

Transsion's Product Positioning Strategy for Emerging Markets

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Abstract. Competition in the global smart phone market has intensified, and emerging markets have become the key areas for enterprise growth. Chinese Brand Transsion is an African smart phone head manufacturer, and its layout has reference value for overseas expansion. This paper uses literature review, second-hand data comparison and multi-case analysis to explore the product positioning strategy, high-end path and challenges of Transsion in emerging markets. The results show that the localization strategy is the core of Transsion, and the multi-brand matrix of TECNO, Infinix and itel is constructed, covering different age and income groups. Targeted research and development of long battery life, multi-SIM cards, dark skin photo optimization and other functions to meet the needs of emerging markets, the market share of smart phones in Africa exceeds 40%, and the global mobile phone shipments rank third in 2024; However, it faces the competitive squeeze of brands such as Xiaomi and Realme, as well as the pressure of technological innovation and the challenges of emerging market policies and cultural uncertainties. This paper provides practical experience of "localized product design + multi- brand layout" for enterprises to expand overseas emerging markets and helps them balance market competitiveness and sustainable development.

Keywords: Transsion; product positioning strategy; emerging markets.

1. Introduction

The global market has become a complex business environment with increased competition and dynamism. The development of technologies, globalization and Internet access changed the patterns of consumers and opened up opportunities and challenges for companies to market their products internationally, in a market environment like this companies need to have effective marketing strategies to increase the competitiveness of their products in the global market [1].

In the first quarter of 2025, the global smartphone market grew by 0.2% slightly increasing the shipment reached 296.6 billion units. Samsung shipped 60.5 billion units and maintained its leading position with the launch of its latest flagship models and A series product which is competitive in price. Apple secured a second place by shipping 55.0 million units and its total market share is 19%, the growth was from emerging Asia Pacific markets and the United States. Xiaomi took third place and shipped 41.8 million units, with the market share of 14%. It continued to leverage its diverse product ecosystem to strengthen its brand in Mainland China and emerging overseas markets. Vivo and OPPO took fourth and fifth places and shipped 22.9 million and 22.7 million units [2].

Establishing a strong brand position is necessary for businesses to differentiate themselves from their competitors [3].

Product positioning has played a crucial role in marketing activities, positioning strategies have become essential to the success of a firm's marketing strategies. Positioning is not what people do to a product, but what people do to the minds of the prospective customers; that is, people position the product in the mind of the intended client. It is understood that a product's position is the way in which the product is defined by consumers on important attributes and the place the product occupies in the minds of the consumers relative to competing products [4].

Emerging markets have a unique environment, their economic conditions, social behaviors and technological factors create both opportunities and challenges for businesses to operate in these regions [5].



The increased access to smartphones in Africa and elsewhere in the global south has opened new markets, Transsion is a Chinese mobile maker and one of Africa's top selling smartphones [6]. The article aims to analyze how Transsion prioritizes their products in the Africa market to meet the customer's needs there, how Transsion position its products on different categories and price levels in the market. And how Transsion achieved the high-end development in their products, through this analysis hoping to provide valuable experience and path for enterprise to expand their market overseas.

2. Transsion's Current Development

Transsion Holdings was founded in 2006 and aims to provide mobile phone- based smart terminal design and mobile Internet services to consumers in emerging markets. Transsion mainly focuses on mobile phone business, and adapted a diversified strategy, with mobile phone business in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America and other emerging markets; Transsion also provide digital accessories and home appliances, mobile Internet, service and support and after-sales service [7].

In 2006, major mobile phone brands had yet to establish a market presence in Africa. Meanwhile, African mobile users faced challenges such as high prices for feature phones, poor signal compatibility with local carriers, and a lack of photography software optimized for darker skin tones. The company's proprietary mobile brands, TECNO and itel, developed a dark-skin photo optimization algorithm to address local user pain points, solving the issue of blurry images in low-light environments: They introduced multi-SIM card slot phones to meet local demands for cost-effective communication and seamless multi-carrier switching. To solve the standby time, Transsion designed batteries last 21 days, and according to the climate of Africa, developed phone cases with sweat-resistant materials to enhance user experience. Furthermore, Africa users are passionate about music and dancing, Transsion launched a music app called Hiparty, the app optimized the volume, and it is easier to use in parties and other gathering scenarios. In 2008, Transsion formally established its strategic focus on Africa, and setting up its first office in Nigeria. Then launched its after sale service brand Caricare in 2009, and established Transsion Holdings Limited in 2013, and introduced a new brand Infinix. a brand focus on personalization and targeting the young audience.

Through years of deep market cultivation and localized product strategies in Africa, Transsion's shipments and market share surged rapidly starting in 2014. According to IDC data, Transsion shipped 46 million units in Africa that year, capturing over 20% market share. In 2015, shipments surpassed 50 million units, making Transsion the second-largest seller in Africa behind only Samsung. By 2017, Transsion's shipments in Africa exceeded 100 million units for the first time, capturing a market share of 45.12% and surpassing Samsung to become the undisputed "King of African Mobile Phones." Following its resounding success in Africa, the company set sights on the emerging markets of South Asia and Southeast Asia. Starting in 2015, it gradually expanded into markets including Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Nepal, Russia, the Philippines, Turkey, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Thailand. In 2019, it successfully listed on the STAR Market, and in 2020, it made its debut on the Fortune China 500 list. Additionally, Transsion actively expanded its AIoT business and launched the digital accessories brand Oraimo in 2014, and in 2015, launched Syinix a brand of home appliance. Forming a smart ecosystem with the mobile phone is the top priority.

As Transsion solidified its leading position in the Africa market, and reached a market share exceeding 40%, the opportunities in the Africa market became Limited, and putting efforts in other emerging markets and adjusting the positioning of certain products

Transsion increased the investment in the R&D sector, shifting from a low-cost strategy emphasizing cost performance to a mid-to-high-end positioning. And actively expanded its product portfolio. Beyond smartphones, the three major mobile brands now encompass digital accessories, laptops/tablets, and smart home devices.

In 2022, Transsion established a Mobility Division, launching the two-wheeled electric vehicle brand REV00 and the battery-swapping mobility brand TankVolt to create second and third growth curves for the brand.

In 2024, Transsion shipped approximately 201 million mobile phones. According to IDC data, it held a 14.0% share of the global mobile phone market, ranking third among global mobile phone brands, accounting for 8.7% of the global smartphone market, placing fourth.

Transsion dominated the African smartphone market with over 40% market share, securing the top position. In the South Asian market, the company holds over 40% of Pakistan's smartphone market share, ranking first; it commands 29.2% of Bangladesh's smartphone market share, ranking first; and holds 5.7% of India's smartphone market share, ranking eighth [8].

3. Transsion's Product Positioning Strategy for Emerging Markets

With the success achieved in Africa, Transsion actively expanded business into emerging markets such as the Middle East and East Asia. Currently Transsion operates in over 70 countries and regions worldwide, and have more than 2,000 agents and retail outlets.

Transsion officially unveiled the latest imaging flagship smartphone, the CAMON 40 series, at the 2025 Mobile World Congress. Delivering industry-leading snap photography to users in emerging markets. The CAMON 40 series ranked top of the camera performance in smartphones costing under \$600, becoming the first smartphone in the world in 2025 to earn the prestigious DxOMark Smart Choice label.

3.1. Target Market Segmentation Strategy

Africa's population dynamics, marked by a youthful demographic and rapid urbanization, are instrumental in driving entrepreneurial growth. The continent's burgeoning population translates into an expansive market size and a diverse consumer base [9].

For younger consumers, the Infinix brand attracts mobile gaming enthusiasts with its stylish designs and high-performance gaming configurations. For the middle-aged and elderly demographic, the itel brand offers mobile phones featuring simplified operation and large-font displays.

Segmentation by income dimension. In regions with significant income disparities, such as Africa, introduce products across different price points to meet high-end, mid-range, and low-end consumer demands.

3.2. Product Positioning Strategy

Long battery life design addresses unstable power supply in emerging markets like Africa, launching phones with extended standby times—some models lasting up to 21 days.

Multi-SIM standby functionality tackles high call costs in regions with numerous carriers like Africa and Southeast Asia. Transsion develops dual-SIM and quad-SIM standby phones to reduce user communication expenses. Optimized imaging capabilities: Developed “Black Beauty Mode” for African users with darker skin tones, capturing facial data and adjusting exposure compensation to deliver ideal photos. Personalized entertainment: In Southeast Asia and other mobile gaming-focused regions, Infinix launched gaming flagship phones, partnering with popular games as the designated device for esports tournaments.

Emerging markets including Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East boast massive populations and untapped potential, inevitably drawing attention from Chinese and global smartphone manufacturers. Take Africa as an example: with over 1 billion people and a youthful demographic (average age 19), it generates robust demand for device upgrades.

Meanwhile, Transsion Holdings operates three major smartphone brands—TECNO, Infinix, and itel—encompassing 11 distinct series tailored to diverse consumer segments, forming a multi-brand matrix.

In Africa and certain countries, populations predominantly feature darker skin tones, driving high demand and stringent standards for smartphone capabilities in dark-skin photography, backlit portraits, and nighttime selfies. This has driven Transsion to accelerate R&D and continuously upgrade its imaging technology. The company has achieved a transformative leap from dark-skinned to full-spectrum skin tone imaging, securing triple breakthroughs in skin tone databases, evaluation systems, and algorithmic frameworks. This has redefined the industry benchmark for skin tone technology in mobile portrait imaging.

Transsion's smartphones run on deeply customized operating systems built upon the Android platform, including HiOS and XO (collectively known as “Transsion OS”). These systems have become mainstream operating platforms in Africa and emerging markets. Building upon this foundation, Transsion developed its own app store, gaming center, and phone manager, creating a comprehensive system experience.

Concurrently, Transsion independently developed Boomplay, an African music streaming platform. It secured licensing partnerships with music giants like Universal, Warner, and Sony, while also signing numerous local African musicians and singers to build a music library specifically tailored for African consumers, fulfilling their entertainment needs.

Transsion's after-sales brand, Caricare, currently operates with over 2,000 service centers, providing comprehensive support for Transsion's mobile phones, accessories, and home appliances.

4. Existing Issues and Challenges

4.1. Intensifying Competition

The global smartphone market is a highly competitive market. Chinese smart phone Brands like Vivo and Xiaomi are seeking new growth opportunities and accelerating oversea expansion in the emerging markets. In Southeast Asia and Latin America market, Xiaomi and Vivo use cost-effectiveness and localization strategies to capture market share. In Southeast Asia, Chinese brands are enhancing brand recognition through sponsoring sports events and collaborating with local content providers. In 2024, Xiaomi expand business in West African nations like Cameroon and Ghana, and hold events like “Xiaomi Discount Festival” in Egypt and the “Xiaomi Fan Meetup” event. Realme use Note series secure a 70% year-over-year increase in 2024. Xiaomi shipped 8.4 million units in Africa and secure an 11% market share and ranking third.

Realme secured to place in Africa with shipments of 3.8 million units, reflecting an 89% growth rate. Transsion’s strategy “expansion beyond Africa” facing challenges with competitors expanding business in Africa.

In the India market, Vivo, OPPO, and Xiaomi have built competitive barriers through years of market competition.

In Southeast Asia, Transsion's growth rate also trails behind vivo, OPPO, and Xiaomi. In Latin America, Samsung, Xiaomi, and Motorola collectively hold over 60% market share, while Transsion accounts for just 9%. In the Middle East market, the region (excluding Turkey) saw robust smartphone growth.

in 2024, achieving a 14% increase—nearly double the global average of 7%. By brand, the top three players in the Middle East smartphone market in 2024 were Samsung, Transsion, and Xiaomi. Xiaomi's shipments grew by 33% year-over-year, while Transsion's growth was only 9%

4.2. Pressure for Technological Innovation

The increase of access to smartphones in emerging market, the consumers are enjoying the convenience technology brought to their life, and the demand for mobile phones also increased, consumer also have expectations on AI, image capture and fast charging features.

Technological innovation creates differentiated user value, Transsion need to increase investment in R&D sector. Transsion needs to enhance the maturity of the three-tier R&D system product development, technological R&D, and fundamental research—to strengthen innovation capabilities.

On the product sector, Transsion needs to optimize the Integrated Product Development (IPD) management system to elevate product development quality, efficiency, localized user value, and experience, comprehensively boosting product competitiveness. On the technology sector, Transsion needs to refine the organizational structures, and process designs within technology management system, building core competencies across key technology domains including imaging, gaming, AI, charging, and foundational user experiences.

In the image technology sector, Transsion needs to use AI technologies to deepen expertise and achieve breakthroughs, developing multi-skin-tone algorithms, advanced from dark-skin-tone to multi-skin-tone capabilities, fulfilling personalized imaging needs for users across global regions with varying skin tones and aesthetic sensibilities. Simultaneously, integrating cutting-edge multi-skin-tone color science research.

Transsion tackles Artificial Intelligence multi-skin-tone imaging technology to perfectly restore and showcase the beauty of diverse human skin tones across global multicultural contexts.

In the charging technology sector, Transsion continuously advances the intelligent evolution of all-scenario fast charging, introducing multifunctional smart charging modes to provide users with a seamless charging ecosystem that meets their all-weather, all-scenario needs. To deliver differentiated user value, Transsion strengthens R&D system development across all dimensions and drives technological innovation, to enhance completeness and user experience.

4.3. Changes in the Market Environment

High levels of uncertainty are more common in emerging markets, as policies are changed frequently, corruption thrives, and geopolitical risks may be high, all of which affect business operations [10]. Cultural differences, language barriers and other business practices can be challenging for businesses to grasp. Cultural misunderstandings can lead to inefficiencies and hinder the success of partnerships. Furthermore, marketing tools that address differences in consumer culture may be difficult to create due to different perceptions of customer values and behaviors compared to those of domestic competitor firms [10].

5. Conclusion

This study uses literature review, secondary-data comparison and multi-case analysis to systematically investigate Transsion's product-positioning strategy in emerging markets. Through analyzing the trend of global smart phone market and the cases of Transsion, summarizing Transsion's product positioning strategies and challenges, to show the importance of localization strategies and the importance to design products according to the needs of consumers. Looking forward, as 5G penetration in emerging markets is expected to increase, Transsion can leverage its established mind-slot to extend the "local imaging + digital entertainment" advantage into AI glasses and in-car infotainment, ultimately transforming from "Africa's phone king" to "the digital-ecology platform for emerging markets".

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