sports' as SUV rather than commercial truck. Considering those consumer perceptions and trends, SYMC decided to look for a new opportunity by entering into the untapped market occupied by SUVs.

4.5.2 Changes in product features

Compared to 'Actyon Sports', change and upgrade were made on Q150 as seen in 〈Table 1〉, which are exterior and interior design changes, new equipment addition for riders' convenience

<Table 1> Power train upgrade: performance and emission

Actyon Sports					Q150				
Engine	Performance	Drive Wheel	TM	CO2(g/km)	Engine	Performance	Drive Wheel	TM	CO2(g/km)
D20DT	141ps / 310Nm	2WD 4WD	5MT 6AT	204~230	D20DTR	155ps / 360Nm	2WD 4WD	6MT 6AT	186~211
G23D	149ps / 214Nm	2WD 4WD	5MT	288~293	G23D	149ps / 214Nm	2WD 4WD	5MT	288~293

* G23D : Euro 3 only

Diesel 2.0 DTR Engine is going to

- ✓ Meet Euro 5 emission level
- ✓ Maintain maximum torque across a wide range of 1,500~2,800 rpm
- ✓ Deliver low end torque at 190Nm

and safety, and power train upgrade with low-end torque engine suited to driving situation for outdoor activities.

4.5.3 Rebranding to Korando Sports

While developing repositioning strategy, SYMC seriously considered a new brand name to overcome the negative image of 'Actyon Sports' and to regain internal confidence. As an alternative, the name 'Korando' was suggested because of its high awareness and image relevancy. The brand name 'Korando' was revived as 'Korando C' for a new monocoque type SUV launched in Mar. 2011, after six years of hiatus since Sep. 2005.

According to a recent consumer research in July 2011, the aided awareness of 'Korando' was 92.0% in Korea. The research also found

that the relevant image of 'Korando' was 'strong, dynamic, young, tough, and solid.' It implied that Korean consumers perceived 'Korando' as a vehicle brand suited to young and active people. Moreover, it was found in an international dealer survey that 'Korando' was preferred to 'Actyon' in key countries which account for 77.8% of overseas sales of SYMC.

Given the fact mentioned above, SYMC decided to name the brand Q150 'Korando Sports' while expecting added values from 'Korando'. Regarding the logo design, SYMC decided to make the word 'Sports' bigger than 'Korando' to take advantage of image 'Sports' while harmonizing with brand 'Korando' (Figure 6).

4.5.4 360° Communication campaign

A full-scale IMC(integrated marketing com-

〈Figure 6〉 Korando Sports Logo

〈Figure 7〉 360°communication campaign

〈Figure 8〉 Four season display of outdoor activities

munication) campaign concept was employed and executed under the title of '360°communication campaign' (Figure 7) to build a strong brand franchise targeting consumers who newly experience 'Korando Sports'. Following the launch ceremony and press conference, advertising

campaigns through mass media, on-line and mobile were aggressively conducted (Figure 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

In addition to media campaign, various experiential marketing events and PR activities were conducted (Figure 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

〈Figure 9〉 Introduction of Korando Sports at the main stage

〈Figure 10〉 TVC story board

〈Figure 11〉 Korando Sports print ads

Head Copy

"change your weekend repertoire"

Main body copy

**Recreation machine
"Korando Sports" comes!**

〈Figure 12〉 On-line events

〈Figure 13〉 Mobile promotion

〈Figure 14〉 PR activities

	Date	Contents	Media	Number of Release
Launch & Event News Release	Jan 3	KORANDO SPORTS Make A Public In/Exterior & Executing Pre-Contract	Daily Newspaper Finance Newspaper Auto Newspaper	58 media
	Jan 12	KORANDO SPORTS. The First 'LUV' in Korea. Officially Launched		89 media
	Jan 16	Various Experience-Event is held In memory of KORANDO SPORTS Launching		21 media
	Feb 6	KORANDO SPORTS Snow Driving School is held		23 media
	Feb 13	KORANDO SPORTS Snow Camping is held		32 media
PR News release	Feb 6~11	PR News of Snow Driving School	Sports Newspaper	4 media
	Feb 18	KORANDO SPORTS History	On line media	1 media
	Feb 20~29	Introduce Product Information Of KORAND SPORTS	Auto magazine On line media	9 media

〈Figure 15〉 Posters for dealers and AS workshops

〈Figure 16〉 Experiential marketing - Snow driving school

Date & Place : Feb 4th~5th, 2012 at Chuncheon Motor Park
Participants : 100 customers(50 Female drivers)

4.5.5 Result of the strategic repositioning

Even with its short campaign period, it was found that the ad campaign was highly suc-

cessful from the results of an ad effect test conducted in Mar. 12th~14th, 2012 to 300 small SUV purchase intenders. The aided ad awareness(ad recall score) was 77% of total responses

〈Figure 17〉 Experiential marketing – Snow camping

Date & : Three weekends of Feb 2012 (11~12, 18~19, 25~26)
 Place : Lee's Cabin, Gapyeong, Kyunggi-do
 Applicants to the event: 1,756 groups
 Participants : 30 groups per event(90 groups in total)

and the top 2 boxes(5 point scale) of the message understandability was 75%. Also it was observed that a substantial change was made in consumer perception such as the categorization of 'Korando Sports' and the expectation of driver profile (Figure 18).

The success of repositioning strategy can be

assessed by sales volume and market share, as well. During the first six months since its launch, the sales volume of 'Korando Sports' was doubled up by recording 11,567 cars compared to 5,819 cars of the same period of the previous year, without sacrificing 'Korando C' volume. Despite a serious concern of cannibal-

〈Figure 18〉 Perception changes in category concept and driver profile image

* Ad effect test in March 12th~14th, 2012 (300 small SUV purchase intenders)

ization raised by the domestic sales departments, market share of 'Korando C' was increased 2.3% points during the same period of time.

V. Evaluation of Korando Sports Repositioning Case Based Six Elements

5.1 Core, Deliberate Strategic Values

In 'Korando Sports' repositioning campaign, SYMC focused on changing brand fundamentals and strategic direction such as brand concept, target consumer segment, and competitive set. And purposely drove these radical changes in a very speedy manner.

5.2 Strategic Flexibility and Learning Capabilities

Differently from the initial intention of a leisure car positioning, the consumer perception of 'Musso Sports' had been becoming a commercial pickup. The main cause might be its entrance into existing truck market to increase sales in a short term, rather than segmenting different consumers with continuous investment in brand building. Or it might be too early to segment a sizable market for a leisure vehicle, considering consumer and social trends.

The ability to learn faster than competitors may be the only source of sustainable competitive advantage because a strategy should be open and receptive to changes to pursue development overtime(Mintzberg 1987). It is essential for a company to build learning capabilities, in order to provide superior value to consumers, difficult to imitate, and appropriate in dynamic environment (Slater and Narver 1995). In response to recent changes in consumer trends like active outdoor lifestyle, SYMC reflected the potential of a specialized vehicle for outdoor activities such as auto-camping, water sports, MTB, etc. to their repositioning strategy and made a courageous positioning shift to 'a leisure utility vehicle(LUV)', even though it had been positioned as a commercial pickup for years. SYMC developed an effective repositioning strategy based on their strategic flexibility and learning capability to enable better understanding of the product, competitors, consumers, and social trends.

5.3 In-depth Understanding and Keen Sensitivity in Meeting Customers' Needs

SYMC has a comprehensive knowledge of car industry and customers based on its accumulated business experience. Also, recent consumer researches aimed at understanding consumer needs helped SYMC to focus on target consumers who were most likely to be swayed

into purchasing 'Korando Sports'. Sensitivity to consumers' needs and changing lifestyle gave SYMC an insight to shift paradigm, which was required to have successful repositioning of 'Korando Sports'.

5.4 Critical External Orientation

Consumers' increasing interest in outdoor activities and traveling made SYMC geared up for SUV sales. This trend provided SYMC with a new paradigm about competition and triggered repositioning strategy. And the idea of demand creation by LUV positioning initially came from the understanding of changes in other industries such as fashion, auto camping, and climbing gears. SYMC's attention to external environment was to be one of success factors for the repositioning.

5.5 Top Management Commitment

Inside SYMC organization, there were lots of criticism and cynicism about LUV positioning and 'Korando' as replacement of 'Actyon'. It was concerned how a commercial truck with 10-year history can be repositioned as LUV and how a pickup truck dares to compete against SUVs produced by great carmakers like Hyundai and Kia. Also the worry about the cannibalization against 'Korando C' due to sharing the name 'Korando' was raised by SYMC sales department. Nevertheless, top management of

SYMC and M&M(Mahindra & Mahindra) recognized the necessity and validity of repositioning and new positioning and continuously sent affirmative message to all levels and functions of SYMC organization.

It seems that top management understood that effective motivation generates superior commitment (Meyer and Herscovitch 2001). Without this strong and steadfast commitment and motivation of top management, this repositioning strategy could have never been successfully realized.

5.6 Belief in the product and brand

SYMC workers have unwavering pride as SUV pioneer and a strong confidence in technology. Despite concerns and negative views about sharing the brand name 'Korando' with 'Korando C' SUV, consumer research proved that 'Korando' added value to 'Korando Sports' as well as 'Korando C', differently from the worries of image dilution.

VI. Conclusions

When we consider strategic innovation, there is a difference between choosing the core concept and core activities operating as a sustained platform for growth. Previous studies found that strategic innovation needs to create new values for customers and wrong-foot competitors(Hamel

1996). SYMC sought to respond to competitive challenges through redefining its core business concept, rather than improving operational quality. To actualize the strategic innovation aimed at changing the rules of the game, SYMC decided to enter into a new consumer segment held by SUVs, with a new positioning concept called 'Leisure Utility Vehicle.'

Successful repositioning needs a reconciliation between internal ability and external market needs (Turner 2003). In the course of 'Korando Sports' repositioning, SYMC proved their compatibility and reconciliation of consumer needs and external environment. 'Korando Sports' is particularly well suited to adapt to changing consumer needs and to offer proper attributes such as driving performance and loading capacity as shown in low-end-torque engine, frame body, 4 wheel drive, sizable deck, etc. As an attempt to solidify the repositioning strategy, SYMC made a number of consumer events to re-build the positioning of 'Korando Sports' as LUV via mass media ad campaign under the 360° IMC campaign principles. This 'Korando Sports' repositioning strategy was proved to be extremely successful in terms of business performance and consumer perception change. The evaluation based on successful repositioning framework also confirmed that the strategic repositioning of 'Korando Sports' meets all the requirements of the framework. SYMC's experience indicates that it is essential to close the gap between the market needs and enter-

prise's ability to make a shift to a new consumer segment with a new positioning.

Previous studies showed that the process of repositioning should be evolutionary, pragmatic and built on existing capabilities (Ryan et al. 2007). The changes in this case also meet the condition of limited and evolutionary change. But, its move to a totally new segment with a new concept can be regarded as more than evolution. As Corstjens and Doyle described in their theory of three types of repositioning, 'Zero, Gradual, Radical repositioning', management frequently believes that the gradual repositioning can restore the health of business because it reduces short-term risk by preserving continuity and using skills already possessed. However, to make a major, discontinuous shift into new markets and competitive advantages to fill the large positioning gap, the radical repositioning is required (Corstjens and Doyle 1989). Therefore under the highly competitive circumstances, SYMC has to make a radical and innovative leap into new market segment with a new business concept in order to change the rules of the game led by strong players such as Hyundai and Kia.

This paper attempts to provide a number of the major insights offered as of today with the aim of assisting executives in identifying strategic repositioning opportunities. Primarily, the 'Korando Sports' case affirms the repositioning as a viable strategy and indicates that repositioning is a feasible means for strategic

change. Second, this case shows the influence of a target consumer shift and SYMC's repositioning to follow consumer preference for a particular attribute. Moreover, we can understand how a product formerly considered weak in attributes can enjoy benefits in other segments with the same attributes. However, if we rely on company's internal perceptions shaped by the firm's own corporate culture too much, it can be dangerous to develop a successful repositioning strategy. As successful strategy tends to be followed by majority, the repositioned strategy should be continuously renewed as well.

But because of the relatively short observation period, six months, it has limitation to identify the longer term impact of the strategic repositioning and competitor reactions against this strategic change. And if we expand the coverage of this study to car dealers and sales network, we may find more practical and fruitful results for building a better business strategy.

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