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Strategic Positioning Through AI-Based Customer Insights: A Resource-Based View Perspective

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Abstract

This article examines how AI-based customer insights contribute to strategic positioning when viewed through the lens of the resource-based view. In increasingly data-rich markets, firms rely on AI and advanced analytics to understand evolving customer needs, yet existing research often treats these tools as operational rather than strategic assets. This study conducts a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2023 to synthesize how AI-enabled customer insight capabilities are conceptualized, how they are linked to firm-level capabilities, and under what conditions they support positional advantage. The review codes studies by theoretical lens, operationalization of AI-based customer insights, and outcome variables, with particular attention to segmentation, differentiation, and value proposition design. The findings indicate that AI-based customer insights are best understood as higher-order marketing capabilities that enhance market sensing and resource orchestration, but that empirical work rarely measures strategic positioning explicitly and is highly contingent on complementary organizational structures, culture, and alignment with business strategy.

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1. Introduction

Strategic positioning has become increasingly challenging in data-saturated, highly dynamic markets, where firms must continuously refine how they define target segments, value propositions, and competitive space. Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and marketing analytics enable firms to turn massive, heterogeneous customer data into granular insights about needs, behaviors, and psychological drivers, promising more precise and adaptive strategic decisions (Haleem et al., 2022; Basu et al., 2023). Rather than being restricted to campaign-level optimization, AI-based customer insights now permeate core marketing strategy, informing choices about which markets to serve, how to differentiate, and where to allocate scarce resources.

A growing body of work shows that analytics and AI capabilities can create superior customer understanding and, ultimately, competitive advantage. Customer analytics–driven value creation capabilities help firms translate data into differentiated offerings and relational value, but the payoff is contingent on how these capabilities are structured and embedded in the organization (Hossain et al., 2021). Similarly, data-driven innovation and big data analytics capabilities enhance market agility and performance by enabling firms to sense changing customer preferences, experiment, and reconfigure offerings faster than rivals (Sultana et al., 2022; Morimura & Sakagawa, 2023). These studies imply that AI-based customer insights are more than analytical tools; they represent higher-order capabilities that shape strategic marketing choices.

The resource-based view (RBV) provides a powerful lens for understanding how such capabilities underpin strategic positioning. RBV argues that sustained competitive advantage arises from resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable, and that are effectively orchestrated within the firm (Zhang et al., 2021). Recent research has begun to conceptualize AI capability as an intangible, composite resource, showing that AI-related skills, infrastructure, and decision processes can improve firm performance when leveraged as a coherent capability bundle (Chen et al., 2022). Big data and analytics capabilities have likewise been framed as strategic assets that extend market knowledge, support sensing and seizing opportunities, and strengthen strategic marketing insight (Brewis et al., 2023; Morimura & Sakagawa, 2023). However, the RBV perspective on AI has largely emphasized generic performance outcomes, with limited attention to the specific role of AI-based customer insights in driving a firm's positional choices in the marketplace.

At the same time, the literature on AI in marketing remains fragmented across streams focused on customer engagement, personalization, decision support, and automation, often lacking an integrated strategic perspective (Haleem et al., 2022; Basu et al., 2023). Empirical studies frequently examine isolated applications (e.g., recommendation systems, pricing, or service automation) without explicitly theorizing how customer insights derived from AI are accumulated, combined with other resources, and deployed to reconfigure strategic positioning over time (Hossain et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022). This fragmentation makes it difficult to

understand when and how AI-based customer insights contribute to durable advantage rather than merely incremental efficiency.

This article addresses these gaps by conducting a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed studies published between 2019 and 2023 at the intersection of AI-based customer insights, strategic marketing, and the resource-based view. By synthesizing these streams, the study aims to conceptualize AI-based customer insight capability as a strategic resource, clarify the mechanisms through which it supports positional advantages, and identify contextual factors that strengthen or weaken its impact (Sultana et al., 2022; Brewis et al., 2023). The review develops an integrative framework linking AI-enabled customer understanding to strategic positioning choices and firm outcomes, while outlining a future research agenda that bridges AI, marketing strategy, and RBV. In doing so, it seeks to advance theoretical understanding and offer guidance to managers seeking to leverage AI-based customer insights for sustainable strategic positioning.

2. Literature Review

The recent literature on AI in marketing shows a clear shift from viewing AI merely as a set of analytical tools toward understanding it as part of a broader capability system that supports strategic decisions. Reviews of AI in marketing and related scientometric analyses highlight how firms increasingly rely on AI to process high-volume, high-variety customer data for segmentation, personalization, and forecasting, yet most studies still focus on operational and campaign-level outcomes rather than explicit strategic positioning (Jarek & Mazurek, 2019; Mustak et al., 2021;

Duarte et al., 2022; Basu et al., 2023). Conceptual work likewise emphasizes that AI-driven customer insights can reshape how firms identify attractive markets, configure offerings, and orchestrate customer journeys, but these implications are often discussed at a high level and not systematically linked to resource-based theorizing (Huang & Rust, 2021).

A parallel stream anchored in the resource-based and dynamic capability views examines how marketing and analytics capabilities translate data into competitive advantage. Cao et al. (2019) show that marketing analytics capability operates as a dynamic capability that enhances market sensing, planning, and implementation, thereby supporting superior performance in turbulent environments. Big data analytics capability has similarly been framed as a distinctive, hard-to-imitate resource that improves market performance when combined with appropriate business models and strategic choices (Olabode et al., 2022). Extending this logic, studies on big data, marketing analytics, and firm marketing capabilities argue that data and analytics become strategically valuable only when embedded in routines for planning, implementation, customer relationship management, and product development (Hossain et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2022; Brewis et al., 2023). Within this stream, Hossain et al. (2020) reconceptualize customer analytics capability for data-driven retailing as an integrated capability that bundles data assets, technologies, and organizational routines, highlighting how analytics-based customer understanding can underpin sustainable advantage.

More recent work brings AI explicitly into this capability perspective by examining AI-enabled customer analytics capabilities and their service and

innovation implications. Hossain et al. (2022) develop and validate an AI-enabled customer analytics capability construct, showing how firms translate AI-augmented data resources into service innovation and value co-creation. Related contributions conceptualize how AI, big data, and analytics systems support strategic marketing choices by strengthening market sensing, insight generation, and reconfiguration capabilities (Olabode et al., 2022; Brewis et al., 2023). Yet empirical studies still tend to assess aggregate outcomes such as agility, innovation, or financial performance without clearly articulating how AI-based customer insights feed into classic positioning decisions such as target selection, value proposition design, and competitive differentiation (Cao et al., 2019; Mustak et al., 2021; Duarte et al., 2022).

Overall, existing evidence suggests that AI-based customer insight capabilities meet key resource-based criteria of being valuable and difficult to imitate, but the literature has not yet fully unpacked how they shape strategic positioning as a distinct outcome domain. Current studies predominantly examine downstream consequences such as agility, innovation, and performance without clarifying the intermediate positional moves like who to serve, what value propositions to emphasize, and how to differentiate, that link AI-enabled insights to sustained competitive advantage (Jarek & Mazurek, 2019; Huang & Rust, 2021; Olabode et al., 2022; Basu et al., 2023). This gap motivates a systematic literature review that explicitly situates AI-based customer insights within a resource-based view of strategic positioning.

3. Methods

This study adopts a systematic literature review method to identify, evaluate, and synthesize peer-reviewed research on AI-based customer insights and strategic positioning from a resource-based view perspective. The review focused on articles published between 2019 and 2023 to capture recent developments in AI and analytics capabilities. Searches were conducted in major academic databases (such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and IEEE Xplore) using combinations of keywords related to artificial intelligence, customer insights, customer analytics, strategic positioning, competitive advantage, resource-based view, and dynamic capabilities. Inclusion criteria required that articles be written in English, published in peer-reviewed journals, and contain an empirical or conceptual focus on AI or advanced analytics used to generate customer insights with explicit links to strategy, competitive advantage, or firm capabilities. Conference papers, non-peer-reviewed sources, practitioner reports, and studies that discussed AI in marketing only at a very general level without engaging with strategy or capabilities were excluded.

The screening process proceeded in several stages. First, titles and abstracts were screened to remove clearly irrelevant records. Second, full-text assessment was conducted to ensure alignment with the core themes of AI-based customer insights, strategic marketing decisions, and resource-based or capability-oriented theorizing. The remaining articles were then coded using a structured template that captured (1) theoretical lens and key constructs (e.g., AI capability, analytics capability, customer insight capability), (2) methodological approach, (3) how AI-based customer insights were operationalized, and (4) outcome variables, with particular attention to strategic

positioning outcomes such as market selection, differentiation, and value proposition design. To enhance consistency, the coding scheme was refined iteratively, and studies were compared across sectors and contexts to identify convergent patterns, boundary conditions, and gaps that informed the integrative framework developed in the subsequent section.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Conceptualizing AI-Based Customer Insight Capability in Resource-Based View (RBV) Terms

Across the reviewed studies, three broad patterns emerge regarding how AI-based customer insights are conceptualized, how they contribute to strategic positioning, and which conditions shape their impact. First, the literature progressively moves from a tool-centric view of AI toward a capability-based understanding rooted in the resource-based view. Early work tends to describe AI and analytics as technologies deployed to automate decisions or improve campaigns (Jarek & Mazurek, 2019; Duarte et al., 2022). More recent contributions conceptualize customer analytics and AI-enabled customer insight as multi-dimensional capabilities that integrate data resources, technological infrastructures, human expertise, and organizational routines (Cao et al., 2019; Hossain et al., 2020; Mustak et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2022). Within this view, AI-based customer insight capability is positioned as an intangible, path-dependent resource that can meet key RBV criteria of being valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate when embedded deeply in firm processes (Zhang et al., 2021; Brewis et al., 2023).

4.2 Mechanisms Linking AI-Based Customer Insights to Strategic Positioning

The mechanisms through which AI-based customer insights influence strategic positioning can be grouped into three interrelated pathways: market sensing, resource orchestration, and value appropriation. In terms of sensing, studies show that AI and advanced analytics enhance firms' ability to detect emerging segments, micro-differentiate customers, and anticipate shifts in needs and behaviors through continuous data collection and pattern recognition (Huang & Rust, 2021; Mustak et al., 2021; Basu et al., 2023). These capabilities expand the informational basis for segmentation, targeting, and positioning decisions and support more fine-grained value propositions. In terms of orchestration, AI-based insights guide the reallocation of resources across channels, products, and customer groups, allowing firms to reconfigure offerings and marketing programs more dynamically in response to sensed opportunities (Sultana et al., 2022; Morimura & Sakagawa, 2023; Olabode et al., 2022). Finally, value appropriation is typically assessed through outcomes such as innovation success, agility, customer satisfaction, and financial performance, with evidence that AI capabilities often work through intermediate strategic and organizational capabilities rather than exerting direct effects on performance (Hossain et al., 2021; Hao et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2022).

4.3 Boundary Conditions, Measurement Gaps, and Implications for Positioning Outcomes

Despite this progress, only a minority of studies explicitly model strategic positioning outcomes as such. Many empirical papers operationalize the effects of

AI and analytics in terms of agility, innovation, or generic competitive advantage and then infer implications for positioning, rather than directly measuring changes in target markets, positioning statements, or brand architectures (Hossain et al., 2021; Sultana et al., 2022; Morimura & Sakagawa, 2023). Conceptual frameworks in AI marketing highlight the potential for AI to reshape segmentation, targeting, and positioning, yet often stop at high-level taxonomies of AI applications or customer journey stages (Huang & Rust, 2021; Basu et al., 2023). As a result, the literature offers relatively few detailed accounts of how AI-based customer insights translate into specific positional moves, for example, exiting unprofitable segments, redefining a category frame of reference, or shifting from product-centric to solution-centric positioning.

The review also reveals several important boundary conditions and complementarities that qualify the strategic value of AI-based customer insights. Studies on big data and analytics capability show that their impact on innovation and performance is contingent on achieving an appropriate balance between data volume, analytics capability, and organizational learning processes (Hao et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2022). Work on alignment emphasizes that analytics and AI capabilities deliver the greatest benefits when they are tightly coupled with business strategy and structures, for instance through fit between big data analytics capability and business alignment in driving organizational agility (Xie et al., 2022; Olabode et al., 2022). Other research indicates that culture, governance, and data-driven decision norms mediate how far AI-based insights actually influence strategic choices rather than remaining confined to tactical optimization (Hossain et al., 2020; Brewis et al., 2023).

From an RBV perspective, this points to the importance of complementary assets and orchestration routines, as AI-based customer insight capability alone is rarely sufficient to drive repositioning without supportive managerial cognition, structures, and processes.

Taken together, these findings contribute to resource-based theorizing and strategic marketing in several ways. First, they support the view that AI-based customer insight capability is best understood as a higher-order marketing capability that bundles data, technology, and organizational routines, rather than as an isolated IT resource (Cao et al., 2019; Hossain et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). This extends RBV applications by specifying how information-processing capabilities grounded in AI can become VRIN resources when shaped by firm-specific learning trajectories and embedded in unique combinations with brand, relational, and innovation assets (Hao et al., 2019; Brewis et al., 2023). Second, the evidence suggests that the principal strategic contribution of AI-based customer insights lies in enhancing the quality and speed of market sensing and resource orchestration, which in turn enables more adaptive and differentiated positioning, even if many studies still operationalize outcomes in terms of agility or performance rather than positioning per se (Huang & Rust, 2021; Sultana et al., 2022; Morimura & Sakagawa, 2023). Third, the identified boundary conditions highlight that firms gain the most from AI-based insights when they achieve alignment between analytics capability, strategic intent, and organizational structure, echoing broader RBV arguments about the centrality of resource orchestration (Xie et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Olabode et al., 2022).

For future research, the review points to several priorities. There is a need for more studies that explicitly operationalize strategic positioning outcomes, such as changes in segment portfolios, repositioning strategies, or shifts in value proposition logic, and examine how these are shaped by AI-based customer insight capabilities over time. Longitudinal and process-oriented designs could clarify how insight generation, managerial sense-making, and resource reconfiguration interact during AI-enabled repositioning. In addition, more nuanced assessments of heterogeneity across industries, data regimes, and regulatory environments would help determine when AI-based customer insights truly confer sustained competitive advantage and when they are easily replicable. Addressing these gaps would deepen understanding of AI-based customer insights as a strategic resource and provide clearer guidance to managers seeking to leverage AI not only for operational efficiency but for enduring strategic positioning advantages.

5. Conclusion

This review concludes that AI-based customer insight capabilities are emerging as strategically important resources that extend beyond tactical analytics or campaign optimization. Synthesizing recent work through a resource-based view suggests that when AI, data, and organizational routines are combined into coherent capabilities, they can enhance market sensing, resource orchestration, and ultimately enable more adaptive and differentiated strategic positioning. However, most empirical studies still operationalize outcomes in terms of agility, innovation, or

generic performance, so the link between AI-enabled insights and concrete positional moves in the marketplace remains under-specified.

At the same time, the evidence shows that the strategic value of AI-based customer insights is highly contingent on complementary assets and organizational conditions. Alignment between analytics capabilities and business strategy, governance structures that support data-driven decision-making, and a culture that encourages learning and experimentation all appear critical for translating insights into strategic repositioning. Without these elements, AI-based customer insights risk remaining isolated technical tools rather than VRIN capabilities that confer sustained advantage.

This review also highlights several limitations and boundary conditions that should temper the interpretation of its findings. The underlying studies vary in methodological rigor, measurement of capabilities, and explicitness of their strategic constructs, which may limit the generalizability of the synthesized patterns. The focus on peer-reviewed journal articles from 2019 to 2023, while appropriate for capturing recent developments, may omit earlier conceptual work and emerging empirical evidence in other outlets. These constraints raise legitimate questions about how far the present conclusions can be extended across industries, firm sizes, and institutional environments.

Future research should therefore develop richer, more explicit models of strategic positioning outcomes and examine how AI-based customer insight capabilities shape segment portfolios, value propositions, and brand architectures over time. Longitudinal and process-oriented designs, as well as cross-industry

comparisons, would help clarify causal mechanisms and boundary conditions. By addressing these gaps, subsequent studies can strengthen the validity of current insights and offer more precise guidance to managers seeking to leverage AI-based customer insights for sustainable strategic positioning.

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