

## Positioning strategies: a literature review

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### Abstract

The concept “positioning” has drawn significant attention from academics and practitioners since it was put forward, because it played an important role in marketing activities. The aim of the paper is to carry out a contemporary and concise review of the positioning research domain, in particular how scholars have approached this field of study, various positioning strategies have been studied, and how the studies are designed. Through an iterative search in multiple literature databases, 46 qualified research studies on positioning strategies were identified and retrieved. The study is based on research articles in English, published in academic journals, which limits the international and professional scope of the study. Another limitation is the selected time period, which does not include studies later than 2012. As a review, the main contribution of this paper is a contemporary and comprehensive overview of the field as such.

**Keywords:** Brand, Literature review, Positioning strategies and Product

### Introduction

The concept of positioning is subject to considerable differences in interpretation. It is perhaps one of the thorniest and most complex concepts in marketing (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). One of the reasons for this circumstance is the issue that despite different authors have attempted to define the term positioning; there is no mutual agreement among marketing scholars and practitioners about the exact meaning of the concept. It is, however, important to note that the lack of coherent definitions (Arnott, 1992; Blankson & Kalafatis 2004; Holmes, 1974; Maggard, 1976) and the difficulties involved in the implementation of the positioning process by practitioners (de Chernatony, 1994) has perpetually given rise to comments about the lack of appreciation of the positioning concept (Pollay, 1985). Such dilemma was first expressed in the writings of Aaker and Shansby (1982) who stated that: “positioning means different things to different people”. To some, it means the segmentation decision. To others it is an image question. To still others it means selecting which product features to emphasize, and it still holds true today.

Ries & Trout (2001) define Positioning as an organized system for finding a window in the mind of a customer. It is based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances. Positioning is the act of designing the company’s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market. Blanks on and Kalafatis (2004) Clement and Grottemeyer (1990) noted that the concept of product positioning strategies has become essential to the success of a firm’s marketing strategies. According to Soundararaj & Rengamani (2002) positioning is not what you do to a product, but what you do to the minds of the prospect customers; that is, you 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. Fill (1999) states that the successful positioning can only be achieved by adopting a customer’s perspective and by understanding how customers perceive products in the class, and how they attach importance to particular attributes that can be grouped under a construct. As suggested by Kapferer (2004), Brand Positioning task is to give the answers to the four questions: a) “a brand for what”; b) “a brand for whom”; c) “a brand for when”; and) “a brand against whom.

According to Brooks bank (1994), the positioning strategy should include three components: customer targets, which are the product of the segmentation study; competitor targets, which are a product of the analysis of external environment; and competitive advantage, which is also a product of the environmental analysis. Brooks bank (1994) had found in his research between higher and lower performing United Kingdom (UK) companies in terms of their marketing practices, that to be successful over the long term a firm's offering must be well positioned in the market place. This is supported by authors including Clement & Grotemeyer (1990) and Devlin et al. (1995) who assert that, just as marketing has become an increasingly important element of strategic management process, so has become fundamental to the success of firm's the adoption of the positioning concept, and Fisher (1991) contended that differentiated position generates high return on profits. Urban & Hauser (1993) states that Positioning is critical for new product. Not only must a new product deliver the benefits the customer needs, but it must do so better than competition. In developing a positioning, the marketer must consider four things: the target market; how the product is different or better than competitors; the value of this difference to the target market; the ability to demonstrate or communicate this difference to the target market. Therefore the present work picks up on the importance of target market for positioning. A contemporary and concise review of the positioning research domain, in particular how scholars have approached this field of study, in which target markets positioning have been studied, and how the studies are designed.

### **Literature review**

Several positioning have been have been proposed in the literature. Alpert and Gatty (1969) were the first to propose positioning by behavioural lifestyle. By collecting data from respondents on 80 variables, they used a factor analysis statistical technique for data reduction and identified 25 male consumer segments which were further divided into two categories, that is, heavy and light beer drinkers. As a result the authors suggest that the profile of users for product positioning emanates from consumer purchasing patterns and product use.

Holmes (1974) recommended four positioning strategies for retailers: positioning by leader, positioning by emulation, alternative positioning and positioning strategy to overcome a common weakness. According to Holmes one enviable position is that of being the leader and other is emulation which implies that management should try to out distance the number one competitor on each of the several dimensions .Further Holmes suggests that rather than to imitate a competitor the merchant may attract greater attention and generate more traffic by taking a different tact opting for alternate position and also by overcoming the common weakness shared by all competitors.

Maggard (1976) suggested three variety of positioning alternatives: head-on positioning that can be applied to either the firm or the product i.e. placing the new brand right alongside the entrenched leaders, all in the same commercial setting; head-on variations that can be launched against a leader, either directly or indirectly and positioning for social accountability where each producer of consumer products must become increasingly aware of the trend towards consumer protection.

Houston and Hanieski (1976) proposed multiproduct positioning strategies and defined multiproduct positioning as overlaying one product's characteristics with the perceived characteristics of another to derive demand for one product through the demand of another product. The mechanism is in either demonstrating the complementarities of the products or in creating complementarities. These multiproduct positioning strategies are parasitic positioning where a firm tries to associate its product with a star product that is consistent with the product's trajectory and pooled positioning where two or more companies (divisions) jointly promote the complementary nature of the products.

Ries and Trout (1981) in their seminal work mentioned that the main focus of positioning is establishing a favorable location for brands in the minds of the consumer and this location can be established through five different positioning alternatives such as:

- Market leader - According to them to become a leader in a certain product category, it is almost a prerequisite to be the first in the people's mind and to be the first brand to offer a certain product.
- Follower - If a brand is not the first one in the respective product category, but is a follower, it can as well profit by looking for the hole and filling it in the customers mind. The claim of a follower position is a "contrast-position" to the leader. This "contrast-position" when compared to other positioning typologies (Aaker and Shansby, 1982; Wind, 1982; Crawford et al. 1983; Aaker, 1991) has big similarities with competitor positioning.
- Reposition competition - If the product was not the first in customer's minds and if marketers cannot find an empty niche in the market anymore, authors suggest repositioning competition.
- Brand name - The success of the brand depends on the brand name, it should not be underestimated by marketers.
- Line extension - Sometimes broadening the base and extending the application of the original product also works.

Myers and Shocker (1981) limited their positioning classification to three types of attributes: Product characteristics both physical and pseudophysical. However they have made a distinction between physical characteristics and pseudophysical characteristics. Pseudophysical characteristics, reflect physical properties that are not easily measured examples are spiciness, smoky taste, tartness, type of fragrance, greasiness, creaminess and shininess; benefits (direct and indirect) - advantages that promote the well being of the consumer or user for and image or inferences made about the product user.

In a major advance in 1982, Aaker and Shansby suggested six types of positioning strategies which are most widely used strategies by the marketers

- Positioning by attribute - The most frequently used positioning strategy is associating a product with an attribute, a product feature, or customer benefit. A new product can upon occasion be positioned with respect to an attribute that competitors have ignored.
- Positioning by price/quality - The price/quality attribute dimension is so useful and persistent that it is appropriate to consider it separately. In many product categories, some brands offer more in terms of service, features, or performance and a higher price serves to signal this higher quality to the customer.
- Positioning with respect to use or application - Another positioning strategy is associating the product with a use or application. Products can, of course, have multiple positioning strategies, although increasing the number involves obvious difficulties and risks. Often a positioning-by-use strategy represents a second or third position designed to expand the market.
- Positioning by the product user - Another positioning approach is associating a product with a user or a class of users.
- Positioning with respect to a product class - Some critical positioning decisions involve product-class associations
- Positioning with respect to a competitor - In most positioning strategies, an explicit or implicit frame of reference is the competition.
- Positioning explicitly with respect to a competitor can be an excellent way to create a position with respect to an attribute.

Wind (1982) also suggested positioning on the basis of product features, Benefits, Problem solutions or need, usage occasions, user, against another product and product class dissociation. Berry (1982) divided retailing into four segments and suggested positioning on the basis of value retailers where focus is on providing better value than competitors (warehouse, off-pricing); time-efficient where focus is on convenience (superstores, catalogue stores, tele-shopping); high-Contact where focus is on providing strong customer service; (specialty, facilitating, advising, added value, resource usage) and sensory retailers where focus is on making the shopping experience exciting (sounds, smells). Crawford et al. (1983) works involved content analysis of a sample of products and services advertisements appearing in a range of popular consumer and business magazines. The author subsequently put forward two key positioning category - attribute (i.e. features, function, benefits) and surrogates with sub- categories (*Table1* ).

**Table 1: Taxonomy of positioning alternatives**

<b>Alternatives</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Attributes</b>	
<b>Feature</b>	A property of an object which causes a benefit.
<b>Function</b>	The mode of operation or performance.
<b>Benefit</b>	A service or well being which derives from the product.
Direct	An immediate benefit.
Indirect	A benefit which follows from direct benefit.
<b>Surrogates</b>	
<b>Competitor</b>	A product is the same as another.
<b>Endorsement</b>	Value is imputed by a third party's acceptance.
Expert	The third party is qualified to judge the product.
Emulative	The third party is a celebrity.
<b>Experience</b>	Extensive use by others at tests to value.
Other Market	Use in another market.
Bandwagon	Use by a select but not expert, group as the favourite.
<b>Manufacture</b>	How the product is made.
Materials	The ingredients or materials.
Process	The process by which made.
<b>Parentage</b>	Something about the source of the product implies quality.
Company	The company has proven skills.
Brand	The brand is known.
<b>Rank</b>	Leadership implies acceptance either by market share.
<b>Target</b>	The product was specially designed for a particular group.
Demographic	Defined by age sex or other demographic criteria.
Behavioral	Defined by use or other behavioral criteria
Psychographic	Defined by lifestyle or other psychographic criteria

*Source: Crawford et al. (1983)*

Frazer (1983) examined the advertiser's intention for creative strategy and conceptually developed his typology from literature. This positioning typology suggests a different sort of typology than has previously been available. Seven positioning bases suiting certain market conditions in the consumer goods field are suggested in this typology.

- The Generic Strategy which can successfully be applied by marketers with an extremely high market share or monopolistic characteristics. The aim of the positioning element is to stimulate demand for the whole product category a brand belongs to.
- Pre-Emptive strategy where the marketer of a certain product emphasizes a benefit or attribute common to all products in the category as first and as being unique. This approach

seems to be somewhat similar to the “market leader positioning” outlined in other positioning typologies such as that of Ries and Trout (1982).

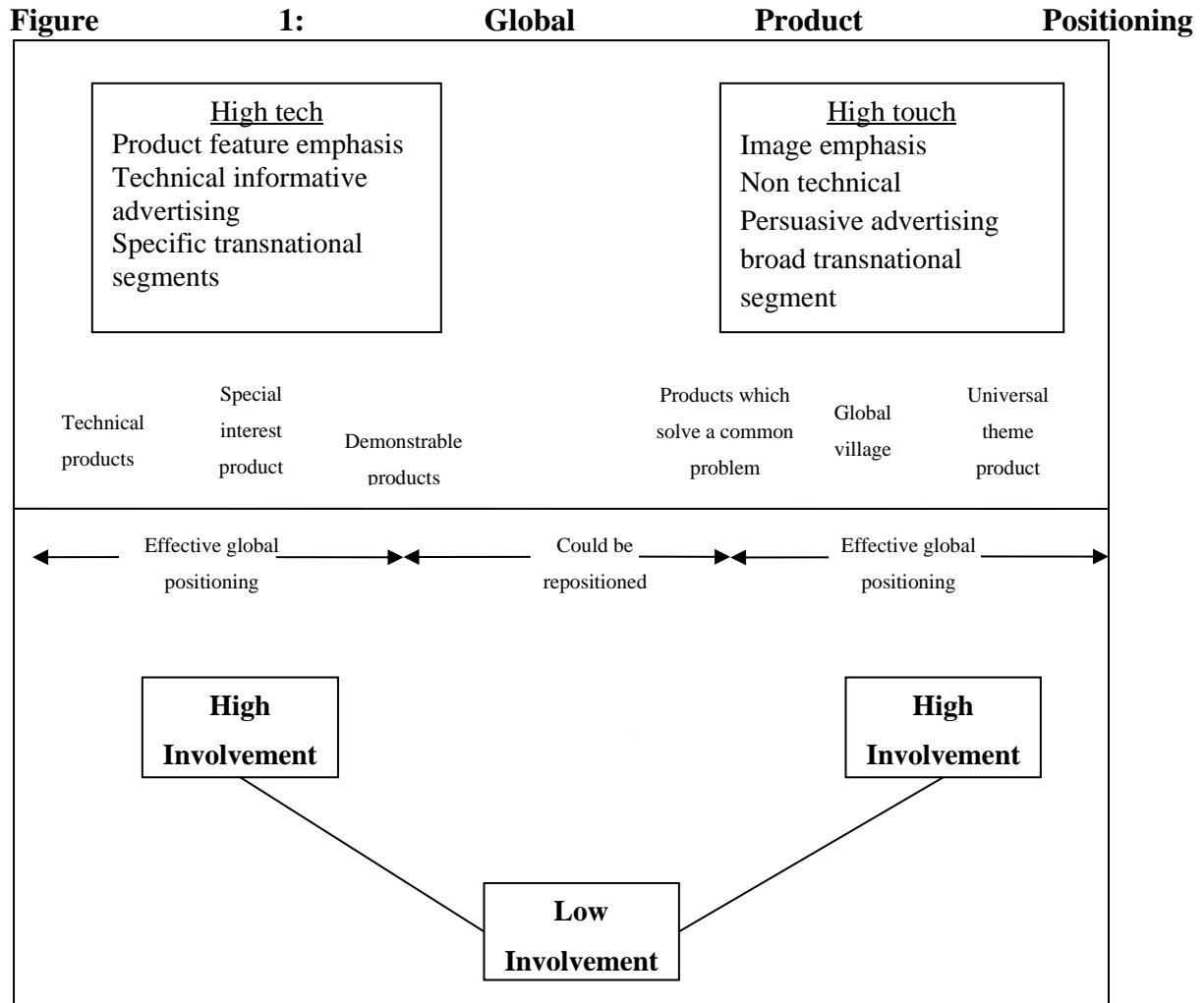
- Positioning based on physical differentiation is referred to as unique selling proposition strategy (USP). Products are associated with a meaningful, distinctive, consumer benefit based on a unique physical product characteristic.
- The counterpart to USP is brand image strategy, where superiority of rather homogenous, low-technology goods with little physical differentiation is claimed via differentiation based on factors extrinsic to the product itself i.e. psychological differentiation.
- The so called “positioning strategy” is a separate positioning alternative where it is required to give the product a place in the consumer’s mind relative to competition.
- The Resonance Strategy where the experience of the consumer is the main focus for sale. Hence, advertisements present situations and emotions which find counterparts in target consumer’s experiences.
- Positioning based on the affective strategy, where the aim is to get in touch with with the consumer at an emotional level. This positioning alternative is based on grabbing the attention and participation of consumers resulting from the ambiguity of ads.

Shostack (1987) suggested that service firms should position their products based on structural complementarity, structural diversity, and overall development direction. He used two variables to describe service processes. The variables are : Complexity - the steps and sequences that constitute the processes and Divergence - executional latitude or variability of those steps and sequences. Shostack (1987) also suggested four strategic directions to differentiate a service process which are: reducing divergence, increasing divergence, reducing complexity, and increasing complexity.

Wortzel (1987) recommended three basic strategies for retail positioning: a product differentiation strategy - offering a different assortment from that of competitors; a personality and service augmentation strategy - offering additional unique services and personality to differentiate the store; and a price leadership strategy - offering the same products as the competition, at lower prices.

Domzal & Unger (1987) identified three positioning strategies which are used in global marketing. The first strategy is to launch the product as a world brand by maximizing name, feature, and image standardization worldwide. The second strategy is to classify global segments that seek the same product benefits and/or share similar psychographic characteristics. The third strategy is to position the world brand toward either end of the high-tech/high-touch spectrum. Such positioning is effective because both poles encourage high consumer involvement and both offer common symbols and language based either in high technology and product features or in human emotion and product image. The three positioning strategies are

- Global Positioning Strategy 1: High-Tech focuses on tangible product features. Buyers of these more technical products may require considerable product information to make their decision.
- Global Positioning Strategy 2: High-Touch focuses on those products which are more images oriented than product-feature-focused.
- Positioning Strategy 3: Hybrids on the Continuum - There are many successful global brands that fall into more than one category on the high-tech/ high-touch continuum. Some sports equipment overlaps the high-tech and special-interest classifications.



Source: Domzal & Unger (1987)

Easingwood and Mahajan (1989) proposed an empirically based positioning typology by adopting content analysis and worded advertisements methodology approach, in a study of positioning for financial services companies. The authors advocated that positioning strategies favored for services should be different from those for goods and positioning strategies should be developed from a consideration of the marketing implications of the special service attributes of intangibility, heterogeneity, and simultaneity. Easingwood and Mahajan (1989) proposed an eight base positioning typology:

- Positioning by organization when marketers emphasize the reputation and special capabilities of the organization itself. This base is used in regard to the expertise position, reliability position, innovativeness position and performance position.
- Positioning by service augmentation, which occurs either through the augmentation of the product itself, or the provision of extra service.
- Positioning by people where company's staff is better trained and motivated than competitor's staff is highlighted.
- Positioning by attractive package offering/assembling a mix of services for a client.
- Positioning by superior use of technology particularly information technology for the customer's benefit.
- Positioning by accessibility for customers.
- Positioning by customization, opportunity of designing the service to match individual needs.

- Positioning by offering complete product line so that customers are not required to go to a competitor.

Laskey, Day and Crask (1989) with the help of content analysis of commercials empirically derived five informational positioning bases and four transformational ones. The five informational positioning bases are

- Comparative Positioning when a brand is openly compared to a competitor on informational components such as attributes or benefits.
- Unique selling proposition strategy when products are related with a meaningful, distinctive, consumer benefit based on a unique physical product characteristic.
- Pre-Emptive positioning which is factually based and impartially verifiable without any claims of uniqueness and mentioning of competitors.
- Hyperbole Positioning where advertisements are building around overstated claims and are subjective.
- The Generic-informational approach is comparable to Frazer's generic strategy where the aim of the positioning element is to stimulate demand for the whole product category a brand belongs to.

The last four positioning bases are transformational, meaning that they are not information-based, but correlate the experience of using the advertised brand with psychological characteristic such as:

- User image positioning that focuses on brand users and their lifestyles.
- Brand image positioning that focuses on the brand itself and conveys a brand personality.
- Use occasion positioning where marketers try to create an connection between the product and a certain situation wherever the product might be used.
- Generic-transformational positioning elements when the focus of creative strategy is on the product class rather than the advertised brand and the commercial is clearly transformational.

Lewis (1990) examined hotel advertisements and classified the lodging position into two groups: Objective positioning that solely focuses on physical attributes to establish a hotel's image and subjective positioning which is concerned with consumer's mental processes.

Arnott's (1992) presented a rigorous empirical alternative to the typologies discussed earlier by proposing a composite positioning typology such as positioning by empathy, solvency, promotions, administrative time, helpfulness, reliability, attentiveness, staff competence, flexible products, access to people, reputation, customization, incentives, social awareness ,security and technology.

According to Dibb and Simkin (1993) positioning is widely employed in the services sector. And positioning strategies for services should be different than goods and described positioning strategies in services by attributes /values, price, service level, quality ambience and value for money. Such positions are well entrenched in the mind of consumers and it seems no less developed than in the marketing of manufactured goods.

Hooley and Saunders (1993) asserted that the basis of the success of several product and services is their ability to hold and defend their position over many years. These authors, drawing upon the work of Aaker and Shansby (1982), proposed that a firm can position itself on the basis of four key generic positions, i.e. consolidation, latent position, deposition and membership. According to Hooley and Saunders (1993), for each position the firm can pursue six main strategies, i.e. attributes, price/quality, competition, application user and product class.

The hypothetical typology of Arnott and Easingwood (1994) was developed for categorizing positioning alternatives in the services sector. The authors intended to conceptually derive a

composite positioning typology from all existing typologies until that time. The typology incorporates the following elements:

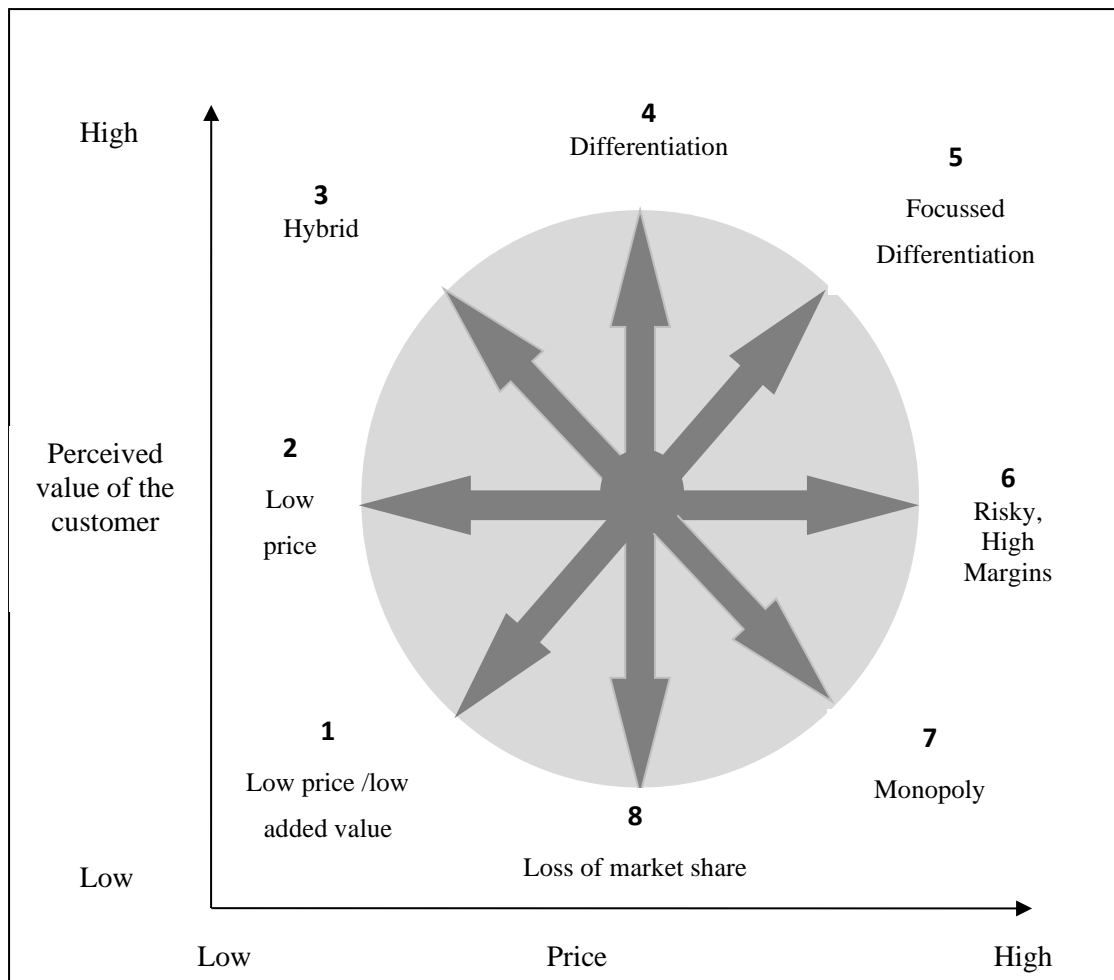
- Positioning along sensory factors covers those aspects of a service that can be directly perceived through any of the consumer's five senses.
- Positioning along price include consumer relevant variables.
- Positioning according to usage.
- Positioning according to the end-user concerns.
- Positioning a product through associations/ comparison.
- Positioning by emphasizing the process of service delivery.
- Positioning by highlighting a company's well-trained people.
- Positioning by stressing easy access to the service.
- Positioning by experience.
- Positioning by emphasizing the way in which a company communicates with consumers and the competitive advantage the company has in that area.
- Positioning by assurance where marketers try to relate their products to safety and believability.
- Positioning by reliability which stresses on keeping promises, dependability and accuracy.
- Positioning along empathy which means to show the consumers that we understand them.
- Positioning by highlighting a company's innovativeness and stressing new product development.
- Positioning along a technology advance and
- Positioning along a company's social accountability.

Boyd et al. (1995) proposed seven marketing strategies : Mono-segment type positioning attracting consumers from one market segment; multi-segment type positioning of attracting consumers from different market segments; waiting positioning used to minimize respond time switching from multi-segment to mono-segment positioning; imitation positioning depending on another successful brand on the market; anticipation positioning where the brand is positioned in anticipation or expectation of the evolution of needs of a market segment; adaptive positioning where the brand is repositioned periodically to be in trend with the market evolution and the needs of the watched segment and defensive positioning where additional brand is introduced in the same position for the same segment to defend itself against competitors.

Bowman & Faulkner (1995) developed a positioning strategy known as "Bowman's strategy clock" based on the principle of achieving competitive advantage by providing customers better products than competitors. Positions on the strategy clock represent different positions in the market where customers have different requirements in terms of perceived value and monetary cost considerations.

### **Figure 2: Bowman's Strategy Clock**





Source: Bowman & Faulkner, 1995

Competitive advantage is achieved through the following positions:

- Low price, low value added- It is a category in which companies prefer low price and the only method by which competence can be achieved is by increasing the volumes and the number of new customers.
- Low price- It is a category in which the company prefer to keep low prices .
- Hybrid, Moderately price, high added value- It is a category in which companies provide high perceived value at a low price compared to the competition.
- Differentiation-This positioning provides high quality products and differentiated in a way that the consumer perceives a high added value of the product.
- Focussed differentiation. It offers a very high perceived value for a distinct segment.
- High price/ standard added value. -It is a category in which companies provide standard value at a high price.
- High price/ low added value- It is a category in which companies' low value at a high price. This only works in the case of monopoly.
- Low value/ standard price. This strategy leads directly to the loss of market share. Products with low perceived added value, and without being differentiated, cannot compete at the market only by the price.

Blankson, Kalafatis and Pollard (1996) extended the four generic positions (consolidation, latent position, deposition and membership) proposed by Hooley and Saunders (1993) with two more, positions (primal and fallow) .The positioning strategies suggested by them are Attributes - creation of awareness by attempting to be distinct on a special attribute;

Price/Quality - the use of price and quality as a basis for advertisements and promotion in the market-place; Competition- using its superiority as the main emphasis of an advertising or promotional campaign; Application - highlighting the other uses of its range of services; User - portraying a sense of security, reliability, trustworthiness and reputation ; Product class - associating the product or service with being up-market or even one which is moving upwards and Image or Ethos - highlighting the importance of its good image in society.

Porter (1996) suggested three foremost ways in which firms might position their offerings in the market: Variety positioning which is basically product centered and based on firms assets and competencies rather than customer requirements; needs-based positioning where a firm identifies its target market and then designs its offerings to meet as many of its (product-related) needs as possible and access-based positioning which is based on the identification of segments through commonality of accessibility.

Hooley et al. (1998) argue that the competitive positioning approach offers a more realistic way of understanding how companies compete in their markets than the conventional strategic type perspective. According to them there are an infinite number of ways by which firms might position themselves in their markets and these can be summarized on the basis of the emphasis they give to six main dimensions of differentiation. Positioning can be based on price, quality, service, tailoring, benefit differentiation or innovation. The key to creating sustainable positions is to ensure that they are built on the marketing assets and competencies of the firm and hypothesizes the assets and competencies necessary for each positioning strategy (*Table 4*).

**Table 2 : Positioning Strategies**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Customer groups</b>	<b>Strategic focus</b>	<b>Assets and competencies</b>
Low price	Price-sensitive customers	Internal efficiency	Cost control systems, TQM processes, procurement and information systems.
Superior quality	Premium demanding customers	Superior quality and image Management	Market sensing, quality control and management assurance, brand reputation and supply chain management.
Rapid innovation	Innovators and early adopters	First to market	New product/service development R&D technical skills and creative skills.
Superior service	Service-sensitive customers	Relationship building	Market sensing, customer linking, service systems, skilled staff, feedback systems and continuous monitoring.
Differentiated benefits	Benefit segments	Focused targeting	Market sensing, NP/SD and creativity in segmentation.
Tailored offering	Individual customers	Tailoring to individual customer wants and needs	Market sensing, customer bonding and operations flexibility.

*Source: Hooley et al. (1998)*

Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra (1999) examined the emergence of brand positioning strategies in advertising by conducting research in seven countries which were selected to represent broadly Asian and Western cultures as well as developed and developing economies: India,

Thailand, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the United States and proposed a new concept of Global Consumer Culture Positioning (GCCP). The authors suggest that GCCP is a “positioning tool” through which certain offerings can be positioned in the multicultural marketplace. Identification of GCCP as a positioning tool suggests one pathway through which certain brands come to be perceived by consumers as global and provides managers with strategic direction in the multinational marketplace.

Kim and Mauborgne (2000) suggested a simple new approach for examining the benefits offered to customers. They assert that a new service product is likely to succeed if it is appropriately priced, possesses a good business model, avoids hurdles to stakeholder adoption and satisfies consumer utility within one of six key categories known as utility levers (compelling reasons for consumers to buy a product or service) such as:

- Customer productivity- innovation aiding consumers to do things better, more rapidly or in a different way
- Simplicity- services, which are more effortless to use and easier to understand than existing offerings.
- Convenience- availability, ease of consumption and purchase,
- Risk reduction- safety of product/service consumption process (reduces physical risk), safety of investment (reduces financial risk).
- Fun and image- pleasure arising from the use/ purchase of the service and positive image portrayal of the service as perceived by the consumer.
- Environmental friendliness- the capacity of the service to improve, or reduce risk to, the environment.

Kalafatis et al. (2000) empirically derived and validated a positioning typology in the area of business marketing. Contrary to others, the authors do not focus on brands but chose companies as the unit of analysis, as they scrutinized the business market where product positioning is believed to be less developed than in consumer markets and identified thirteen positioning alternatives, whereas the main differentiating constructs were leadership; safety; stability and the long standing of a provider; presence; range of offering; product performance; personal contact; easy to do business; pricing; distinct identity; status; country identity; differentiation.

Romaniuk (2001) assessed the relationship between different positions and customer vulnerability over time in the business financial services market. The six positions which he used for studying the relationship are price, relationship/services benefit, security benefit, user type, accessibility benefit and perceived quality.

Pham and Muthukrishnan (2002) classified positioning strategies into two categories abstract positioning which is general, and summarizes the product’s features and attribute-specific positioning which is specific, and details the product’s features through specific performance claims. The authors specifically highlighted the effectiveness of an abstract position versus an attribute specific position and concluded that abstract positions were more memorable and more defensible than specific positions in certain instances.

Trommsdorf (2002) mentioned two main positioning concepts: market exhaustion i.e. positioning of brands in the centre of the consumers ideal conceptions or in a potent market and segment or differentiation i.e. positioning of brands as far away from competitive brands as possible.

Punj & Moon (2002) suggested two positioning alternatives that are normally available to a manager for seeking brand association either an exemplar brand or an abstract category prototype. The purpose of exemplar-based positioning is to accomplish brand consideration by direct comparisons with the market leader or other major brand. Product attributes, package design, point of purchase displays, or independent testing results may be used as the basis for

correspondence. Exemplar-based positioning can be executed by either “positioning with respect to a competitor or using comparative advertising and the purpose of abstraction-based positioning is also to achieve brand consideration but without direct comparisons with the market leader or a major brand. The goal of abstraction-based positioning is also to facilitate entry into the consumer’s consideration set, but through association with a hypothetical (i.e., composite) brand in the category. Abstraction-based positioning can be implemented by either positioning using product characteristics or using a non - comparative advertising claim. Kapferer’s (2004) typology provided profound insight into positioning alternatives, but being conceptually derived it was only descriptive and not approved empirically. He emphasizes positioning along features and benefit and refer to benefit positioning as rational vs. psychological benefits and objective vs. subjective benefits, respectively). He further advocates that brands are positioned with the help of brand personality, associations with certain imaginaries, imageries and meanings. Finally, He asserts positioning along a brand’s deep values and mission.

Unlike the extant empirically based positioning typologies (Crawford et al. 1983; Easingwood and Mahajan, 1989) which are characterized by their lack of consumer perceptions, Blankson and Kalafatis (2004) developed customer-derived positioning topology. The authors claimed that the proposed typology is generic in nature and suitable for studying positioning in both service and product industries. They suggested eight positioning strategies for both goods and services: Top of the range, service, and value for money, reliability, attractiveness, country of origin, branding and social class.

According to Burton and Easing Wood (2006), the K&M (2000) typology is incomplete. Addition of a revised ‘hedonic’ benefit lever including emotional benefit, sensual/sensuous experience, and image, in place of the more restricted ‘fun and image’ lever, accounts for direct consumer product and service consumption experience leading to emotional variation. The expanded utilitarian and hedonic ‘risk’ lever is more complete. What the utility lever approach offers, is a basic structure for the checking and re-evaluation of entrepreneurs’ and managers’ intuitions regarding a proposed service product. It allows a planned positioning to take place, based on a focus on the benefits that a service product is planned to offer. Hence Burton and Easingwood, suggested following strategies: customer productivity, simplicity, convenience, risk (function, social, and psychological), environmental friendliness hedonic benefit (image, emotional benefit) and sensual/sensuous benefit.

According to Batra et al (2006) a positioning strategy is vital to provide focus to the development of an advertising campaign and suggested seven approaches that are used in positioning these are using product characteristics or customer benefits, the price quality approach, the use or applications approach, the product user approach, the product class approach, the competitor approach and the cultural symbol approach. The six approaches are the same as given by the Aaker and Shansby (1982). They added the new positioning approach i.e. the cultural symbol approach as many advertisers use deeply entrenched cultural symbols to differentiate their brand from competitors.

Elliot and Percy (2007) proposed two different types of positioning strategies: central positioning and differentiated positioning. A brand that has a central approach is a brand that is considered as having all the main benefits that consumers generally associate with the specific product category. Brands that have this positioning approach are normally addressed to as “category-leaders” or “the best brand in the category” and do not need to continuously reemphasize their benefits. However, differentiated positioning works if the consumers initially believe that the brand is the best within the category. Elliot and Percy (2007) pointed out that in order to effectively position oneself in marketing communication, benefits play an important part. Furthermore, they suggest that when consumers are linking these benefits to the brand,

they build an attitude (positive or negative) towards the brand, which in return decides on the purchasing behaviour. The desired positioning can be effective by understanding how this attitude is related to the benefits a brand wish to be associated with.

Aaker and McLoughlin (2007) drawing upon the works of other authors suggested that positioning could be done by offering value, quality, innovative product , giving a narrow product focus, giving a target segment focus, being global, product category, product attributes and functional benefits, breadth of product line, organizational intangibles, emotional self-expressive benefits , experience, being contemporary, brand personality and competitor position .

According to Batra and Kazmi, (2008) popular positioning approaches used by the marketers are positioning by product attributes or benefits, by use or occasion and time, by price quality ,by product category ,by product user ,by competitor, by corporate identity and by brand endorsement .They actually modified Aaker and Shansby (1982) classification by adding two more positioning typologies from Crawford et al. (1982) positioning taxonomy : Positioning by corporate identity and Positioning by brand endorsement.

Aslı (2009) developed a conceptual framework for marketing managers that facilitate selection and implementation of positioning strategies for a number of product types and proposed positioning alternatives for different product types while considering the impact of stage of life cycle and brand equity. These strategies are attribute/benefit positioning, value positioning, competitor positioning and niche positioning

In line with the classification of Aaker and Shansby 1982 and Batra et al. (2006) Chandrashekar (2010) also adapted Aaker and Shansby (1982) typology. Positioning strategies such as attribute positioning, benefit positioning, use or application positioning, user positioning, competitor positioning, product category positioning, and quality or price positioning and added one more positioning strategy i.e. Positioning in relation to a target market , regardless of which positioning strategy is used the needs of the target market always must be considered.

According to Lamb et al. (2010) firms use a variety of bases for positioning such as attribute, price and quality, use or application, product user, product class, competitor and emotion .They also modified Aaker and Shansby (1982) typology by adding positioning by emotion that focuses on how the product makes customers feel.

Gammoh, Koh and Okoroafo (2011) drawing on the work of Alden et al. (1999) suggested two positioning strategies global consumer culture positioning (GCCP) and local consumer culture positioning (LCCP) and investigated the impact of global consumer culture positioning (GCCP) in comparison to local consumer culture positioning (LCCP) strategies on consumer evaluations of a new unknown brand. According to them consumer evaluations as measured by four variables - brand attitudes, purchase intentions, word of mouth, and brand prestige and these variables were higher for global brand positioning relative to local brand positioning strategies.

Diwan & Bodla (2011) developed an empirically based customer-derived typology of positioning strategies in the automobile industry. Eight positioning strategies/factors in the automobile industry suggested by them are visual artistic, contemporary features, basic features, security measures, brand image, dealer network and services, promotional campaign and cost and finance.

## **Conclusion**

The concept “positioning” has drawn significant attention from academics and practitioners since it was put forward, because it played an important role in marketing activities. The paper carried out a contemporary and concise review of the positioning research domain, in particular

how scholars have approached this field of study, various positioning strategies have been studied, and how the studies are designed. Positioning is emerging as an internationally recognized research domain characterized by a high degree of multi-disciplinary, rapid proliferation in and between disciplines, and a somewhat fragmented theoretical foundation. On the basis of literature different positioning strategies were identified which managers use for positioning their product successfully in the market . the main contribution of this paper is a contemporary and comprehensive overview of the field as such.

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