

## Key strategies and issues of positioning: A review of past studies



**Partha Prasad Chowdhury, Chartered Marketer (UK)**

Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing, American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB), Dhaka.

E-mail: [ppc\\_bd@yahoo.com](mailto:ppc_bd@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** Despite the significant role of positioning on developing competitive advantage it has been noticed that, in the recent academic literature few studies highlight the key strategies to positioning a product/brand successfully. This study tries to fill in this gap by highlighting the key positioning strategies along with some guidelines for the marketers for formulating effective positioning of their brand in the market. A good number of prior research studies on market positioning of brand/product between the years 1958 to 2010 are reviewed with a view to prepare this study. Though the study of positioning reveals that firms use different positioning concepts but most studies highlighted the use of product attributes, product categories and competitors as main ways for positioning. This study is based upon the previous studies which are mainly based on the Western context and hence findings may not be directly generalized everywhere and concludes with suggestions for further research. This literature review integrates the findings of the prior studies and focuses on highlighting key positioning strategies along with some key points that need to remember during positioning and suggests marketing practitioners some guidelines to develop effective positioning strategies for achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

**Key Words:** positioning, competitive advantage, chaotic marketplace, value proposition, differentiation, attributes.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction and background

Marketing is a social and managerial process (Kotler, 1996) by which marketers create long-term superior value efficiently and effectively by offering products as per the needs and requirements of a set of customers or prospects and by developing strategies to adapt themselves with the all micro and macro-environmental factors in order to establish, develop and maintain fair and non-opportunistic relational exchanges (Gronroos, 1994) creatively and profitably in a way so that the objectives of all concerned stakeholders are achieved as promised.

Alderson (1958) suggested that tasks of marketing are to produce goods from the materials available in nature as per the needs of the households or individuals. Levit (1960) suggested that focus of a firm should be customer oriented. Kotler & Levy (1969) suggested that the functions of marketing are maintaining close relationship (touch) with the customers; identifying needs; developing products as per customers' needs; and to communicate with a view to express firm's objectives. Hooley et al. (2001) suggested that marketing is the process

of profitably matching organisational capabilities to the needs and requirements of target customers which is achieved through formulating and manipulating the marketing mix of products, price, promotion, distribution and customer relationships. The firm decides on the products' design characteristics which are likely to appeal to its target buyers to position their products/brands in the marketplace (Cronshaw et al., 1990). Hence positioning forms the core of modern marketing theory and practices (Hooley et al., 2001) and is a necessary condition for a firm to be successful (Cronshaw et al., 1990).

### **1.2 Rationale of the study**

Overall marketplace is overcrowded with plenty of me-too products, intense competition and customers are willing to buy a satisfactory brand in a product category and traditional approach of advertising do not work effectively and hence firms are unable to introduce and establish most of their new brands in the market (e.g. Trout and Ries, 1972) and today's marketplace is rapidly changing, chaotic, unstable, global and highly competitive (e.g. Trout and Ries, 1972; Hamel and Prahalad, 1989; Hamel, 1996; Day and Montgomery, 1999; Porter, 1996). In this 21st century, more and more products and services are becoming increasingly similar and competitive in terms of prices, features and capabilities (Marken, 1997) and hence firms need to formulate and implement effective positioning strategy for developing some competitive advantage in order to be successful in the marketplace. Though the importance of positioning is widely accepted by the academic scholars in the literature but It has been noticed that there are not enough literatures on product/brand positioning which were published recently and to the best of my knowledge a limited number of researches/literature reviews were focused on highlighting the all possible ways for positioning of a product/brand in the marketplace. Hence the purpose of this study is to address this gap in the literature and to go for a review of literatures that are relevant with product/brand positioning with a view to highlight the different ways that marketers may consider for positioning their products along with the importance of positioning and some key points to remember during formulating positioning strategies so that marketing practitioners will have a guideline for developing proper understanding in order to formulate and implement right positioning strategies.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The purpose of the study is to identify and highlight the key strategies for positioning a product or brand in a marketplace along with some key points that need to remember during positioning which might be effective for the practitioners for formulating marketing programs by leveraging the proper understanding of positioning concept in order to find out the way(s) for an organization to compete and to be successful in the changing and chaotic market place. This literature review based on the findings of the published books and articles on positioning is focused on to provide answers of the following five questions:

1. What is positioning? Why is positioning important?
2. What are the main strategies for positioning a brand or product?
3. What are the roles of promotion on positioning a brand?
4. What are the different steps of positioning? How positioning works?
5. What are the different issues that need to be remembered while positioning a brand/product?

## **2 METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

As per the objective of the study, with a view to identify and highlight the main positioning strategies and key points that need to remember during positioning a brand/product in the marketplace, prior studies which are relevant with the positioning and were published between the years 1958 to 2010 are reviewed. In this literature review, first of all introduction and background, rationale of the study, objectives of the study, methodology & structure of the study are discussed which is followed by the main part of this study. This main part (Literature review) is constructed under several sections as per objective of the study. In this literature review, first of all definition of positioning and its importance is discussed then main strategies of positioning have been highlighted with examples from the previous studies. Role of promotional tools on positioning; steps of positioning; how positioning works; key positioning issues are explained in brief in the following sections. Finally, discussions & managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed. Full list of references are mentioned at the end.

### **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 What is positioning?**

Different scholars defined positioning in different ways. A “position” is a set of buyers at whom the product is primarily aimed (Cronshaw et al., 1990); the place a product occupies in a given market (Ansari et al., 1994); and is the combination of choice of target market and competitive advantage (Hooley et al., 2001). Positioning is the act of designing, establishing the company's offer and image and communicating the products' key distinctive benefits in the market so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the minds of the target customers (e.g. Kotler, 1996; Kotler & Keller, 2009). Positioning indicates how the business aspires to be perceived by the stakeholders in relation with the competition and the marketplace (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007).

Cravens & Piercy (2009) mentioned that positioning is deciding the desired perception/association of an organization/ brand by customers of the target market segment and developing the marketing program with a view to meet (or exceed) the needs and requirements of the customers of that marketplace. The objective of positioning is to locate the brand/product in the consumers' minds so that organization can secure maximize potential benefits (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Marketer formulates different value propositions for positioning different brands for different market segments. For example, Chevrolet positioned its Cobalt automobile with its sporty styling, minimal rear seat, and small trunk to young singles; it positions its Impala, a much larger vehicle, at the family car buyer needing a roomier vehicle (source: Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).

#### **3.2 Why is positioning important?**

Market positioning sets the competitive positioning for the product and creates a detailed marketing mix. The outcome of positioning is the creation of an effective value proposition which is customer-oriented (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Positioning of a brand/product helps to differentiate it from its competitors on the basis of important attributes to the customers of the target marketplace and develops a distinctive identity for the product/brand in the minds of the customers (Ansari et al., 1994); creates a unique perception in buyers' minds of the target market segment (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

An effective positioning is helpful to guide marketing strategy by clarifying the brand's essence, what goals it helps the consumer achieve, and how it does so in a unique way (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Positioning is an important source of competitive advantage and acts as a support for competitive advantage. (Cronshaw et al., 1990). Positioning strategy which includes product strategy, distribution strategy, pricing strategy, advertising and sales promotion strategy, sales force strategy, direct marketing strategy, and the Internet strategy points out how (and why) the product mix, line, or brand is to be positioned in the target market segment and hence effective targeting and positioning of the firm's products are core dimensions of market-driven strategy and hence are essential in gaining and sustaining superior performance (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

### **3.3 How to position in the marketplace?**

During 1950s marketing concepts challenged the old concepts and was focused to create and market products as per customers' needs and wants. During the 1960s and 1970s, as most of all major industries were over communicated with plenty of existing brands in each product category, which were serving same customers' wants. Availability of high volume of existing products/brands and their advertising activities created the marketplace as noisy and as leading brands had already made up customer's mind and hence traditional approach of advertising of new brands were unable to create a space in the market by changing the minds of the prospects. Advertising became ineffective to persuade customer by highlighting product features or customers' benefit due to customers changing habit towards a satisfactory brand instead of best one for any product category in the already mature and complex and hence chaotic marketplace (Trout & Ries, 1972) and hence Trout & Ries (1972) emphasised on positioning approach which focused on competitors instead of needs and requirements of the customers.

Trout & Ries (1972) introduced new marketing philosophy under which, organisation should conduct their marketing activities. They redefined the marketing concept by focusing on industry competitors instead of traditional focus on customers. By analysing and giving a lot of real evidence from the different industrial sectors they suggested that the companies should follow positioning concept for their orientation towards the chaotic marketplace. They focused mainly on competitors as a way to position the products or brands. Whereas Aaker and Shansby (1982) suggested that the competition is a reference point for positioning. Despite on focusing only on competitors as suggested by Trout & Ries (1972), they highlighted six strategies of positioning as- positioning by attribute, positioning by price/quality, positioning by use/application, positioning by product user/class of users, positioning by product class association and positioning by competitors. Aaker and Shansby (1982) also emphasised on identifying competitors where competitors might be primary competitors and secondary competitors (e.g. For Tab, all products in diet cola category are primary competitors and other colas and all soft drinks are secondary competitors). They also suggested identifying competitors by association of products with product situation (e.g. other beverages regarded as appropriate for snack products might be the competitors of Tab). Sujan & Betman (1989) also suggested identifying the competitive brands before going to positioning the brands.

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 (executorial latitude or variability of those steps and sequences). He classified service processes under  $2 \times 2$  matrixes as per following figure:

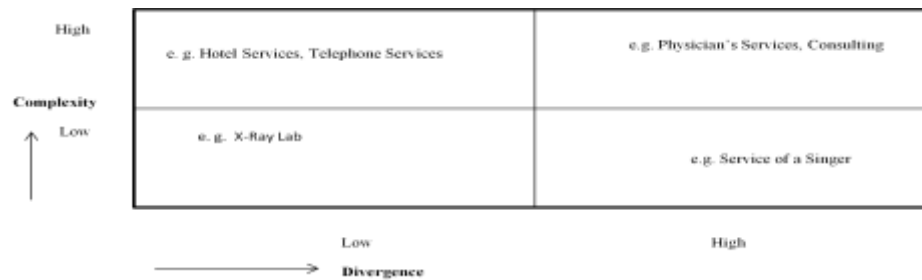


Figure-1: Relative positions based on structural analysis (source: Shostack, 1987)

Shostack (1987) suggested four strategic directions to differentiate a service process which are reducing divergence (e.g. legal firms for specific service), increasing divergence (e.g. H&R Block), reducing complexity (e.g. retailer selling ice cream only), and increasing complexity (barbering, supermarkets). Whereas Sujan & Betman (1989), with the help of Schema plus tag model and Sub-typing model suggested that presence of customers' perception about strong discrepancy helps to position a brand in a niche market segment whereas presence of customers' perception about moderate discrepancy helps to differentiate a brand and depends on brand attributes, brand evaluations and market and category perceptions.

Kotler (1996) emphasized on differentiation for positioning and highlighted some tools for competitive differentiation like product differentiation (e.g. features, performance quality, conformance quality, durability, reliability, repairability, style, design etc.); service differentiation (e.g. delivery, installation, customer training, consulting service, repair etc.); personnel differentiation (e.g. competence, courtesy, credibility, reliability, responsiveness, communication); Image differentiation (e.g. symbol, atmosphere, events etc.). Kotler (1996) suggested that firm should bring competitive difference in a way so that it is important, distinctive, superior, communicable, preemptive, affordable and profitable. Kotler (1996) also suggested different ways of positioning a product as- attribute positioning, benefit positioning, use/application, user positioning, competitor positioning, product category positioning, quality/price positioning. Firms should define and communicate the similarities and differences between brands for positioning a brand and to take a decision regarding positioning firm requires determining a frame of reference by identifying the target market and the competition and identifying the ideal points-of-parity (category points-of-parity which are essential but not sufficient associations and competitive points-of-parity which are associations that negate competitors' points-of-difference) and points-of-difference (e.g. Apple for Design; Lexus for quality; Nike for performance) brand associations (Kotler & Keller, 2009)

Ansari et al. (1994) pointed out that firms select the optimal mix of tangible and intangible product attributes along with prices for positioning their brands/products in the target market. As it is not possible to find a bundle of attributes that satisfy the needs and requirements of all the customers in any market place hence it is suggested to formulate value proposition by adjusting attributes in ways so that it can attract more customers of the target marketplace

(Cronshaw et al., 1990). Walker et al. (2003) suggested that there are two ways of positioning- physical positioning (e.g. Ford Expedition vs. GM Suburban in terms of physical attributes like seating capacity; cargo capacity; engine; city mileage, highway mileage, length,

**Table-1: Strategic positions**

Strategic Positions	Example (firms)	Source
Relating the brand against an established brand	Avis vs. Hertz	Trout & Ries, 1972; Aaker & Shansby, 1982
To be in an uncommon/unwanted position	VW- 'ugly' positioning in the 70s	Trout & Ries, 1972
Repositioning the competitors	Beck's beer against Lowenbrau	Trout & Ries, 1972
Benefit positioning	Crest for cavity protection	Kotler, 1996
Use/Application	Campbell's soup for lunch time	Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Kotler 1996
User positioning	Johnson & Johnson mild shampoo for frequent users, Miller high Life beer for upper class.	Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Kotler 1996
Price/Quality	Departments stores in high quality, Sears or J.C. Penny in value segment and discount stores like K-Mart in low price/quality segment	Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Kotler 1996
The best	Accenture, Harrods	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Value	Skoda, Aldi	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Innovator	Nokia, SAP	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Product focus	Rolex, Land Rover, Amazon	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Target Segment	Hamleys, Mothercare	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Product categories/class association	Red Bull, Remy Martin e.g. 'Un-cola' for Seven-up e.g. Caress as a bath oil	Trout & Ries, 1972; Aaker and Shansby, 1982; Kotler 1996; Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Product attributes	Saab, Duracell, Volvo (safety & reliability) BMW-performance, fun in driving, engineering innovations. Range Rover- Style & design Sony Wega TV- picture, bright color	Aaker and Shansby, 1982; Cronshaw et al., 1990; Ansari et al., 1994; Kotler 1996; Walker et al., 2003; Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Product line scope	Tesco, Amazon	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Organizational intangibles	HP, Sorbonne	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007; Ansari et al., 1994
Emotional benefits	MTV, BBC, Radio Five Live Safe in Volvo, energized while drinking Redbull, strong & rugged when driving a Range Rover.	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Contemporary (reliable, safe, a friend, and even innovative)	U2, Zara	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Self-expressive benefits	Puma, Mercedes (successful, in control, and a leader by driving a Mercedes)	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Experience	Harvey Nichols (merchandise, ambience and service) , Guardian Unlimited	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Personality	Patek Philippe, Velcom Volvo/ Financial Times (professional and competent) Mont Blanc, Jaguar (upscale and sophisticated)	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007
Competitors	Visa, Virgin	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007; Trout & Ries, 1972; Kotler 1996
Multiple strategic positions	Honda- (youth and racing) in Japan; family orientation in US; quality and engineering in Europe.	Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007

Perceptual positioning	Headache remedies	Walker et al., 2003
Structural complementarities, structural diversity, and overall development direction	Service firms	Shostack, 1987

price) and perceptual positioning (on the basis of what it does not what it is (e.g. a vehicle on how comfortably it rides, a headache remedy is judged on how quickly it brings relief). Aaker & McLoughlin (2007) suggested that positioning could be done by offering quality, value, 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, competitor position etc.

### 3.4 Role of promotional tools on positioning

As mentioned earlier that Trout & Ries (1972) suggested that the task of positioning is to position the product or brand in the prospects' minds but they pointed out that advertising became ineffective to persuade customer by highlighting product features or customers' benefit due to customers changing habit towards a satisfactory brand instead of best one for any product category in the already mature and complex and hence chaotic marketplace. Whereas Aaker & Shansby (1982) suggested the use of comparative advertising to aid competitor based positioning (e.g. Pontiac against imported cars by comparing mileage and price). They advised to stick with the effective advertising (if any) and to highlight any feature only if it is attributed in the product. Sujana & Betman (1989) suggested that in order to establish a brand in a niche market, marketer should highlight distinguishing features during communication by a single advertising whereas in case of differentiating a brand they should disperse the features across multiple advertisings.

Ambler & Vakratsas (1999) tried to find out and generalise the effects of advertising and concluded that main intermediate effects of advertising are experience, affect, and cognition where cognition interferes affect but the hierarchy of these three effects vary as per context related factors like product category and stage of product life cycle. The effect of short-term promotion is 20 times higher than that of advertising. It was noticed that response function of advertising follows an inverted U shape. The effects of advertising for an established brand in mature frequently purchased packaged goods category diminishes fast and levels off after 3 exposures within a purchase cycle. Message of an ad should be familiar to be effective. The influence of ad likeability on brand preference is not supported as a general rule. Advertising is a promotional tool which helps to position a product/brand as it could be used to establish premium price in the long-run. The effect of advertising was found to last as per varied time and depends on model use of the study, types of the data, nature of the data source, and product category. Response to advertising depends on individual and their involvement based on product category. Ambler & Vakratsas (1999) tried to generalize the effects of advertising but the effectiveness of advertising also depends on other external information sources like word of mouth, magazine articles, PR activities which were not discussed. Marken (1997) suggested that both advertising and public relations play important role and each publication's presentation should support and reinforce the company's and product's position. He also suggested that firms and their agencies should direct all of their communication efforts to the specific position that they want to achieve and to reinforce it with all promotional tools (e.g. PR, advertising, sales promotion, sales contacts, on-line communications etc.). Kotler (1996) suggested that firm needs to communicate its positioning effectively to the buyers of the firm's target marketplace. And all members of the firm should have clear understanding about

the brand positioning and need to use it as content with a view to take decision (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

### 3.5 Steps of positioning

Walker et al. (2003) suggested that there are seven steps of positioning. These are i) to identify a relevant set of competitive products (at the generic level e.g. new breakfast drink may compete with breakfast cereals and eggs; ii) To identify determinant attributes (e.g. features, benefits, usage, parentage, manufacturing process, ingredients, endorsement, comparison, pro-environment, product class, price/quality, country or geographic area); iii. To collect data about perception of the customers for products in the competitive set; iv) To analyse the products' current position in the competitive set (to draw perceptual map); v) to determine customers' most preferred attributes (may be location, price of goods, service for a retail outlet); vi) To consider fit of possible positions with customer needs and segment attractiveness; vii) To write positioning statement or value proposition to guide development of marketing strategy.

**Table-2: Positioning statement and value proposition for Volvo automobiles in the USA**

(Source: Walker et al., 2003)

Positioning Statement	Value Proposition
For upscale American families , Volvo is the automobile that offers the utmost in safety and durability	Target market: Upscale American families Benefits offered: Safety, durability Price Range: 20% premium over similar car

### 3.6 How positioning works?

As positioning indicates buyers' perception about existing or potential brands in a market and hence in order to position a product/brand firms need to go for positioning analysis which is helpful for the managers to understand how customers perceive their market which may be different from their own views and marketing managers require realistic view which is required for understanding the product market and differentiate their product (Perreault & McCarthy, 2006). To formulate a positioning strategy effectively firms require a simultaneous analysis of competitor and consumer behavior (Ansari et al., 1994).

**Table-3: How positioning works (Source: Cravens & Piercy, 2009)**

Objective	Match the organization's distinctive capabilities with the customer value requirements in each market target (How do we want to be perceived by targeted buyers?)
Desired result	Gain a relevant, distinct, and enduring position that is considered important by the targeted buyers
Actions by the organization	Design and implement the positioning strategy (marketing program) for the market target.

Hooley et al. (2001) suggested that firms have two starting points-market focused resources (e.g. culture and orientation, assets, capabilities) and market environment (e.g. macro factors, customers, competitors, suppliers, intermediaries) for selection of a strategy as per positioning goals. After selection of a strategy that should be implemented through key processes of



marketing (marketing mix, CRM, internal marketing) innovation & learning (through market research) in order to create barriers to imitation for effective positioning in the market and by doing so firms gain good market share which in turn provides good financial performance.

### **3.7 Positioning issues/ key points to remember while positioning**

There are so many factors that a marketer needs to consider for positioning a product or brand. The key issues or points to be remembered while positioning are briefly mentioned as follows-

- The strategic position should resonate with customer, differentiate the firm from its competitors, and reflect and supported by the culture, strategy and capabilities of the business (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2007)
- While positioning, firm should consider formulating a positioning concept for a particular brand only not for all the competing brands that consists of product category/class and firm should follow that positioning concept over the life of the brand/product (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).
- Corporate/brand name should not be narrow; should reflect the vision of the firm; should not be identical with the name of an established firm and use of initials as name is meaningless and hence not suggested (Trout & Ries, 1972).
- Unnecessary line extension creates confusion and hence decline in market share (Trout & Ries, 1972) but Aaker & McLoughlin (2007, p-237) pointed out that a broad product offering indicates substance, acceptance, leadership, and often the convenience of one-stop shopping.
- Products should be positioned in a particular market segment as products positioned in the wider market to appeal to all were not able to establish in the marketplace (Trout & Ries, 1972). Treacy & Wiersema (1993) supported this as they pointed out that industry leaders are focused in the narrow market segment. But Miles & Slow (1978; cited by Morgan & Strong, 1997) pointed out that 'Prospector' firms are opportunistic and show interest in new and broader markets.
- Management should not forget what made the brand successful and should not create any confusion to the customers/prospects (Trout & Ries, 1972) and multiple concepts may confuse buyers and may weaken the effectiveness of positioning actions (Cravens & Piercy, 2009)
- Management of a new brand should not try to compete on head-to-head against a product leader. Focusing to a niche market or to identify a position where strong competitors have weaknesses is suggested (Trout & Ries, 1972). Aaker & McLoughlin (2007, p-234) also suggested that successful positioning can be done on the basis of a narrow product focus. Hamel & Prahalad (1989) pointed out that one way to creating competitive innovation is to identify loose bricks.
- Positioning should be in a way to adapt in the changing environment and management should be aggressive enough to utilise the opportunity (if any) by taking flexible strategies which are appropriate for the company (Trout & Ries, 1972).
- Trout & Ries (1972) suggested that it is extremely difficult for a company serving in any product category to establish a position in a different product category as evidence from the industries confirmed that transfer of skills to other products or

marketing situations was not successful. This view is not always acceptable as existing competitive advantages could be used to build sustainability (Ghemawat, 1986) and competences could be enhanced if they are applied and shared. (Hamel & Prahalad, 1990).

- Key to success of a firm in product category is not product innovation or marketing skill but to establish the position against any opportunity prior to competitors (Trout & Ries, 1972; Cravens & Piercy, 2009). But Aaker & McLoughlin (2007, p-231) pointed out that perception creation is easy if firm's offering is based on product or service innovation.

#### **4 DISCUSSIONS & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of the study was to identify and highlight the major ways for positioning a product or brand in a marketplace along with some key issues that need to be remembered during positioning. Positioning needs firms to have all relevant information regarding competition and the market to place the brand in the mindsets of the target customers by creating the value offerings with some differentiation from the competitors. Positioning guides marketing strategy; helps to differentiate brands to position in the market; and helps firms to secure financial return from the target market.

The study reveals that firms used different positioning concepts in order to establish their position in their target market and became successful. But most studies highlighted the use of product attributes, product categories and competitors as main ways for positioning. Though the study of Trout & Ries (1972) did not recognize the positive effect of advertising on positioning but other studies (e.g. Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Sujan & Betman, 1989; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999; Marken, 1997; Kotler, 1996; Kotler & Keller, 2009) recognized the importance of advertising and other promotional tools on positioning.

Combination of the benefits that the customers receive from a product offering that a firm offers to a marketplace is termed as positioning (Hooley et al., 2001) and hence acts as an important source of competitive advantage (Cronshaw et al., 1990). Porter (1996) suggested that in the industry with intense competition no firm can have sustainable competitive advantage without uniqueness in products/services or offering comparable value at a lower cost, or both. Trout & Ries (1972) suggested that the better player in the game of positioning could be able to win the competition in the chaotic marketplace.

This study might be helpful for the marketers for planning and developing marketing strategy. The performance of a firm depends on successful positioning of its products or brand in the market place. By developing successful positioning marketers can attract and keep the customers loyal to them and hence can develop long-run relationship with the customers which is a very important way to develop sustainable competitive advantage. While positioning analysis marketers need to consider other factors like competitive forces, industry structure, opportunities, threats, resources and competences. As strategists should focus on gazing into the future (Campbell & Alexander, 1997), ignoring other factors might create competitive disadvantage in the long-run.

#### **5 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.**

The positioning concept and suggested guidelines are important for the academics and students for study and would provide scope for further research. Practitioners should be able to get some directions for appropriate positioning of their products. This study suffers from several limitations which should also be considered. One limitation of this study is the context of the study. This literature review is based on prior studies where majority of the studies were based on the Western context and hence the findings of this study on positioning which are highlighted here might be more effective in the context of the Western context and might not be directly generalised to some part of developing countries. Some of the suggested ways to position a product might not be applicable to all industrial sectors and to all product categories. This study is based on the limited number of articles/books/research studies that I managed to collect or download. List of the articles/books used to do this study are mentioned later. Though I reviewed a good number of articles/books but this is not the exclusive list. There may have some other important studies which were overlooked and hence not reviewed. Hence further review based on more in-depth analysis might develop the findings of this study.

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