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THE RESOURCE-BASED VIEW (RBV) AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MARKETING STRATEGY

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Resource-Based View (RBV), Marketing Strategy, Competitive Advantage, VRIN Framework, Brand Equity, Strategic Resources, Marketing Capabilities.</i>	The Resource-Based View (RBV) has become a cornerstone in strategic management and marketing literature, emphasizing that sustainable competitive advantage arises from a firm's unique, valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources. In the context of marketing strategy, RBV provides a powerful lens for understanding how firms can leverage tangible and intangible resources to differentiate themselves in competitive markets. This paper explores RBV as a theoretical framework for marketing strategy, highlighting its application in brand building, customer relationship management, innovation, and digital transformation. The study outlines effective marketing techniques grounded in RBV principles and demonstrates how resource orchestration can strengthen long-term market positioning.



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Introduction

Marketing strategy has long been concerned with the question of how firms can create, deliver, and sustain superior value in competitive markets. Traditional perspectives often emphasized external factors such as industry structure, competitive rivalry, and consumer behavior, as seen in Porter's Five Forces or market orientation approaches. While these external perspectives remain valuable, they do not fully explain why firms within the same industry, facing similar market conditions, often achieve different levels of success. The **Resource-Based View (RBV)** addresses this gap by shifting the focus inward, examining how firms' internal resources and capabilities form the foundation for sustainable competitive advantage.

At its core, the RBV argues that firms are heterogeneous bundles of resources, and that these resources—if they are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN)—can enable firms to outperform their competitors. Unlike market-based approaches that prioritize external positioning, RBV emphasizes internal strengths and competencies as the key drivers of competitive differentiation. In the marketing context, this perspective encourages firms to view their brand equity, customer relationships, intellectual property, human capital, technological capabilities, and organizational culture as strategic resources.

The relevance of RBV to marketing strategy becomes increasingly apparent in today's hypercompetitive and digitally connected environment. For instance, while competitors may replicate product features, they cannot easily replicate the brand reputation of Apple, the service culture of Ritz-Carlton, or the customer engagement capabilities of Amazon. These examples underscore RBV's emphasis on unique resources that resist imitation and create sustained value.

A central tenet of RBV in marketing is the notion of **capability development and resource orchestration**. Marketing is not only about possessing resources but also about how firms deploy, integrate, and renew them. For example, having customer data is not enough; the firm must also have analytics capabilities and strategic insights to transform that data into meaningful consumer engagement. Similarly, possessing a strong brand is insufficient unless the firm consistently communicates and reinforces brand values through authentic messaging and customer experiences. Thus, RBV extends beyond static possession of resources to dynamic capabilities—the ability to adapt, reconfigure, and renew resources in response to changing market conditions.

From a theoretical standpoint, RBV complements other frameworks such as market orientation and dynamic capability theory by providing a foundational lens on why firms differ in performance. It positions marketing strategy as the effective mobilization of internal assets toward value creation and market leadership. This is particularly relevant in the digital era, where intangible assets like data, brand equity, content creation, customer trust, and digital ecosystems dominate traditional tangible assets.



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Moreover, RBV offers valuable insights for marketers seeking to achieve **sustainable competitive advantage (SCA)**. Marketing strategies often face the challenge of imitation by competitors—price cuts, promotional tactics, or product design may quickly be replicated. However, resources such as strong customer loyalty, deep cultural alignment, or proprietary technology represent barriers to imitation, thereby protecting the firm’s strategic position. The RBV thus aligns closely with the practical needs of marketers who must develop defensible strategies in crowded markets.

Finally, RBV highlights the **interconnectedness of functional strategies** within the firm. Marketing strategy, under RBV, is not an isolated function but is tightly linked with R&D, human resource management, supply chain operations, and leadership vision. For example, Tesla’s marketing strength lies not in traditional advertising but in leveraging its innovation capabilities, charismatic leadership, and community of loyal customers—all of which are unique internal resources. This integration reinforces the idea that marketing effectiveness is determined by how well a firm coordinates its distinct resources into a coherent and compelling value proposition.

In summary, the Resource-Based View provides a rich theoretical framework for marketing strategy by emphasizing the role of unique resources and capabilities in achieving sustained competitive advantage. It challenges marketers to look inward, identify distinctive assets, and deploy them strategically to build resilient brand positions and enduring customer relationships. This paper explores the application of RBV in marketing strategy, offering conceptual insights and outlining effective resource-based techniques for long-term success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the Resource-Based View (RBV) as a theoretical foundation for marketing strategy. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Examine how RBV principles can be applied to marketing functions such as brand building, customer engagement, and innovation.
2. Identify marketing resources and capabilities that contribute to sustainable competitive advantage.
3. Provide a conceptual framework integrating RBV with effective marketing practices.
4. Offer theoretical insights that can guide marketers in leveraging internal resources to strengthen market positioning without relying solely on external competitive forces.

Conceptual Framework

The RBV framework for marketing strategy is grounded in the VRIN model:

- **Valuable Resources** → Assets that enable firms to exploit opportunities or neutralize threats (e.g., strong brand image, customer insights).



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- **Rare Resources** → Unique assets not widely possessed by competitors (e.g., niche market expertise, patents).
- **Inimitable Resources** → Difficult-to-replicate resources due to history, culture, or social complexity (e.g., brand heritage, employee know-how).
- **Non-Substitutable Resources** → Assets that cannot be replaced with alternatives (e.g., authentic brand identity).

Applied to marketing, the framework emphasizes that sustainable strategies emerge when firms align their marketing practices with these VRIN resources.

Literature review

The resource-based view of the firm (RBV) and the resultant resource-based theory (RBT) provide an important framework for explaining and predicting the basis of a firm's competitive advantage and performance (Barney et al. 2011; Slotegraaf et al. 2003; Vorhies and Morgan 2005). In the past decade, the applications of resource-based logic in marketing have grown exponentially; in the 1990s, only 19 articles in marketing explicitly referenced the RBT or RBV, but in the 2000s, that number increased to 104. In just 2010–12, more than 50 published conceptual and empirical marketing articles drew on RBT (according to a search of marketing journals' abstracts in the Business Source Premier database for explicit references to the theory). This upward trend indicates the growing importance of RBT to marketing. While top management journals have dedicated special issues solely to RBT (e.g., issues 17(1), 27(6), and 37(5) of *Journal of Management*), there is a need to synthesize the fragmented applications of RBT in marketing (Srivastava et al. 2001). (Kozlenkova et al., 2014)

strategy" (Barney and Clark 2007, p. 52). The resource-based logic relies on two fundamental assumptions about firm-based resources to explain how they generate SCA and why some firms may persistently outperform others. First, firms possess different bundles of resources, even if they operate within the same industry (Peteraf and Barney 2003). This resource heterogeneity assumption implies that some firms are more skilled in accomplishing certain activities, because they possess unique resources (Peteraf and Barney 2003). Second, these differences in resources may persist, due to the difficulty of trading resources across firms (the resource immobility assumption), which allows the benefits from heterogeneous resources to persist over time as well (Barney and Hesterly 2012). (Kozlenkova et al., 2014)

According to RBV, wealth is generated from the exploitation of resources [14]. Organizations must utilize their resources to generate economic value in a way that is superior to their competitors [15, 16]. By using the RBV's foundations, businesses can gain a competitive edge by implementing methods that none of their present or potential competitors can adapt [17]. The resources can be tangible or intangible [18]. In addition, heterogeneity (talents, capacities, and other resources vary



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from business to business) and immobility (resources do not move from one organization to another) of resources are also essential assumptions of RBV [19, 20]. Brand equity, business processes, knowledge, and intellectual property are examples of intangible resources that are typically immovable. Figure 1 shows that resources can be divided into tangible and intangible types, both of which are crucial for the organization's smooth operation. **(Kero & Bogale, 2023)**

According to Teece [31], "if an enterprise has resources and competencies but lacks DCs, it might have the potential to make a competitive advantage for a short period, but it cannot sustain the long-term competitive returns [32], unless by chance." Through the DCs, businesses can make use of resources and adjust in novel ways to gain a competitive advantage [33]. To respond to changes in dynamic settings, the DC approach emphasizes the importance of a firm's ability to adapt, integrate, and rearrange organizational resources, skills, and competencies. Jensen et al. [34] specified that RBV is used to examine resources as possible sources of competitive advantage. By updating their resource base and developing operational capabilities that outperform competitors, firms can increase significant competitive advantages and strong relationships with their customers. If competing companies cannot imitate firms' operational competencies or do not have access to the same resource base, they may shy away from trying. Wang et al. [35] argue that, if a firm's operational capabilities are distinctive and difficult to replicate, it might give it a competitive advantage in terms of cost and consumer value. Therefore, DCs can improve firms' performance by enabling businesses to renew operational capabilities that are challenging to imitate or expensive for rivals to do so. **(Kero & Bogale, 2023)**

Effective Marketing Techniques Using RBV

The Resource-Based View (RBV) highlights that firms achieve long-term competitive advantage not only by identifying unique internal resources but by nurturing, protecting, and strategically deploying them in marketing. Below are detailed techniques aligned with RBV principles, supported by concise 30-word case study illustrations for each.

1. Brand Equity Development

Strong brand equity functions as an intangible, inimitable resource that anchors consumer loyalty and reduces price sensitivity. It requires consistent messaging, emotional connections, and cultural alignment to create deep differentiation across markets. A well-managed brand becomes a strategic shield against imitation, as competitors may replicate products but cannot replicate heritage, symbolic meaning, or consumer perceptions attached to the brand identity.

Case Study:

Coca-Cola sustains unmatched brand equity through consistent global campaigns, nostalgia-driven storytelling, and emotional resonance. Its heritage, red imagery, and "happiness" associations make the brand nearly impossible for competitors to replicate effectively.



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2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM integrates customer insights, personalization, and data-driven engagement to transform customer interactions into long-term relationships. It emphasizes the strategic use of customer data as a valuable and rare resource that provides predictive insights and enhances loyalty. Effective CRM transforms one-time buyers into brand advocates, reducing churn and strengthening switching barriers.

Case Study:

Amazon leverages advanced CRM through AI-powered personalization, predictive recommendations, and seamless customer service. Its continuous focus on customer satisfaction builds trust-based loyalty that competitors struggle to match at similar scale.

3. Innovation as a Marketing Resource

Innovation represents a capability that reshapes market perception and positioning. By embedding innovation into marketing strategy, firms can differentiate offerings, communicate cutting-edge value propositions, and reinforce their image as industry leaders. Innovation-driven marketing ensures sustained advantage as it positions the brand as forward-looking and dynamic, creating a reputation for setting—not following—market trends.

Case Study:

Tesla integrates innovation into marketing by using product breakthroughs and visionary leadership to drive consumer excitement. Instead of traditional advertising, innovation itself becomes the communication tool that attracts loyal customers globally.

4. Digital Ecosystems and Platforms

A digital ecosystem consolidates apps, platforms, services, and communities into a network that fosters customer stickiness. These systems are not easily imitated due to their scale, integration, and long-term user dependence. They represent a complex, socially embedded resource that enhances customer lifetime value and builds switching costs, making them central to RBV-based marketing strategies.

Case Study:

Apple builds a digital ecosystem through hardware, software, and services integration. By embedding iOS, iCloud, and App Store, it creates user lock-in, ensuring continuous engagement and sustained competitive differentiation worldwide.

5. Human Capital in Marketing

Human creativity and expertise are rare, inimitable resources central to effective marketing execution. Skilled marketing teams provide insights, generate original campaigns, and translate consumer culture into powerful storytelling. Developing human capital through training,



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empowerment, and creative freedom ensures sustained marketing excellence and competitive advantage that technology alone cannot replicate.

Case Study:

Nike’s marketing team leverages cultural intelligence, athlete partnerships, and creative innovation to craft globally recognized campaigns. Their “Just Do It” messaging integrates human storytelling with brand ethos, creating enduring market resonance.

6. Cultural and Ethical Positioning

Aligning marketing strategies with social responsibility and ethical values creates rare reputational assets. Consumers increasingly value purpose-driven brands, making ethical positioning a non-substitutable differentiator that builds trust, credibility, and resilience against reputational crises. Integrating sustainability, inclusivity, and activism within marketing reinforces the brand’s alignment with societal priorities, strengthening loyalty and long-term market presence.

Case Study:

Patagonia embeds ethics into marketing by promoting environmental sustainability, transparent supply chains, and activism campaigns. Its cultural stance appeals to socially conscious consumers, creating deep loyalty that transcends functional product attributes.

7. Dynamic Capability in Marketing

Dynamic capability emphasizes adaptability, flexibility, and the continuous reconfiguration of resources. It is critical for marketing resilience in fast-changing markets. Firms with strong dynamic marketing capabilities can pivot strategies, embrace new technologies, and anticipate trends, thereby ensuring long-term survival and leadership. This capability is rare and difficult to imitate due to its path dependence and embedded learning.

Case Study:

Netflix exemplifies dynamic marketing by evolving from DVD rentals to streaming and original content production. Its ability to reconfigure resources quickly sustains relevance, reshaping entertainment consumption and maintaining strong market dominance.

8. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and or publication of this article.



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