DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

„Brand Positioning Through the Consumers' Lens“

Verfasserin / Verfasser

Mag. rer. soc. oec. Christoph Fuchs

Angestrebter akademischer Grad

Ph. D. (Doctor of Philosophy)

Wien, im April 2008

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:	A 094 146
Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt:	Management
Betreuer / Betreuerin:	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Adamantios Diamantopoulos

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Univ. Prof. Adamantios Diamantopoulos, Ph. D., for the supervision of this dissertation and for being my mentor over the last four years. I would also like to thank o. Univ. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Udo Wagner, Associate Professor Kevin E. Voss, Ph. D., Professor William E. Baker, Ph. D., and o. Univ. Prof. Bodo B. Schlegelmilch, Ph. D., D. Litt, for their excellent comments on the issue of positioning effectiveness measurement. Furthermore, I am indebted to Dr. Daniel Hoppe, ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. Elfriede Penz, and Professor Rajan Varadarajan, Ph. D., for valuable comments on the qualitative study conducted in Chapter 3. Moreover, I would like to thank Florian Mailänder and Mag. Fritz Alexander from Research International Ltd. for their agreement to collaborate on the scale development project (Chapter 5) and for their valuable input from the practitioners' side.

ABSTRACT

Brand positioning is a core concept in marketing. Despite the importance of the concept, however, there is limited research in the field of positioning clarifying to what extent various brand positioning alternatives affect consumer perceptions and how positioning effectiveness can be best measured. The present dissertation consists of three complementary empirical studies aimed at shedding light on the latter issues. The first study explores the impact of distinct types of brand positioning strategies on consumer categorization processes. The results of the qualitative study provide evidence that consumers categorize brands based upon their underlying positioning strategies. More specifically, consumers classify brands that share similar types of positioning bases into the same category. The second study, which builds the cornerstone of this research project, involves the development and validation of a comprehensive, consumer-derived scale, measuring brand positioning effectiveness. The latter is modeled as a multidimensional construct capturing conceptually-relevant dimensions of positioning success (namely favorability, dissimilarity, uniqueness, and credibility). Altogether, nine complementary sub-studies are presented aimed at developing the scale and testing its dimensionality, reliability, and validity. To ascertain the scale's generalizability and stability, data from several product categories are used for scale development and validation purposes. The third study presented in this dissertation pays attention to the open question whether the use of certain positioning strategies (e.g., feature-based positioning) results in more superiorly positioned brands than the application of other strategies (e.g., user-based positioning). For this purpose, a within- and between-subjects design study is conducted that investigates the direct impact of brand positioning strategies on positioning effectiveness, measured from a consumer perspective. Specifically, four distinct positioning strategies of real brands are evaluated in terms of positioning effectiveness, while controlling for brand-specific, product class-specific, and socio-demographic influences. Consistent with the hypotheses derived from a comprehensive literature review, significant differences in terms of positioning effectiveness between the focal positioning strategies are detected. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the theoretical, methodological, and managerial implication. Furthermore, the limitations associated with the studies outlined in the dissertation are addressed and resulting avenues for future research are presented.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In times of an over-communicated world that is crowded with offerings, where even strong brands are becoming increasingly similar (Clancy and Trout 2002), positioning is often acknowledged to be *the* tool of competitive warfare (Ries and Trout 1986). Brand positioning is the foundation of branding (Anderson and Carpenter 2005) as marketing activities and programs are largely based upon a brand's positioning strategy (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Keller and Lehmann 2006; Myers 1996). Positioning is defined as "the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market. The end result of positioning is the successful creation of a customer-focused value proposition, a cogent reason why the target market should buy the product" (Kotler 2003, p. 308). A positioning strategy is "an attempt to move brands to a particular location within a perceptual product space" (Dillon, Domzal, and Madden 1986, p. 29) and is generally implemented to communicate a brand image and differentiate the brand from competitors (to achieve a position)" (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986, p. 139).

The essence of brand positioning from the company's perspective is developing key brand associations in the mindset of consumers aimed at differentiating the brand from competitors and thereby attaining the highest possible extent of competitive superiority (Keller and Lehmann 2006, Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002). This set of associations may cover physical attributes, benefits, or life-style, usage occasion, or user image among others (Aaker, Batra, and Myers 1992). Thus, positioning does not refer to what is done with the product itself, but what is done with the product in the mind of the consumer (Ries and Trout 1986) that is how consumers perceive, think, and feel about a brand relative to competitive entries (Czerniawsky and Maloney 1999; Ries and Trout 1986). Through positioning, two identical products may be viewed as different or two rather dissimilar products may be viewed as substitutes (Evans, Moutinho, and van Raaij 1996) by altering the beliefs about a brand (see Kalra and Goodstein 1998). A typical example is bottled mineral water: even though the physical characteristics of the products are (nearly) identical, well-positioned brands like *Evian* are more successful in the marketplace than their competitors.

The positioning decision is central to the success of a brand (Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002; Punj and Moon 2002) as it directly shapes customers' perceptions and choice decisions (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto 1994). More specifically, brand positioning has an impact on important consumer-based outcome variables such perceived price sensitivity (Kalra and Goodstein 1998), brand affect (Jewell and Barone 2007) as well as on customer-derived brand equity, price margins and demand elasticity (Boulding, Lee, and Staelin 1994; Kalra and Goodstein 1998; Keller 1993; 2003). Essentially, a well-positioned brand appeals to the particular needs of a customer segment, leads to high consumer loyalty, positively shaped preferences and beliefs about brand value, and greater willingness to search for the brand (Day 1984; Schiffman and Kanuk 2007; Trommsdorff and Paulssen 2005). Ultimately, positioning has an impact on the financial performance of a company (Day 1990; Roth 1992, 1995a; 1995b; Urban and Hauser 1993). In general, if the positioning by a company is done effectively, it has the potential to build powerful brands; however, if done incorrectly, it can also result in fatal branding disasters (see Haig 2005).

Literature Gaps

Despite the importance of the positioning concept, however, there is lack of empirical research examining the role of positioning strategies in consumers' categorization processes of brands. While it is well established in the feature-based model of categorization that consumers perceive brands as similar when they share the same (product) attributes (Tversky 1977), it is unclear whether brands sharing the same type of positioning strategy (i.e., positioning base) are also perceived as similar by consumers. In fact, the question whether and to what extent positioning information incorporated in marketing communications influences consumers' brand categorization processes has not received empirical attention in the literature. In this context, consumers may perceive a brand as distinct or similar to other brands due to numerous (external) criteria which are *not* explicitly communicated, such as their visually accessible or inferred features, price perceptions, appropriateness-in-use, personal goals, expertise, or prior experience with the product (Bijmolt et al. 1998; Friedmann and Lessig 1987; Day, Shocker, and Srivastava

1979; Dubé and Schmitt 1997; Graeff 1997; Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993; Ratneshwar et al. 2001; Sujan and Dekleva 1987).

Second, there is only scant research on how the *effectiveness* of a brand's positioning should be measured (Blankson and Kalafatis 2007), which is surprising taking into account the massive costs that are associated with building strong brands (e.g., Bhat and Reddy 1998; Mizik and Jacobson 2008). Existing studies have either used financial measures (Roth 1992, 1995a), positioning maps (Dillon, Domzal, and Madden 1986; Dröge and Darmon 1987; Seggev 1982; Wilkes 1977), or brand evaluation measures (e.g., perceived brand similarity, perceived brand quality, attribute evaluation, etc.) to capture the outcomes of positioning (e.g., Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto 1994; Dubè and Schmitt 1999; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991). However, although several measurement approaches are highly valuable for positioning analysis (e.g., determining dimensions on which the brand should be positioned) they are associated with limitations in the specific context of measuring a brand's positioning effectiveness. Essentially, positioning effectiveness, as a distinct construct, has not yet been explicitly conceptualized or operationalized; thus, a valid and reliable measurement instrument of the latter does not exist, which consequently hinders the establishment (and testing) of theoretical relationships between positioning effectiveness and other core marketing constructs.

Third, limited empirical attention has been paid to the question whether the use of certain positioning strategies (e.g., benefit positioning) results in more superiorly positioned brands than the application of other strategies (e.g., user positioning) (Keller and Lehmann 2006; Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002). At the same time, it is unclear upon which rationale positioning decisions should be made.

Research Objectives

The objective of this dissertation is to bridge the above discussed gaps in the literature.

The first major goal of this research is to establish whether consumers (a) categorize brands according to the positioning information communicated, and (b) whether such categorization is congruent with the organization of positioning bases in extant positioning typologies (e.g., Aaker and Shansby 1982; Kotler 2003; Crawford 1985; Wind 1982). A related objective is to make inferences about the validity of the major positioning typologies that are frequently cited in the marketing literature (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Crawford 1985, Kotler 2003; Kotler et al. 2005; Wind 1982).

Second, the present research project seeks to develop and test a conceptually-sound measurement instrument of positioning effectiveness, capturing how well a brand is positioned in the minds of (target) consumers and thus enabling marketers to assess whether their brand positioning is effective from a consumers' viewpoint. In doing so, the focus is on identifying key dimensions of positioning effectiveness, generating operational measures to capture them, and assessing their psychometric properties. One central aim is to develop a generalizable (rather than a product- or sector-specific) measure that can be applied in distinct product categories.

Third, the major purpose of the last study conducted within the scope of this research is to compare the effectiveness of prototypical positioning strategies of real brands from a consumer perspective. The core objective in this context is to find out whether and how the type of positioning strategy employed affects the positioning success of a brand. In order to assess the effectiveness of their actual positioning strategies, we introduce an alternative measurement approach. Overall, the findings resulting from this study should provide brand managers with empirically-based insights for making sound positioning decisions.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured as follows (see Figure 1):

Chapter 2 provides a review of the existing literature on the concept of positioning. In particular, this chapter describes the role of brand positioning in marketing theory and contrasts different perspectives of the positioning concept (i.e., company versus consumer perspective). This is followed by a formal distinction between intended, actual, and perceived positioning. In a next step, the terms positioning bases, positioning typologies and positioning strategies, which are crucial for understanding the nature of the concept, are elaborated.

Chapter 3 describes the results of a qualitative study, which was undertaken to assess the influence of different brand positioning strategies on consumers' brand categorization processes. The applied study design involves the use of an open sort task that also enables insights into the validity of the most prominent bases incorporated in major positioning typologies. Establishing the validity of the latter is of major importance for the subsequent studies.

Chapter 4 provides an overview and a critical discussion of different approaches aimed at assessing positioning effectiveness of brands. Specifically, strengths and weaknesses of each approach are presented as well as areas for their application.

Chapter 5 describes the development and validation of a comprehensive, consumer-derived scale measuring brand positioning effectiveness. The latter is modeled as a multidimensional construct capturing conceptually-relevant dimensions of positioning success (namely favorability, dissimilarity, uniqueness, and credibility). Altogether, nine complementary studies are presented aimed at developing the scale and testing its dimensionality, reliability, and validity. To ascertain the scale's generalizability and stability, data from several product categories are used for scale development and validation purposes.

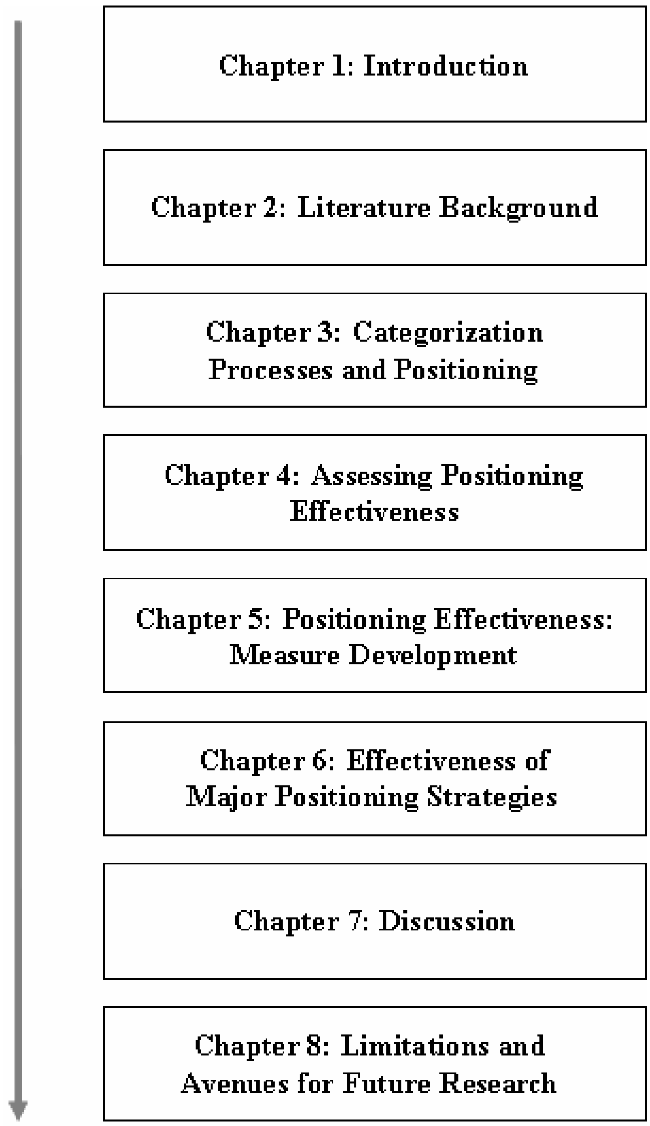
Chapter 6 presents two complementary studies that explore the direct impact of brand positioning strategies on positioning effectiveness measured from a consumer perspective.

Specifically, four distinct positioning strategies of real brands are evaluated in terms of positioning effectiveness, while controlling for brand-specific, product class-specific, and socio-demographic influences.

Chapter 7 summarizes the main findings of the dissertation and discusses its theoretical, methodological and managerial implications. With specific emphasis on the latter, the application of the positioning effectiveness measure is demonstrated in an empirical setting.

Chapter 8 concludes this research project with a discussion of the studies` limitations along with specific suggestions for future research emerging from the latter. In a final step, we present general avenues for future research in the area of brand positioning.

Figure 1: Organization of the Dissertation



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE BACKGROUND

The Role of Brand Positioning in Marketing

Brand positioning is traditionally discussed as part of the segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP) model (see Dibb and Simkin 1996; Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003), which is considered to be the basis for all marketing strategy (Kotler 2003). The first step in this model is segmentation, which involves dividing a heterogeneous market into a number of mutually exclusive submarkets, i.e., homogeneous groups (also referred to as segments). Formally, segmentation is defined as the "process of subdividing a market into distinct subsets of customers that behave in the same way or have similar needs" (Bennett 1995; p. 165). Segmentation is essential since "most (probably all) markets are not monolithic but instead consist of submarkets that are relatively homogeneous in terms of what they need or want from firms offering similar types of products of services (Myers 1996, p. 16). It is important to form segments because they are likely to respond differently to various marketing activities (Myers 1996) and are relevant for explaining and predicting customer behavior to a company's marketing actions (Wind and Cardozo 1974). Segments can be based upon (and are thus homogeneous in terms of) various consumer characteristics such as demographics, lifestyles, behavioural patterns, needs, values, and other characteristics (see Wedel and Kamakura 2000; Myers 1996 for an overview). In this regard, it is essential that buyer groups (that are targeted) respond similarly to company's marketing activities. Overall, Wind (1982, p. 79) contends that the "real value of product positioning is revealed only when the positioning is coupled with an appropriate market segmentation strategy."

The second step in the STP model is the target market selection. Targeting involves assessing the various segments identified in the segmentation process with the aim of determining in which submarkets the company should compete (Friedmann and Lessing 1987). This assessment is primarily based upon the segment's overall economic attractiveness as well the company's resources and objectives (Kotler 2003). More specifically, in evaluating the segments, particular focus is put on factors like segment size, resources required to penetrate the segment, firm strengths and weaknesses, presence of substitutes within and outside the product category (Porter

1980). In general, marketers are recommended to focus on segments which a brand can satisfy in a superior way (Kotler 2003). In this context, it is important to recall that some consumer segments value certain differential claims made by brands more than other segments, thus, the target segment decision influences the choice of the positioning.

The last step in the STP model is positioning, which logically follows after the appropriate target segment has been determined (Crawford, Urban, and Buzas 1983). Positioning involves placing a brand in a way that the target market perceives it as different and superior in relation to competitors (Crawford 1985; Kotler 2003; Myers 1996)[1]. Positioning is important as it "sets the direction of marketing activities and programs – what the brand should and should not do with its marketing" (Keller and Lehmann 2006; p. 740). Thus, the development of the marketing program should be linked to the positioning to ensure that marketing mix decisions are consistent and supportive (Aaker and Shansby 1982). For example, when a company claims high prestige, it can support this claim by charging a premium price, by limiting the number of distribution outlets, and/or by producing less than demanded (e.g., Bhat and Reddy 1998). The marketing mix can hence be viewed as "the tactical details of the brand's positioning strategy, any decision on positioning has direct and immediate implications for the whole marketing mix" (Evans, Moutinho, and van Raaij 1996, p. 168). Conversely, all elements of the marketing mix – promotion, pricing, distribution and, of course, the product – are critical factors in positioning (Shostack 1987), since they have an impact on the perceptual space of consumers (Easingwood and Mahajan 1989; Ellson 2004; Ries and Trout 1986;). Moreover, all members of the marketing team need to be coordinated in order to become the positioning as close in consumers' minds as intended by the company (Crawford 1985).

[1] Alternatively, management can, in a first step, set a certain positioning strategy and, in a second step, identify those target segments, which are most likely to be responsive to the latter (Wind, 1982). Typical examples from practice that had applied this process were "Xerox" copiers or "Polaroid" cameras (Shostack 1987).

Defining the Concept

Positioning is perhaps one of the thorniest and most complex concepts in marketing (Bhat and Reddy 1998). One of the reasons for this circumstance is the issue that there is no mutual agreement among marketing scholars and practitioners about the exact meaning of the concept (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Crawford 1985; Mühlbacher, Dreher, and Gabriel-Ritter 1993; Rigger 1995). As highlighted by Blankson and Kalafatis (1999, p. 109) "there has been no single universally accepted definition of the concept of positioning." Specifically, the boundaries of the concept are often not clearly defined – the question what exactly falls under the scope of positioning has not been sufficiently answered in literature and is still subject to heavy debate in the marketing community. Table 1 presents a collection of positioning definitions from several well-known authors which clearly illustrate these issues.

Table 1: Overview of Positioning Definitions

Author	Year	Definition
Day	1981	"Product positioning refers to the customer's perceptions of the place a product or brand occupies in a given market." (p. 286)
Lodish	1986	"The process of trying to improve the perception of your product by a market segment" (p. 183)
Quelch	1991	"Positioning is a management concept of where a product or service should stand in the marketplace relative to competitive products and services." (p. 190)
Dibb and Simkin	1993	"Positioning is the place which a product occupies in a given market as perceived by the product's targeted consumers." (p. 31)
Myers	1996	"It [positioning] is what happens in a customer`s mind, how customers view competing product entries" (p. 11).
Perreault and McCarthy	1996	"Positioning shows how customers locate proposed and/or present brands in a market." (p. 110).
Trout and Rivkin	1996	"Positioning is simply concentrating on an idea – or even a word – that defines the company in the minds of consumers." (p. 54)
Wilson and Gilligan	1997	"The process of designing an image and value so that the customer within the target segment understand what the company or brand stand for in relation to its competitors." (p. 302)
Antonides and van Raaij	1998	"Positioning refers to the consumer's perception of a brand amongst other brands. Positioning mainly results from marketing communication regarding brands, social communication and personal experience." (p. 563).
Jain	2000	"Placing a brand in that part of the market where it will receive a favourable perception compared to competing products." (p. 359)
Keller	2003	"Positioning is all about identifying the optimal location of a brand and its competitors in the

		minds of consumers to maximize potential benefit to the firm." (p. 119)
Kotler	2003	"Positioning is the act of designing the company´s offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market. The end result of positioning is the successful creation of a customer-focused value proposition, a cogent reason why the target market should buy the product." (p. 308)
Lilien and Rangaswamy	2003	"Positioning refers to the set of strategies that firms develop and implement to ensure that these differences occupy a distinct and important position in the minds of customers." (p. 117) "Positioning is what you try to do to the minds of customers to help them perceive the product differences clearly." (p. 118)
Kapferer	2004	"Positioning a brand means emphasising the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors and appealing to the public." (p. 99)
Winer	2004	"Considering the alternative differentiation possibilities and determining what differential advantages are to be emphasized and communicated to the target customers." (p. 459)
Blythe	2005	"The grouping of similar product types together in the consumer's perceptual map." (p. 96)
Solomon, Marshall, and Stewart.	2006	"Developing a marketing strategy aimed at influencing how a particular market segment perceives a good or service in comparison to competition." (p. 571)
Kerin, Hartley, and Rudelius	2007	"Product positioning refers to the place an offering occupies in consumers' minds on important attributes relative to competitive offerings." (p. 202)
Schiffman and Kanuk	2007	"Positioning conveys the meaning of a good or service in terms of how it fulfills needs of consumers." (p. 171)

As can be seen from the definitions outlined in Table 1, many researchers agree that positioning is a management activity that focuses on creating associations in the mindset of consumers relative to competitors. Kotler (2003, p. 308), for example, defines positioning as "the act of designing the company's offering and image[2] to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market. The end result of positioning is the successful creation of a customer-focused value proposition, a cogent reason why the target market should buy the product". For some scholars, all marketing activities that potentially create or change associations in the mindset of consumers fall under the concept of positioning (e.g., Solomon, Marshall, and Stuart 2006). Ellson (2004) notes that for others, like the pioneers of the positioning concept, Al Ries and Jack Trout (1981; 1986), positioning is a mere communications issue that involves manipulating consumer perceptions about a certain good or service (i.e., and focusing on consumer attitudes and

[2] The key difference between brand image and brand position(ing) is that the latter uses an explicit frame of reference, usually the competition (Aaker and Shansby 1982). In this regard, brand image is defined as "the concept of a brand that is held by the consumer – which is largely a subjective and perceptual phenomenon that is formed through consumer interpretation, whether reasoned or emotional" (Dobni and Zinkhan 1990, p. 117).

preferences).[3] At the same time, marketing scholars also refer positioning to an activity that takes place in the mindset of consumers. For example, Day (1981, p. 283) argues that "product positioning refers to the customer's perceptions of the place that a product or brand occupies in a given market." Taking this latter perspective, positioning is a consumer concept rather than a management concept.

Although there are several differences between the definitions listed in Table 1, they basically all share a "perceptual" component – that positioning is something that (should) happen(s) in the minds of consumers. To elaborate more on this, the next section presents a systematic overview of different perspectives of brand positioning, which should give readers more insights into the complex nature of the concept.

Positioning: The Company versus the Consumer Perspective

A comprehensive literature review (including the definitions outlined in Table 1) reveals that positioning can be viewed from the marketers' perspective or from the consumers' perspective (Blankson and Kalafatis 2004; Crawford 1985, Wind 1982).[4]

From a *company* perspective, which is regarded as the dominant "perspective" in the literature, positioning implies the *identification and communication of associations* so as to change or strengthen consumers' perceptions of the particular brand vis-à-vis other brands. Here, the company is active and intends to create the desired associations in consumers' minds. In this regard, positioning from a firm's perspective can be divided into two subcategories namely the intended and the actual positioning.

[3] A contradicting view is that positioning is a strategic decision, which involves the response of companies to shifts in the marketing environment (Porter 1979) – see strategic marketing positioning (Footnote 5).

[4] Essentially, various stakeholders (i.e., company, consumers, employees, etc.) view the concept from different angles (see Brown et al. 2006; Simoes, Dibb, and Fisk 2005). Thus, each of the stakeholder groups have a different understanding about the meaning of positioning. Accordingly, the answer to the question "what is effective in terms of positioning?" may also vary among these stakeholders.

The *intended positioning* is how a company wants/intends to have the brand perceived by the target consumers. Thus, the intended positioning comprises the (complete) set of associations that managers desire the target consumers to hold (Brown et al. 2006). For example, an automobile company's intended positioning of a particular SUV model may be that target consumers should perceive its automobile as (a) being superior with reference to safety, and/or (b) that the particular model was the pioneer in the SUV category. The initial ideas about the intended positioning (i.e., target position) may be grounded in the strategic market positioning[5] of the company (i.e., company specific-level) and can be driven by factors such as the core competence or capabilities of a company (Ellson 2004; Porter 1979). On a more brand-specific level, the intended positioning is likely to be driven by the aim of finding the position with the highest utility for customers, touching the largest or most profitable customer segment, or being well-differentiated from competitors. Hauser (1988) assumes that positioning decisions depend on competition, cost structure, as well as the consumers' preference structure.

Aaker and Shansby (1982) suggest a systematic sequence for the development of the intended positioning. The first step involves the identification of relevant competitors (i.e., frame of reference). This should be systematically done by conducting qualitative research studies aimed at identifying consumers' consideration or evoked sets. Methods include the free response approach (Green, Wind and Jain 1973), the dollar metric approach (Pessemier et al. 1970), direct grouping into product categories (Bourgeois, Haines and Sommers 1980) and/or product-by-use analysis (Stefflre 1979, Myers and Tauber 1977; see Day, Shocker, and Srivastava 1979, for an overview). In a second step, companies are advised to determine how the competitors are

[5] *Strategic (market) positioning* is conceptually distinct from brand positioning. The former is sustained by the genuine capabilities and competences of a company rather than the instalment of perceptions and images about brands in buyers' minds. Essentially, strategic positioning, which is rooted in the strategic management literature (e.g. Porter 1979; 1985; Day and Wensley 1988), refers to the competitive market standing of a firm against its competitors (Evans, Moutinho, and van Raaij 1996; Day and Wensley 1988) and is foremost based on the resource-based view of the firm (Fahy and Smithee 1999). More precisely, strategic positioning is "the process of identifying and selecting a market segment that represents business potential, targeting vulnerable competitors, and devising a strategy to compete" (DiMingo 1988, p. 35). Thus, strategic positioning is reflected in the product-market positions established by the firm (Kald, Nilsson, and Rapp 2000), whereby companies seek to find ways for deploying firm-specific resources and assets to build positional advantages in product-markets (Morgan, Strong, and McGuiness 2003; Fahy and Smithee 1999). For instance, if a company wants to become technology leader in a product category, it needs to develop the skills or allocate resources to enable this position (for example, through high R&D investments or other initiatives).

perceived and evaluated. For this purpose, perceptual mapping techniques (see Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003; Myers 1996; Hauser and Koppelman 1979) can be employed, which graphically illustrate the positions of competitors` in the perceptual space of consumers and, thus, can assist marketers in finding positions (i.e. niches) in the market that are not occupied by competitors.[6] The next step involves analyzing customers – the aim is finding out the needs and wants of the targets segments with regard to the brand in consideration. Based on customer analysis and the preceding analysis of the competitive market structure, companies are recommended to derive a set of potential associations that managers desire the target segment(s) to hold. The final step involves determining the ones that are aimed to be perceived by the target audience. In this regard, managers normally need to emphasize a constrained set of associations (i.e., those that they want the consumers to view as most salient), in order to establish a clear picture of the brand in consumers minds (Brown et al. 2006; Ghose 1994).

Normative branding literature (Kapferer 2004; Keller 2003; Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002; Punj and Moon 2002) also suggests an alternative but related procedure for positioning (new) brands consisting of two phases. In the first phase, when a new brand is launched on the market, marketers need to associate the brand with the product category in which the brand should compete. For this purpose, companies need to select positioning bases that create points of association with the focal product category (Punj and Moon 2002). This assures that the brand becomes classified as a member of that category (Krishnan 1996) and enters the potential consideration set of consumers (Punj and Moon 2002). Having established points of association with a certain product category, the company subsequently needs to identify and communicate potential brand characteristics (i.e., associations) that enable the brand to differentiate it from competitor brands (i.e., creating points of difference) (Keller 2003; Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002; Punj and Moon 2002).

Whereas the intended positioning reflects the associations a company intends to create with a brand, the *actual positioning* is reflected in the positioning information actually presented to the consumers. This is typically done with different marketing communication tools such as public relations, sales promotions, packaging, etc. but primarily via advertising, which is regarded as

[6] Of course, perceptual data about potential competitors need to be collected.

the main tool for building a brand's position (Krishnan, 1996; Lilien and Rangaswamy, 2003; Lodish 1986). Thus, the difference between the intended and the actual positioning lies in the execution of the marketing/communication program (e.g., advertising program) (Blankson and Kalafatis 2007; Roth 1992).

From a *consumer* perspective, on the other hand, positioning refers to a process that occurs in the minds of consumers - how a consumer *perceives a brand in his/her mental map* in relation to competition (e.g., Antonides and van Raaij 1998; Jain 2000). From this point of view, the company is passive and the consumer is active – consumers form or alter the perceived positions of brands in their minds (Crawford 1985).

In essence, based on the *actual positioning*, consumers form their own perceptions of the brand and position the latter in their minds; this is the *perceived positioning,* which indicates the complex set of perceptions or beliefs, thoughts, feelings and impressions that consumers hold for the brand compared to competitor brands (Ellson, 2004; Kerin, Hartley, and Rudelius 2007; Ries and Trout, 1986). Aaker, Batra, and Myers (1992, p. 131) define the perceived positioning (i.e., position)[7] of a brand as "the set of associations the consumer has with the brand. These may cover physical attributes, or life-style, or use occasion, or user image… A brand's position in a consumer's mind is a relative concept, in that it refers to a comparative assessment by the consumer of how this brand is similar to or different from the other brands that compete with it. Think of every consumer as having a mental map of the product category. The location of your brand in that map, relative to that of your competitors, is your position, and the locations of all the brands in that map are determined by the associations that the consumer makes with each brand".[8] The perceived positioning may vary depending on the individual consumer, because consumers may interpret the same positioning information (i.e., brand claims) differently,

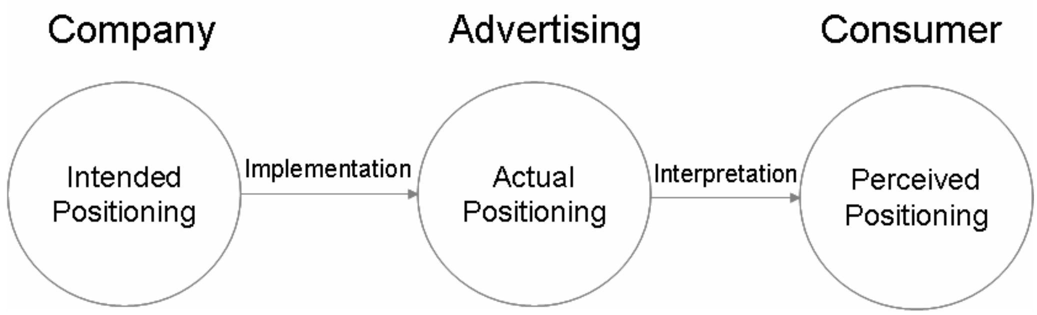
[7] Note that some academics distinguish between the terms *position* (i.e. a place in the mind of consumers [i.e., static]) and *positioning* (i.e., an active process in which the company or consumer is active) (e.g., Rigger 1995, Sarel 1980), whereas other authors use these two terms interchangeably (see, for example, Kerin, Hartley, and Rudelius 2007; Perreault and McCarthy 1996). In the scope of the present article, and in line with the latter authors, the terms positioning and position are also used synonymously.

[8] In a similar vein, Wind (1982) describes a brand's position "as a place (what place does the product occupy in its market?), a rank (how does the product fare against its competitors in various evaluative dimensions?), and a mental attitude (what are consumers attitudes- the cognitive, affective, and action tendencies?), toward the given product" (Wind 1982, p. 75).

depending on their current personal goals, objectives, values, usage situations or prior experience (e.g., Friedman and Lessig 1987; Schiffman and Kanuk 2007). Moreover, the associations consumers hold with a brand may be influenced also by a variety of outside sources such as competitors, word-of mouth, the media etc. in addition to communications from the firm (Brown et al. 2006, Brown 1998; Krishnan 1996). In this regard, as noted by Dibb et al. (1997, p. 228) "positioning is based on consumers' perceptions and is therefore only partly within the control of marketers."

Figure 2 presents an overview of the relationships between the intended, actual, and perceived positioning. As shown in the Figure, marketers need to make the active decision first – thus, they need to position their brands in an attempt to influence consumer perceptions (Crawford 1985). The intended positioning is then implemented in the form of the actual positioning which contains the information that is actually communicated to the target audience. The actual positioning eventually serves a basis for the creation of the perceived positioning.

Figure 2: Intended, Actual and Perceived Positioning



Given that establishing a brand's position is a long-term process connected with massive investment especially in advertising (Bhat and Reddy 1998) – companies choosing the "wrong" intended positioning, (i.e., they select positioning dimensions, which are not perceived as being relevant and important by consumers and/or do not sufficiently differentiate the brand from rivals' brands), run into risk of harming the perceived positioning of a product, consequently leading to an erosion of brand equity and diminishing sales. Similar problems may be faced if the intended positioning is sound but its execution (i.e. the actual positioning) fails to result in an effective perceived positioning by consumers. Thus sound positioning can be compromised by choosing the wrong intended positioning, by poorly executing a sound intended positioning (poor actual positioning), or a combination of both.

Positioning Bases

In principle, companies can position their brands on an almost *infinite* number of dimensions (Hooley, Saunders, and Piercy 2004; Wind 1982). For example, a mobile phone can be positioned upon its size, shape, handiness, user-friendliness, stylishness, etc. In an attempt to overcome this issue and thus to operationalize these individual dimensions, academics have classified conceptually similar positioning dimensions into distinct groupings which are called positioning bases (e.g., Aaker and Shansby 1982; Blankson and Kalafatis 2004; Crawford 1985; Kapferer 2004; Kotler et al. 2005; Wind 1982). Thus, a positioning base comprises of a set of theoretically related associations (i.e., dimensions) and constitutes a means to convey a differential advantage of a brand in consumers' minds. Table 2 describes main positioning bases commonly discussed in the literature. It is generally distinguished between three main groups of positioning bases – attribute positioning (consisting of concrete and abstract attribute positioning), benefit positioning (consisting of direct and indirect benefit positioning) and surrogate positioning (consisting of multiple alternative bases)

Table 2: Overview of Main Positioning Bases

Type of positioning	*Literature (extracts)*	*Description*	*Examples*
Features (Concrete Attributes)	Aaker and Shansby (1982); Crawford (1985); Hooley, Saunders, and Piercy (2004); Keller 1993; Olson and Reynolds 1983; Plummer (2000); Vriens and ter Hofstede (2000); Wind (1982)	Company highlights the concrete attributes of the brand in order to create a differential advantage; concrete attributes are characteristics of the brand advantage; they are objectively measurable, mostly tangible and typically "search features"; they are also specific to the product category	Knee airbag; cylinders; horsepower; price; air-conditioning; hybrid engine
Abstract Attributes*	Olson and Reynolds (1983); Reynolds, Gengler, and Howard 1995; see Snelders and Schoormans (2004)	Often regarded as bundles of concrete attributes; attributes that are frequently comparable across product categories; they are not tangible	Performance; quality; style; sporty; fast acceleration
Direct (Functional) Benefits	Aaker and Shansby (1982); Bridges, Keller, and Sood (2000); Crawford (1985); Keller (1993); Plummer (2000); Tybout and Sternthal (2005); Vriens and Ter Hofstede (2000); Wind (1982)	Communicate advantages of (the usage of) a brand; the personal value consumers assign to good or service features; closer related to one's self than product attributes; not directly observable; functional nature; reflect whether a brand works as intended; mostly attribute-based benefits, refer also to problem solutions and functional needs.	Cost reduction; park in smallest lots; comfort; convenience; durability; superior service; ease-of use
Indirect (Experiential /Symbolic) Benefits	Crawford (1985); Gutman (1982); Keller 1993; Olson and Reynolds (1983); see Snelders and Schoormans (2004); Tybout and Sternthal (2005); Vriens and ter Hofstede (2000)	Benefits that satisfy experiential/hedonic needs; psycho-social consequences out of the use of the product that have a hedonic, expressive, or symbolic function; give consumers an indirect advantage of the consumption of a product; perception of a self- or a social-image benefit;	Car X attracts looks of people; enjoyment of the luxury; makes driver feel younger; gives you respect; driving experience; driving fun
Surrogate Positioning	Aaker (1991); Bridges, Keller, and Sood (2000); Crawford (1985); Friedmann and Lessig (1987); Keller (1993)	Designed to create consumer associations about *external* aspects of a brand; says something about the brand that allows the consumer to come to individual conclusions; *not* attributes and benefits; creation of inferred (secondary) associations; refers to intangible aspects of the brand	User type "for people who never grow up"; making associations with Formula 1or great writers; highlighting the pioneer status; product category disassociations; "the best selling car"

*Note that, while abstract attribute positioning and direct benefit positioning are conceptually distinct, in practice, the difference between the two strategies is often marginal (see Snelders and Schoormans 2004).

The positioning bases outlined in Table 2 seek to create associations in consumers' minds that satisfy either having-level goals (e.g., attribute positioning), doing-level goals (e.g., benefit positioning) or being-level goals (e.g., user/surrogate positioning) (Huffman, Ratneshwar, and Mick 2000; Ligas 2000). Moreover, positioning bases correspond to the hierarchical elements of the means-end concept (see Gutman 1982; Olson and Reynolds 1983; Vriens and ter Hofstede 2000) and can be classified according to their abstractness and/or product-relatedness (e.g., Bridges, Keller, and Sood 2000; Keller 1993). Concrete levels of brand knowledge/information (e.g., concrete attributes, abstract attributes) refer more to the product itself whereas abstract levels (e.g., indirect benefits, surrogate positioning) to the consumers themselves (see Reynolds, Gengler, and Howard 1995). The order of presentation of the positioning bases in Table 2 corresponds with their degree of abstractness with concrete attribute (feature) positioning being the most concrete and surrogate positioning the least concrete base.

Whereas attribute based positioning and benefit positioning are seen as common and frequently used positioning alternatives that aim at building their value propositions upon features and functional or symbolic/hedonic benefits, respectively, little is known about the nature of surrogate positioning which demands a more specific elaboration. With particular reference to surrogate positioning, marketers do not position brands on their respective attributes/benefits, but instead communicate something about the brand that permits consumers to come to *individual* conclusions about what the brands stands for (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Crawford 1985). More specifically, surrogate positioning is designed to create consumer associations about *external* aspects of a brand (e.g., the energy drink Red Bull may be associated with extreme sports such as base jumping, rock climbing or speed skiing). The advantage of this type of positioning is that the focal brand is automatically "customized" to the needs of the consumer: s/he decides what is important to him or her (Crawford 1985). For example, if a company positions its brand with a certain usage occasion, consumers may *infer* specific features, or benefits out of using the brand; the *specific* associations and inferences made with the usage occasion might be perceived differently by each consumer (Friedmann and Lessig 1987). Another example of surrogate positioning would be a management consultancy that positions its services by stressing that it is the market leader. This positioning strategy could result into consumers' believing that, due to a great number of customers trusting the firm, it must deliver high value services. On the other hand, it may also be possible that consumers develop negative inferences with this positioning, since serving a great number of customers (quantity) may negatively impact the company's service quality and an individual treatment; a smaller and more specialized consultancy firm may do better. Hence, besides the strengths of this positioning alternative, surrogate positioning, by virtue of its more abstract nature, is also relatively more risky and difficult to implement in comparison to attribute-based or benefit-based positioning because it may lead to a confused image (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Bridges, Keller, and Sood 2000), and because some control over the brand image is given up (Keller 1993). In addition, surrogate positioning makes only sense if consumers already hold association with the used surrogates (e.g, secondary association such as company, person, event) that are in line with desired brand associations (Keller 1993). Nevertheless, Aaker and Shansby (1982) contend that this type of positioning might be a sound positioning alternative particularly for major brands that intend to attract a variety of segments, since it has the potential to give individual meanings to each of the latter.

Positioning Typologies

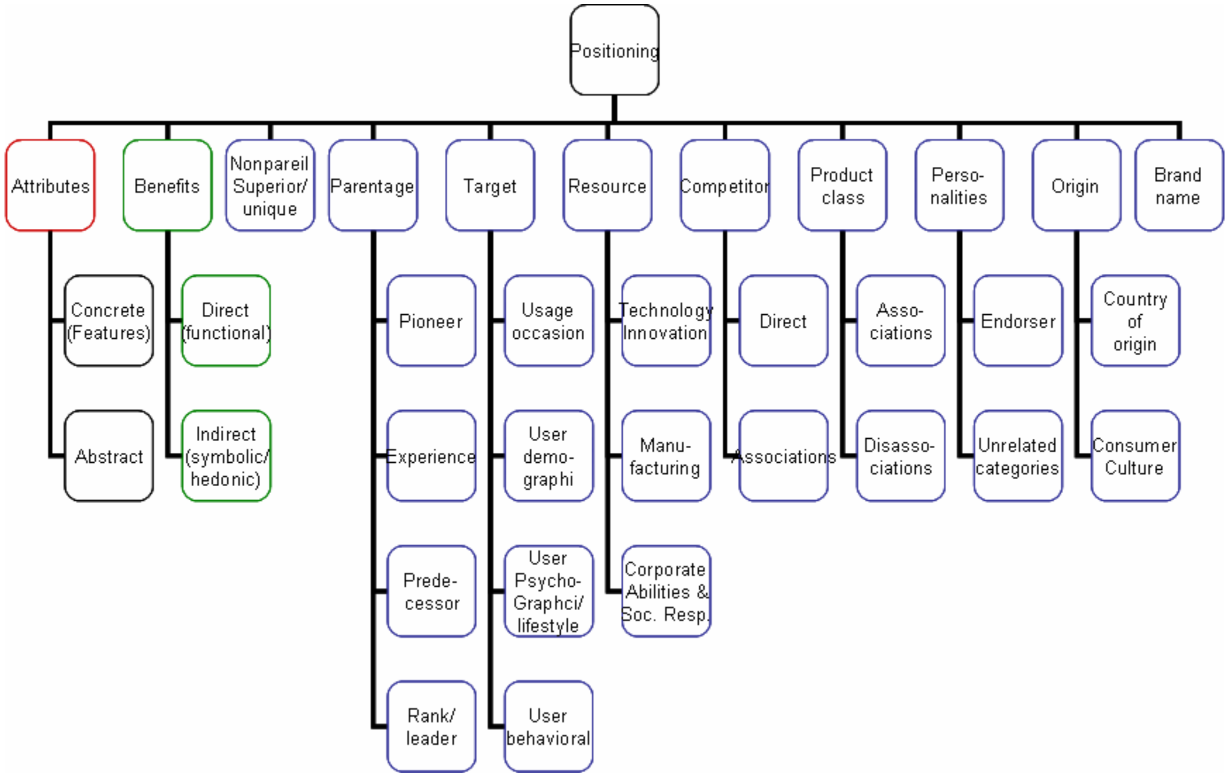
Positioning bases are organized (and collected) in positioning typologies, which can be referred to as classification schemes of positioning bases (essentially, Table 2 gives an overview of the most prominent positioning bases incorporated in positioning typologies). Several positioning typologies have been proposed in the literature (see Blankson and Kalafatis 2004 for an overview), which are largely modified versions of those originally proposed by Aaker and Shansby (1982), Myers and Shocker (1981), Wind (1982), and Crawford (1985).[9] Figure 3 shows an extended version of Crawford`s positioning typology, which is perhaps the most comprehensive typology in literature and encompasses most bases of other typologies (e.g., Aaker and Shansby 1982; Brown and Sims 1976; Myers and Shocker 1981; Kotler et al. 2005; Wind 1982). As can be seen from the typology in Figure 3, surrogate positioning (bases are held

[9] Note that most positioning typologies (e.g., Aaker and Shansby 1982; Kotler 2003; Hooley, Saunders, and Piercy 2004; Wind 1982) are conceptual in nature and have not been empirically validated. An exception is Crawford`s (1985) typology which was empirically derived and can be therefore referred to as a (positioning) *taxonomy* (Bailey 1994). Nevertheless, for simplification reasons the terms taxonomies and typologies are used interchangeable in this work.

in blue) consists of a large set of positioning bases (i.e., nonpareil, parentage, target, resource, competitor, product class, personalities, origin and brand name positioning), which in turn contain several sub-bases.[10] In general, positioning typologies are specifically valuable because they can be employed to operationalize the actual or intended positioning (Blankson and Kalafatis 2004).

[10] See Crawford (1985) for a detailed description of bases falling under surrogate positioning.

Figure 3: Overview of an Extended (Modified) Version of Crawford`s Positioning Typology



Positioning Strategies

A single positioning base or a combination of positioning bases form the positioning strategy of a brand.[11] In essence, a positioning strategy (intended or actual positioning) is defined as "an attempt to move brands to a particular location within a perceptual product space" (Dillon, Domzal, and Madden 1986; p. 29) and generally implemented to communicate a brand image and differentiate the brand from competitors (to achieve a position)" (Park, Jaworski, and McInnis 1986; p. 139).[12]

Conceptually, the overall positioning strategy of a brand can be described by (a) the number and type of positioning bases employed (single/multiple) and the emphasis put on each base (different/equal). Thus, one can first distinguish between *pure positioning*, whereby only one dimension is used to position the brand (e.g. positioning with regards to concrete attributes) and *hybrid positioning*, where multiple bases are employed (e.g., concrete attributes plus surrogate positioning of some sort). If hybrid positioning is used, a further distinction can be drawn between a *balanced* positioning strategy and a *dominant* positioning strategy. Under the former strategy, approximately equal emphasis is given to the various positioning dimensions, whereas under the latter strategy the emphasis varies (see Figure 4).

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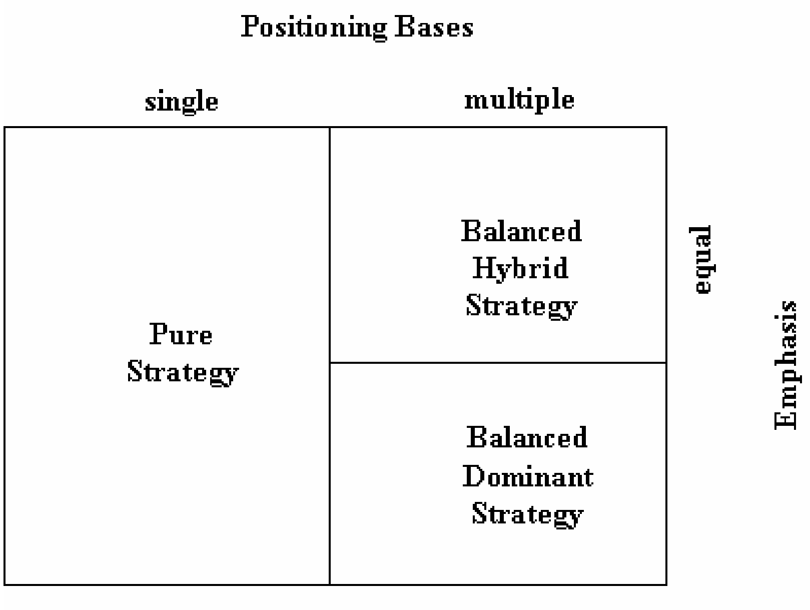
[11] As already mentioned before, some academics advocate that all marketing activities that potentially change or improve consumer perceptions about a brand form the positioning of a brand (e.g., Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986; Solomon 2007). In scope of this dissertation and in line with several prominent authors (e.g., Hauser 1988; Kalra and Goodstein 1998) we contend that positioning strategies comprise one single or a combination of positioning dimensions/bases. However, in this research, we do not focus on the specific content of the positioning dimensions (e.g., "ease of use"), but rather on the type of the dimension (i.e., positioning base; e.g., positioning a brand on "ease of use" falls under direct benefit positioning)

[12] Thus, a positioning strategy can reflect the intended or the actual positioning.

Figure 4: Conceptualization of Positioning Strategies



Since positioning is "the art of selecting, out of a number of unique selling propositions, the ones which will get you maximum sales" (Rosser Reeves quoted by Sacco 1986, p. 13), companies are often advised to emphasize only a limited number of claims when positioning a brand, because using too many dimensions may lead to disbelief (Kotler 2003), confusion (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Brown et al. 2006; Ghose 1994; Sengupta 2005), and/or lowered memory (Meyers-Levy 1989). Confusion in particular has been described as the enemy of positioning (Evans, Luiz, and van Raaij 1996), because consumers do not have a clear picture of the brand in their minds. Related to this, the human brain has only limited capacity to remember multiple brand associations (Trout and Rivkin, 1996) and, therefore, "the rule for positioning is to play your own game and resist temptations to try to be all things to all people" (Czepiel 1992, p. 38). In this context, Chernev (2007) provides empirical evidence that consumers perceive brands that are positioned on one dimension (i.e., attribute) as superior on that specific dimension (i.e., perform better on that attribute) relative to a multiple dimension positioning option, even when the dimension is (exactly) the same for both options.

On the other hand, Barwise and Meehan (2004) objects that companies usually put too much emphasis on positioning a brand on a single (unique) feature (i.e., concrete attribute) or benefit and argue that consumers do not perceive a unique feature as important as a good overall *combination* of features and/or benefits (i.e., hybrid positioning). In this context, Ozcan and Sheinin (2008) report that consumers have higher preferences for brands that are positioned on a variety of attributes (they refer it to a completeness positioning strategy) compared brands positioned on a single (specialized) base specifically when products are highly complex and when there are a large number of alternatives in the choice set. Moreover, according to Boatwright, Kalra, and Zhang (2008), communicating multiple attributes is more effective than communicating single-attribute information when the variation across attributes is relatively low, because people perceive the economical risk of complete information to be lower than of incomplete information. Communicating too little may create only a limited number of consumer associations, hence, the full range of differential advantages of the brand may be underestimated by the consumers. Reynolds, Gengler, and Howard (1995) suggest that instead of claiming either attributes or their consequences separately (single positioning strategies), marketers should try to combine these (hybrid positioning strategies), thus, highlighting the associations between attributes and their consequences (benefits) and/or benefits and values.[13]

Summary

Summarizing, in this chapter we sought to overcome some confusions and misunderstandings resulting from insufficient theoretical development of the brand positioning concept by systematically discussing different definitions and meanings of the latter. A comprehensive literature review revealed that positioning can be viewed through the company`s lens and through the consumer`s lens. Taking a company perspective, positioning can be subdivided into intended and actual positioning, whereas from a consumer perspective, positioning refers to as perceived positioning. Furthermore, we described the terms positioning bases, positioning

[13] Note that the empirical studies presented hereafter focus only on the dominant positioning (bases) of brands and *not* on supporting positioning bases. With exception from the study in Chapter 3, we only explore pure positioning strategies, in which only one (dominant) positioning base is used (see studies in Chapter 5 and 6).

typologies and positioning strategies in great detail and highlighted the use of the latter for marketing theory, which should provide a solid basis for understanding the studies outlined in the next sections.

CHAPTER 3: CATEGORIZATION PROCESSES AND POSITIONING

Introduction

As already discussed in the previous chapter, researchers have identified a wide range of alternative strategies used by marketers to position their brands (e.g., Kalra and Goodstein 1998; Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003) on different dimensions, that is, positioning bases (Wind 1982). For example, marketers have the possibility to position their brands on generic dimensions such as features (e.g., a cell phone creates a differential advantage with a mp3 player), more abstract attributes and/or benefits (e.g., new shape, high performance, good quality, cost saving) or, alternatively, they can create external (secondary) associations with the brand (e.g., this cell phone is ideal for people with a certain lifestyle; it is the best selling cell phone).

In essence, through their positioning efforts, companies seek to create points of association (i.e., move brands closer to competitor brands in the consumers' perceptual space) or disassociation (i.e., move brands further away from competitor brands) with reference to their competitors (Keller 2003; Punj and Moon 2002). Associating a brand with competitors, and thus creating brand similarity perceptions, is particularly important for new or less familiar brands which try to enter the consideration set of consumers (Urban, Hulland, and Weinberg 1993) and/or become associated with (the strength of) main competitors by attaining "me-too" perceptions (e.g., Carpenter and Nakamoto 1989; Keller 2003; Ries and Trout 1986). In contrast, strong and established brands, typically seek to differentiate themselves from competitor brands (Dickson and Ginter 1987). Thus, the aim of brand positioning for established brands is to create favorable differentiation in the minds of consumers (Day 1990; Kapferer 2004).

The present study seeks to investigate whether consumers classify (i.e., group) brands based on their underlying positioning strategies. More specifically, based on categorization theory, we test whether brands adopting similar/dissimilar positioning strategies (as characterized in existing positioning typologies) are also perceived as being similar/dissimilar by consumers. This is an important research question as perceived brand similarity is a key factor for determining consumer perceptions, identifying the relevant competition, and determining the consideration set of consumers (Dubé and Schmitt 1999). Moreover, perceptions of similarity can have an influence on brand evaluations and ultimately on preference judgments and choice (Brenner, Rottenstreich, and Sood 1999; Dhar, Nowlis, and Sherman 1999; Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993).

In the section that follows, the conceptual background to this study is provided and followed by a presentation of the research proposition and a description of the research design employed. Next, the study results are outlined and the chapter is concluded by summarizing the main findings.

Categorization Theory and Perceived Positioning

Insights into how consumers form their perceived positioning can be provided by categorization theory, which plays a central role in understanding consumer behaviour in general. According to categorization theory consumers tend to structure their knowledge about specific product alternatives in categories (Gutman, 1982; Punj and Moon, 2002) – consumers use category structures to organize and differentiate brands (Johnson and Lehmann, 1997). Categorization is a cognitive process which "expresses the characteristic manner in which individuals organize and structure perceptual inputs deriving from the external environment" (Block et al. 1981, p. 770). Categorization research shows "that people do not deliberately and individually evaluate each new stimulus to which they are exposed, but often evaluate a stimulus in terms of whether or not it can be classified as a member of a previously defined category" (Keller 2003, p. 609). Thus, categorization is assumed to be most strongly influenced by similarity perceptions (Medin, Goldstone, and Gentner 1993; Felcher, Malaviya, and McGill 2001; Ratneshwar et al. 2001; Rosch and Mervis 1975). For example, Medin, Goldstone, and Gentner 1993, (p. 254) note that an "important Gestalt principle of perceptual organization is that similar things will tend to be grouped together".[14] Thus, if consumers perceive a brand to be similar to that of a competitor,

[14] In this context, Mareau, Markman and Lehmann (2001, p. 490) remarks that "the goal of categorization is to maximize within-category similarity while reducing the similarity across categories (Medin and Schaeffer 1978; Rosch and Mervis 1975)."

they are highly likely to assign the focal brand to the same category as the focal competitor brand; vice versa, if consumers perceive brands to be distinct from one another, consumers are not likely to allocate them to the same category (Tversky 1977).

Theoretically, similarity-based categorization can be explained by “bottom-up” and “bottom-down” views. The former asserts that consumers form categories by judging the similarity of one brand to another based on whether the two brands have attributes[15] in common and/or possess distinctive attributes that are not shared by the other (e.g., Johnson 1986; Tverski 1977) – thus, if two brands share many attributes, consumers assign them to the same category. In this regard, it is frequently the visually prominent, surface-level aspects of products that drive similarity or dissimilarity perceptions of brands (e.g., Johnson 1986; Lefkoff-Hagius, and Mason 1993; Ratneshwar et al. 2001).

According the bottom-down view of categorization, on the other hand, consumers form categories based on their goals at the level of benefits sought (e.g., Park and Smith 1989; Ratneshwar, Pechmann, and Shocker 1996). If, for example, consumers infer that a brand fulfills the same functions (i.e., benefits) like another brand, or delivers the same situational goals (e.g., same usage context), they tend to allocate them in the same category (Ratneshwar et al. 2001). Thus, consumers may derive categories that include brands that do not necessarily need to share the same features.

Against this background, we expect that consumers group brands together, whose positioning bases (a) possess the same concreteness/abstractness level of brand knowledge and (b) fulfill the same types of goals. Conversely, we expect that if two brands are positioned on distinct positioning bases, consumers will *not* assign them to the same category. Operationally, our expectations based on categorization theory suggest that consumers are able to identify the positioning bases used by brands in their marketing communications and that they organize these bases in a manner consistent with that described in positioning typologies (e.g., brands following

[15] In this context, the term “attribute” is used in a much wider sense than used when referring to “attribute-based positioning” (aimed at creating attribute-based associations) and can encompass various types of associations that consumers have with a brand or a product category (e.g., direct benefit associations, usage-occasions, etc.).

a features-based positioning strategy will be grouped together, those following a benefits-based positioning strategy will form a different group, etc.). We expect that perceived positioning (as captured by consumers' brand categorizations) will be congruent with the actual positioning.

P1: Brands which are positioned on the same positioning base are more likely to be grouped together by consumers than brands positioned on different bases, i.e., categorization is based on positioning strategy.

Research Design

Open Sort Task

To test our research propositions, we employed an open sort task (see Fincher and Tenenberg 2005; Rosch and Mervis 1975), in which subjects are provided with an array of objects (e.g., different ads) which they sort into groups that "go together" on the basis of perceived similarity/dissimilarity (Block et al. 1981). Open sort task approaches are based on the general assumption that the way in which respondents categorize objects (e.g., brands) externally (i.e., by doing a sort task) reflects their internal, mental representation of the latter (Fincher and Tenenberg 2005; Hirschman and Douglas 1981). Sorting tasks have been accepted as a valid and reliable method in studying consumer behavior in general (e.g., Viswanathan, Johnson, and Sudman 1999) and brand positioning research in particular (Hirschman and Douglas 1981; Sujan and Bettman 1989) and they are also an accepted method in similarity studies (Medin, Goldstone, and Gentner 1993). The specific advantages of an open sort methodology are many-fold: First, open sorting constitutes a natural way to reveal consumers' perceptions and knowledge base (DeSarbo, Jedidi, and Johnson 1990). Second, sort tasks are simple and easy to administer (Fincher and Tenenberg 2005, Rugg and McGeorge 1997). Third, this method assures that consumers are highly involved in the task (Hirschman and Douglas 1981); frequently reported boredom and fatigue associated with conventional similarity measurement approaches that negatively impact on data quality are less likely to occur (e.g., Bijmolt et al. 1998; Johnson, Lehmann, and Horne 1991). Moreover, as open sort tasks use free associations, all types of associations with regard to a brand can be captured, and not only attribute-specific associations (Hirschman and Douglas 1981).

Stimuli and Sampling

In a first step, in analogy to existing brand positioning studies (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999; Crawford 1985; Easingwood and Mahajan 1989), two independent experts pre-coded 192 real print advertisements to identify prototypical positioning strategies of brands from distinct product categories. For this purpose, the expanded version of Crawford's well-known typology (see Figure 3), which comprises the major bases of other typologies (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Kotler et al. 2005; Wind 1982) was used.

Watches, compact cars and cell phones were chosen because (a) exploratory content analysis of advertisements in various product categories revealed that a great variety of different positioning strategies are used in these three categories and (b) these product categories are distinct with regard to several product category characteristics such as the level of involvement, level of technology and/or product parity (see also Study 2 in Chapter 5), which may contribute to the generalizability of the study`s results.

Out of the original pool of ads, we selected ten ads per product category[16], which captured either three or four of the theoretical positioning bases outlined in Table 3. The inter-coder consistency of these ads exceeded 90%. In the few cases where the coders were unable to reach consensus, disagreements were resolved with the assistance of a third coder. Note that only the dominant positioning bases were coded. With few exceptions (in which brands employed two dominant dimensions and thus a mixed [hybrid] positioning strategy), the brands were positioned on a single dominant dimension (i.e., pure positioning strategy).

[16] Copies of the ads are available, upon request, from the author.

Table 3: Positioning Bases Tested in Study 1

	Positioning Bases	*Literature Extracts*	*Explanation*	*Examples*
Attribute Positioning	Concrete Attribute (Feature)	Aaker and Shansby 1982; Crawford 1985; Kotler 2005;	Directly observable features; characteristics of the brand advantage; objectively measurable; typically "search features", specific to the product category	Watches: sapphire glas, timer, alarm function, automatic; Cell phones: mp3-player; 2 mio. pixel camera; touch screen;
	Abstract Attribute	Olson and Reynolds 1983; Reynolds, Gengler, and Howard 1995; Gutman 1982;	Often regarded as bundles of concrete attributes; attributes are frequently comparable across product categories	Watches: precision; quality; style; sporty; design, beauty;
Benefit Positioning	Direct (Functional) Benefit	Crawford, 1985; Kotler, 2003; Wind, 1982;	Communicate utilitarian advantages of (the usage of) a brand; closer related to one's self than product attributes; not directly observable	Cell phones: having the office in your cell phone; Cars: more comfort;
	Indirect (Experiential/ Symbolic) Benefit	Mahajan and Wind 2002; Schmitt 1999; Tybout and Sternthal 2005; Keller 1993;	Communicate non-functional advantages of using or possessing the brand such as positive emotions, experiences, or self-fulfillment; aim to create strong affective bonds between consumers and the focal brand; relates to what it feels like to use the brand; sensory pleasure, variety, and cognitive stimulation	Cars: Mini "Is it love?"; Renault Modus "Have Fun";
Surrogate Positioning	Personalities (Endorsement)	Crawford, 1985; Kalra and Goodstein 1998; Keller 1993;	People you respect/appreciate, use it or say it is good; associating the brand with celebrities or lead users; intention to create image congruence between personality and consumer; image transfer from endorser to brand; it is the personality of the endorser that creates the differential advantage	Watches: Brad Pitt for Tag Heuer; Roger Federer for Maurice Lacroix; James Bond for Omega Seamaster;
	User	Aaker and Shansby 1982; Crawford, 1985; Keller 1993; Kotler 2003; Wind 1982;	Is designed for a certain user type; for users like you; can be for a certain target group in terms of psychographic (lifestyle), demographic (sex), behavioural criteria	IWC watches for men; VW Golf for "wild guys"
	Usage (Activities)	Aaker and Shansby 1982; Wind 1982; Kotler 2003; Crawford 1985;	The brand can be used in a certain usage situation; or the brand is associated with certain activities	Cell phones: Siemens for mountaineering; Watches: Omega for diving;
	Pioneer	Alpert and Kamins 1995; Carpenter and Nakamoto 1989; Crawford 1985; Ries and Trout 1986;	The brand was the first in its category; the brand is the original and benefits from its pioneer advantage	Jeep "The Original"; Motorola - the Inventor of the flip phone;

A purposive sample of 109 respondents varying in age, sex, education and occupation was drawn. Forty respondents undertook the open sort task in the cell phone, thirty nine in the automobile and thirty in the watches product category; the sample sizes are consistent with Urban and Hauser's (1993) recommendation that about thirty respondents should participate in a typical sort task. Respondents were asked to independently sort the ten ads into piles based on their perceived similarity of the brands. Respondents, not being familiar with the positioning literature, were told to use *any* criteria for sorting; we purposely did *not* draw consumers' attention to the positioning information of the respective ads. Subjects had the possibility to form as many groups of ads as they wanted and each group could comprise any number of brands (Viswanathan, Johnson, and Sudman 1999). In this respect, "the range of stimuli that are placed in the same category and thus share a common label" (Bruner and Taifel 1961, p. 231) is referred to as the breadth of the category, whereas the number of groups formed by subjects can be regarded as a measure of conceptual differentiation (Block et al. 1981; Gardner and Schoen 1962).

Data Analysis Procedure

We conducted five complementary analyses that together provide a comprehensive and stringent assessment of our research propositions.[17] For all analyses, the input data consisted of a 10 x 10 similarity matrix (co-occurrence matrix), where the cell entries n_{ij} are the number of respondents that grouped brand *i* together with brand *j* for $i,j=1..10,\ i \neq j$. Thus, for each product category, similarity between all possible pairs of brands was scored on the basis of how many respondents categorized the focal brands together (Parkinson and Totterdell 1999; Urban and Hauser 1993). For example, in the watches category, if two brands were put together (matched) by all

[17] The established method to analyze open sort data is cluster analysis or multidimensional scaling. In addition to cluster analysis, we conducted four analyses that aimed at ascertaining a more stringent test of our research question. Although Hair et al. (2006) describe cluster analysis as a method that can also be used for confirmatory purposes, for example, comparing theoretically based classifications to that empirical-based classifications (derived from the cluster analysis), Aldendorfer and Blashfield (1984) advocate to be cautious when solely applying cluster analysis in this regard (see also Bailey 1994). Multidimensional scaling, the second alternative was not applied, as previous empirical studies (e.g., Shaver et al. 1987) found that the latter is inferior in analyzing these data. Moreover, note that open sort tasks are conceptually distinct from free q-sort tasks (see Block 1978, for a detailed description), even though these methods are sometimes used synonymously in extant literature (e.g., Derous, De Witte, and Stroobants 2003).

respondents (n = 30), their similarity was scored as 30 (maximum similarity); if none of the participants categorized the two brands together, their similarity was scored as 0 (minimum similarity). A separate similarity matrix was constructed for each product category. Table 4 shows the similarity matrix for watches as an illustrative example (the matrices for cell phones and compact cars are outlined in Appendix 1).

Table 4: Similarity Matrix for Watches

		Brand *i*									
		1	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***	***9***	***10***
Brand *j*	***1***		24	15	1	0	5	2	4	2	4
	2	24		20	1	1	7	4	4	4	4
	3	15	20		5	7	5	2	6	6	2
	4	1	1	5		9	4	16	6	8	13
	5	0	1	7	9		20	6	20	21	5
	6	5	7	5	4	20		6	17	19	6
	7	2	4	2	16	6	6		7	5	24
	8	4	4	6	6	20	17	7		21	6
	9	2	4	6	8	21	19	5	21		4
	10	4	4	2	13	5	6	24	6	4	
	Total	57	69	68	63	89	89	72	91	90	68

Conceptual Differentiation and Category Breadth

On average, respondents formed 2.88 groups in the cell phone category (ranging from 1 to 4), with a mode of 3 groups, which corresponds to the expected number of groups as a-priori specified by expert coders. In the watches category, consumers formed, on average, 3.23 groups (ranging from 2 to 5); again the mode was 3 corresponding to the a-priori specified number of categories. For the automobile category, the average number of groups created was 3.43, ranging from 2 to 5, with a mode of 3 groups. Thus, in terms of conceptual differentiation, the results are consistent with a-priori expectations, with the exception of automobiles where respondents created, on average, fewer groups than expected.

It was further evaluated with how many other brands each brand was, on average, put together in a group (including the focal brand),[18] which is a measure of category breadth. Table 5 (see Group sizes) shows, on a per brand basis, the comparison between the number of brands that were actually grouped together (i.e., actual group sizes) vis-à-vis the number of brands that were expected to be grouped together (i.e., expected group sizes). The results reveal that the actual group sizes are almost congruent with the expected group sizes for the watches category, whereas in the other two product categories the actual group sizes slightly exceed the expected ones. This indicates that respondents' categories are somewhat broader than the theoretical categories, a finding which probably reflects the smaller number of groups formed by respondents noted above.[19]

[18] For example, in the watches category, the expected group size for each of the brands employing usage positioning is four, since four brands are positioned on the usage base (see Table 5); thus, we expect that consumers group each of these brands together with three other brands (with the latter ideally also employing usage positioning).

[19] For a fixed number of elements (e.g., brands) there is an inverse relation between conceptual differentiation (number of groups) and category breadth (number of elements *within* a group).

Table 5: Results of the Data Analysis Procedure

Category	*Positioning Strategy*		*Group sizes*			*Test 1*		*Test 2*	*Test 3*
		*Code**	*actual*	*expected*	*residual***	χ^2*-value*	*p-value* (8 d.f.)	*psra*	*crsa*
Watches	Abstract Attributes	1	2.9	3.0	-0.1	79.9	<0.01	0.65	0.81
	Concrete/Abstract Attributes	2	3.3	3.0	0.3	38.5	<0.01	0.73	0.80
	Concrete Attributes/Benefits	3	3.3	3.0	0.3	31.1	<0.01	0.58	0.73
	Usage (Activity)	5	4.0	4.0	0.0	46.0	<0.01	0.68	0.74
	Usage (Activity)	6	4.0	4.0	0.0	33.7	<0.01	0.62	0.75
	Usage (Activity)	8	4.0	4.0	0.0	35.7	<0.01	0.64	0.75
	Usage (Activity)	9	4.0	4.0	0.0	44.0	<0.01	0.68	0.76
	Endorsement (Celebrity)	4	3.1	3.0	0.1	24.6	<0.01	0.48	0.63
	Endorsement (User)	7	3.4	3.0	0.4	48.8	<0.01	0.67	0.75
	Endorsement (User)	10	3.3	3.0	0.3	48.7	<0.01	0.62	0.76
Cell Phones	Abstract Attributes	1	4.2	3.0	1.2	18.8	<0.05	0.60	0.62
	Concrete/Abstract Attributes	4	4.1	3.0	1.1	15.4	~0.05	0.54	0.60
	Concrete/Abstract Attributes	5	4.6	3.0	1.6	11.6		0.54	0.53
	Direct Benefits	2	3.7	3.0	0.7	45.3	<0.01	0.60	0.70
	Direct Benefits	8	4.1	3.0	1.1	39.7	<0.01	0.69	0.70
	Dir. Benefits/Concrete Attributes	9	4.3	3.0	1.3	10.3		0.51	0.58
	Usage (Activity)	6	4.5	4.0	0.5	31.4	<0.01	0.61	0.63
	Usage (Activity)	7	4.6	4.0	0.6	22.6	<0.01	0.56	0.57
	Usage (Activity)	10	4.1	4.0	0.1	12.2		0.48	0.59
	Experiential Benefit/Pioneer	3	4.3	4.0	0.3	20.0	<0.05	0.53	0.61
Compact Cars	Concrete Attributes	2	3.8	3.0	0.8	31.4	<0.01	0.62	0.67
	Concrete Attributes	5	3.8	3.0	0.8	28.3	<0.01	0.54	0.58
	Concrete Attributes	7	3.9	3.0	0.9	19.7	<0.05	0.54	0.60
	Abstract Attributes	3	3.4	2.0	1.4	27.7	<0.01	0.56	0.58
	Concrete Attributes/Benefits	6	3.3	2.0	1.3	32.1	<0.01	0.56	0.55
	Indirect Benefit	8	3.3	2.0	1.3	25.9	<0.01	0.56	0.59
	Indirect Benefit	10	3.2	2.0	1.2	34.9	<0.01	0.56	0.52
	User Type	1	3.7	3.0	0.7	24.3	<0.01	0.50	0.51
	User Type	4	3.7	3.0	0.7	7.1		0.46	0.57
	User Type	9	3.5	3.0	0.5	9.3		0.44	0.57

Notes: * a code was assigned to each brand (positioning base), which enables the identification of the cluster solutions (see Figure 5)
** refers to the difference (rounded) between the actual group size and the expected group size

Random Allocation

In the next step of our data analysis procedure, we investigated whether there is *a* structure underlying the categorization patterns of respondents to confirm that brands are not randomly grouped together. For this purpose, we conducted a one-sample goodness-of-fit χ^2-test for each product category, in which the observed frequencies were the number of matches for each pair of brands n_{ij}. The expected frequencies, on the other hand, were calculated by summing up the cell entries (i.e., $\sum n_{ij}$) of the lower diagonal matrix in Table 4 divided by the number of cells in the matrix (a 10 x 10 matrix yields unique 45 cells), which resulted in the same expected number of matches for each pair of brands. The latter corresponds to a uniform distribution of matches that would be expected to occur in the case that no rationale underlie the categorizations.[20] The χ^2-values for each product category turned out to be highly significant, indicating that the frequencies of the matches (i.e., pairwise classifications) are not equally distributed across the different brands in the focal product categories (cell phones, χ^2 (d.f. = 44 [45 cells – 1]) = 117.76, $p < 0.01$; cars, χ^2 (44) = 136.94 and watches χ^2 (44) = 258.90, $p < 0.01$, respectively).

This analysis was also conducted at the individual brand level, where the observed frequencies were the cell entries for the individual brand (e.g., for Brand 1 [watches] n_{12} (24), n_{13} (15), etc.) and the expected frequencies corresponded to the average number of matches for each pair of brands; the latter are derived by dividing the total number of matches by the number of brands j. Thus, the expected frequencies for Brand 1 (see Table 5) is the sum of $n_{1...j}$ (57) divided by the number of brands j-1 (9), which is 6.33 for each cell $n_{ij....}$.

At the individual brand level, the χ^2-tests were also found to be significant. For almost all brands (25 out of 30), the χ^2 values for 8 degrees for freedom were above 15.51 (which is the threshold-value for significant χ^2 value with 8 degrees of freedom at $p < 0.05$; see Table 5, Test 1). These results reveal that the groups (categories) are *not* formed randomly by consumers implying that there is a clear rationale underlying the sorting of the brands. The question now to be addressed

[20] We did this, of course, separately for each product category.

concerns the extent to which this rationale is indeed based on the positioning information communicated to consumers by the adverts of the brands concerned.

Proportion of Substantive Agreement

In order to evaluate whether the rationale for brand categorization was based on the underlying positioning strategies of the brand, we employed Anderson and Gerbing`s (1991) proportion of substantive agreement (*psa*) measure. This enables us to test whether consumers assign brands with conceptually similar/identical bases to the same groups (see Proposition 1 earlier). *Psa*-scores were calculated for each brand as follows:

$$psa = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{m-1} nc_k}{\sum_{k=1}^{m-1} N_k}$$

Where *nc* denotes the number of respondents who group a pair of brands together as a-priori specified by the expert coders, $k = 1 \ldots m$ represents the theoretical (a-priori specified) number of brands that should fall in the same category and *N* represents the total number of respondents (i.e., sample size). The range for this measure is between 0 and 1, corresponding to the proportion of consumers who group pairs of brands together that conceptually belong together.

At the product category level, the *psa* tests produced values greater than 0.5 (0.64 for watches, 0.56 for cell phones, and 0.52 for cars). At the individual brand level, the majority of the respondents also indicated that brands with conceptually similar positioning strategies should be categorized together (see Table 5, Test 2). Thus, based on the *psa* measure, Proposition 1 is supported.

Relative Substantive Agreement

Although the *psa* index provides information on the consistency between the classifications made by respondents vis-à-vis experts, it does not indicate the extent to which respondents group brands together that do *not* share the same underlying positioning base(s). To overcome this problem, we used a modified version of Anderson and Gerbing's (1991) substantive validity coefficient (*csv)*, which also takes "wrong" categorizations (i.e., classifications that are not consistent with theory as coded by experts) into account. Note that the *csv* coefficient is normally used in scale development as a test for a construct's content validity by determining the extent to which respondents assign an item to its posited construct more than to any other construct. In this case, data are collected using closed sort tasks, in which the number of constructs (i.e., categories) are a-priori specified. However, as we employ an open sort task in our study, in which the number of categories are not a-priori specified, we had to slightly modify the *csv* coefficient. The modified measure, which we define as the coefficient of relative substantive agreement (*crsa)*, denotes the proportion of correct matches (i.e. pairwise groupings that were made consistent with theoretical expectations) divided by the sum of correct plus the most frequent wrong matches. The *crsa* for each brand in a given category is calculated as follows:

$$crsa = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{m-1} nc_k}{\sum_{k=1}^{m-1} nc_k + \max \sum_{k=1}^{m-1} nw_k}$$

where *nc* and k = 1…m are defined as before and *nw* denotes the number of respondents who group pairs of brands together that do not share the same positioning base and thus do not belong to the same group. For example, in the watches category (see Table 4), the brands that theoretically go together with Brand 1 are Brand 2 and Brand 3; thus, Brand 1 should be matched with two (m [= 3] – 1) additional brands. The number of correct pairwise classifications n_c for Brand 1 is 24 + 15. The rest of the cell entries constitute wrong classifications and are referred to as *nw*. Out of these wrong pairwise classifications (n_w) those with the highest scores (maximum number of *nw)* for *m-1* brands are selected; in this case Brand 6 (*nw* = 5) and Brand 8 (*nw* = 4) yield the highest (max) number n_w scores.

Crsa values range from 0 to 1, with values of 1 indicating that all brands with the same positioning strategy have been classified together and none with brands following a different strategy. Anderson and Gerbing (1991) recommend a benchmark value of 0.50 for the original substantive validity coefficient (*csv*) (see also Lawshe 1975). This value can be regarded as highly conservative for the *crsa* measure, given that, in our study design, the a-priori chance of attaining higher *nw* scores is substantially higher than for *nc* scores. This is because the number of brands that should *not* be grouped together (e.g., for Brand 1 in the watches category these are 7) with the focal brand is substantially higher than for the number of brands that should conceptually fall in the same group (e.g., for Brand 1 these are 2).

According to the results, the aggregated *crsa*-values for each product category are also well above the .50 threshold value. More specifically, the *crsa*-values in the watches category produced the highest score with a value of 0.76; a one sample proportion test reveal that the focal *crsa* value are significantly higher than the 0.5 threshold value (nc = 230, $nc + nw$ = 304, proportion test: χ^2 [1 d.f.] = 79.03; $p < 0.01$). The *crsa*-value for cars came to 0.57, and for cell phones to 0.60, which are both also significantly higher than the 0.50 threshold (cars, nc = 163, $nc + nw$ =286; χ^2 [1] = 5.21, $p = 0.01$; cell phones, nc = 269, $nc + nw$ = 450, χ^2 [1] = 16.82; $p < 0.01$). Finally, as shown in Table 5 (Test 3), the *crsa*-values for the individual brands are all also above the 0.50 threshold value, indicating that the number of correct matches is always substantially higher than the highest number of wrong matches for the same number of brand pairs. Taken together, the findings based on the *crsa* measure support Proposition 1.

In a final step, following Parkinson and Totterdell (1999), we subjected the similarity matrices (like the one for watches in Table 4) to a series of agglomerative hierarchical cluster analyses using the average linkage method and evaluated whether the resulting clusters were consistent with the classifications made by the expert judges based on the positioning typology.[21] In a first step of the hierarchical clustering procedure, a distance matrix is calculated based on which the clustering algorithm makes a series of binary combinations of brands or groups of brands (working bottom-up) which maximize both within-category similarity and between-category differences until only a single cluster remains.

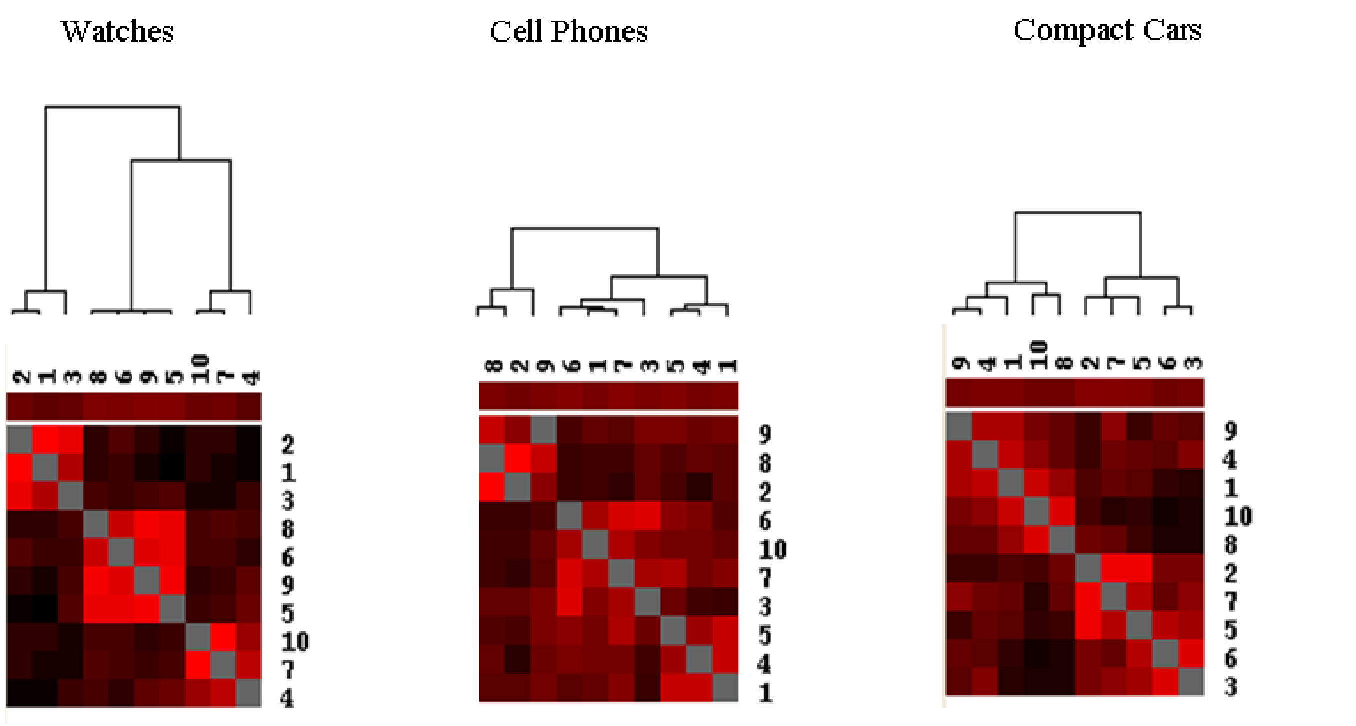
[21] The analyses were performed using the Eisen Lab's *Cluster 2.11* program.

The upper part of Figure 5 displays the dendograms for each product category based on *Cluster's 2.11* integrated *Tree View* program. The lower part of the figure (below the dendograms) graphically illustrates the similarity between the brands. Cells that are colored black indicate lack of similarity, whereas cells in red show groupings that are highly similar (i.e., groupings that frequently occured). The color intensity of the cells (red) increases with increasing (pairwise) similarity.

As can be seen from the dendograms, the results are completely in accordance with the theoretical groupings of the brands (based on their positioning strategies) across all product categories. The graphical representation further provides evidence for the congruence between the theoretical and actual categorizations.

Overall, based on the collective results of the five-stage data analysis procedure, it can be concluded that consumers perceive brands with the same positioning strategies as similar and brands with distinct positioning strategies as dissimilar.

Figure 5: Results of the Cluster Analysis



Notes:

Dendograms for each product category are shown above the figures. The branches of the dendograms correspond to the cells of the figures below, which are graphic representations of the similarity matrices of each product category. Cells held in red indicate high similarity, whereas dark cells indicate low similarity. The labels of the cells are outlined in Table 5 in the "Code" column.

Summary

The present study provides initial insights into consumers' categorizations processes of brands by demonstrating that consumers classify brands based upon their underlying positioning strategy. The results of the study reveal that brands employing similar positioning bases tend to be grouped together, whereas brands using different strategies tend not to be grouped together.
This finding also indirectly provides evidence for the validity of positioning typologies – elements of a taxonomy or typology need to be internally homogenous and externally heterogeneous (Bailey 1994; Laskey, Fox, and Crask 1995; Parkinson and Totterdell 1999)

Having demonstrated that the positioning strategies identified indeed lead to different consumer perceptions the intention of the next chapters is to develop a measure of positioning effectiveness and to compare a set of positioning strategies in terms of positioning success.

CHAPTER 4: ASSESSING POSITIONING EFFECTIVENESS

This section provides an overview of existing approaches for assessing positioning success including a comprehensive discussion of their potential limitations.

Based on a comprehensive review of normative and empirical literature on the subject of brand positioning and effectiveness measurement, we have identified several major approaches for positioning effectiveness measurement. Conceptually, the latter can be categorized along two dimensions, namely (a) the type of positioning analyzed (i.e., intended, actual, or perceived positioning; Crawford 1985, Wind 1982; see also Brown et al. 2006) and (b) the type of measure used (i.e., company-based measures or consumer-based response measures; both comprising different types of metrics). Each combination of the focal elements of the two dimensions (i.e., type of positioning and type of measure) constitutes a different measurement approach that addresses the issue from a different angle.

In a first step, procedures that use company-based measures (e.g., financial performance measures) are discussed. This is followed by an exploration of procedures that use various kinds of consumer-based response measures.

Company-Based Measurement Approaches

Company-based measurement approaches involve surveying managers on the brand positioning they employ (i.e., intended positioning) and link this information with the brand's actual financial performance such as sales, market share, or profitability (Cravens 2000; Roth 1992; 1995). For example, as noted by Evans, Mouthinho, and van Raaij (1996, p. 180) "the rate of growth in sales volume is sometimes perceived as being the most likely financial measure to be affected by a change in relative image or positioning."

However, this approach is potentially problematic due to the difference between what managers *intend* consumers to perceive and what consumers actually *perceive*. Indeed, perceptions that consumers actually hold of a brand and its attributes often differ from the intended meaning (e.g., Brown et al. 2006; Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003; Roth 1995; Wind 1982), because "people make their decisions based on their individual perceptions of reality, rather than on the marketer's definition of that reality" (Lovelock 1996, p. 168). Consumers simply do not know *what* the company intended, and therefore the intended positioning may not *directly* impact on consumer choice behavior. With specific emphasis on the first approach, there are practical difficulties with surveying managers in this context (see Crawford 1985; Easingwood and Mahajan 1989). For instance, asking managers about positioning can be a difficult task because of possible misperceptions about the exact meaning of positioning (e.g., Aaker and Shansby 1982; Blankson and Kalafatis 2007; Mühlbacher, Dreher, and Gabriel-Ritter 1993), and/or because it may prove problematic to even identify the individuals responsible for developing the firm's positioning strategy (Crawford 1985). A further problematic issue is the confidentiality of positioning data – researchers will often have only limited access to actual company marketing plans, which are often necessary to determine the brand's positioning (Crawford 1985).

A similar approach, that potentially overcomes the latter issues involves identifying the *actual* positioning (e.g., claimed attributes or benefits) as contained in company communications (e.g., public relations, advertisements) and then relating it to market performance measures (Padgett and Mulvey 2007).

Nevertheless, bottom line measures (e.g., sales, market share, or profits) are driven by a host of different marketing variables and subject to various macro- and micro-environmental changes (Lenz 1981), which makes isolating the impact of positioning on such measures very problematic (see Rao, Agarwal and Dahlhoff 2004). In this context, Lodish (1986, p. 75) argues that "the relationships between positioning variable (perceptions) and long-term sales and profits are difficult to determine. The measurements usually have a lot of noise associated and are not as precise as researchers or brand managers would like."

Moreover, brand positioning seen through the company's lens is a marketing activity and "marketing activities influence intermediate outcomes (customer thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and ultimately, behaviour), which in turn influence financial performance of the firm"

(O'Sullivan and Abela 2007, p. 80).[22] Consequently, due to these indirect effects the benefits of certain brand building strategies may not be fully reflected in financial performance measures (Srivastava, Shervani, and Fahey 1998). In addition, the entire impact of successful positioning may not be translated into contemporary financial results due to lagged effects, as observed by Mizik and Jacobson (2008). Hence, even though, it needs to be acknowledged that the achievement of financial performance, reflected in bottom line measures, is essential to any marketing effort, these latter measures are retrospective in that they assess historical performance (Rust et al. 2004).

Taking these arguments together, we conclude that measuring positioning effectiveness through the customer's lens is regarded as a more conceptually sound approach. Wind (1982, p. 75), for example, advocate that "the product (brand) positioning should be assessed by measuring consumers' or organizational buyers' perceptions and preference for the product in relation to its competitors." The latter perspective is also congruent with the argument that successful positioning can only be achieved by adopting a customer perspective and by understanding how customers perceive brands in the product class (Fill 1999; Myers 1996; Sweeney and Soutar 2001).

Consumer-Based Measurement Approaches

The second category of measurement procedures addresses the issue from a consumer-perspective by (a) either combining the intended or actual positioning with several types of consumer based response measures, or (b) by analyzing consumers' brand associations in relation to competing brands. The data for both procedures are collected by conducting consumer surveys.

[22] Note that literature also describes the possibility to assess positioning success by changing the intended/actual positioning and subsequently monitor potential changes in outcome variables such as financial performance and/or consumer response metrics (Lodish 1983; Keon 1983). However, this specific measurement approach requires first to *reposition* (i.e., change the positioning of) the brand, which is, however, associated with considerable risk (e.g., repositioning may lead to a confused image (see for example Kotler 2003). Therefore, this approach is more appropriate for mere repositioning studies. Apart from this, research on positioning practices demonstrate that brands usually stick with their positioning strategies over a brand's lifetime (Crawford 1985).

With regard to (a), existing studies have analyzed the impact of the *actual positioning on consumer-based outcome measures* of positioning effectiveness such as buying intentions, brand preference, perceived price sensitivity, or purchase interest (e.g., Alpert and Kamins 1995; Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto 1994; Kalra and Goodstein 1998). Although these measures are highly valuable in predicting consumer behavior, they do not enable marketers to obtain insights into consumers' associations with the focal brand.

The alternative procedure that *does* allow insights into consumers' perceptual spaces is to assess whether the set of associations that companies intend to create in consumers' minds (i.e., *intended positioning*) are consistent with the mental associations consumers hold (*perceived positioning*). The rationale underlying this approach is based on the assumption that effective positioning is manifested in the extent to which congruence between what companies claim (or intend to claim) and what consumers perceive, is achieved (Crawford 1985; Dillon et al. 2001; Keller 2003; see also Brown et al. 2006). Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann (2003), for example, investigated the effectiveness of functional and hedonic positioning strategies employed by companies by analyzing the extent to which they actually lead to focal hedonic or utilitarian brand evaluations.[23] Whereas this approach uses more generic dimensions (functional vs. hedonic) of consumer evaluations, other approaches use dimensions that are specific to the product category of concern.

The latter approaches investigate whether the communicated superiority of brands in terms of product-category relevant attributes (i.e., features and/or benefits) is actually translated into superior perceptions on these focal dimensions in consumers minds (e.g., Chernev 2007; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991). For example, if a car manufacturer claims that its new SUV model is superior in terms of safety and design, effective positioning would be manifested in high safety and design judgments.

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[23] This method is based on the seminal work of Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986), who advocated that the companies can basically position their brands on three broad dimensions – functionality, hedonism and symbolism, each satisfying a basic consumer need, assuming that either of this needs is satisfied, the brand is effectively positioned.

The third types of consumer-based approaches that are discussed in extant literature are based on the idea that strong brand positioning is reflected in performance advantages *over competitors* on *some relevant* attribute dimensions (Keller 2003). Essentially, the differences between the focal brand and competitor brands on important attribute dimensions (i.e., scores) indicate how well the brand is positioned (on these attribute dimensions) (Dillon et al. 2001). In contrast to the previously discussed approaches, this approach does not require the identification of the intended or actual positioning – the subject of analysis is rather consumers' perceptions vis-à-vis competition (i.e., the perceived positioning).[24] Thus, positioning effectiveness is measured by focusing on the perceived positioning only. Operationally, this approach requires the collection of a considerably large set of attributes (i.e. to assure that all important attributes are covered) on which the focal brand can be contrasted with competitor brands (e.g., Aaker, Kumar, and Day 1998, Seggev 1982). By employing statistical tools (e.g., principal component analysis, etc.) the (large) set of attributes can be reduced to more broadly defined dimensions (see Urban and Hauser 1993), on which the brands can be compared. The final comparison and the subsequent judgment whether brands score better than competitors on the focal attribute dimensions can be best done by creating perceptual maps. The maps have the advantage that they visually display the locations of a set of product alternatives in a multidimensional (perceptual) space. One general problem with this approach, however, is that the sole use of perceptual data (attribute ratings) does not reveal "which areas (positions) of the map are desirable to target segments and which are not" (Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003, p. 139). In other words, there is no indication whether the individual consumers (segments) also value (prefer) the (underlying attributes of the) focal brand.

A related and more complex variant of these types of analysis, which overcomes the latter limitation, is to create joint-space maps that represent customer perceptions (e.g., brand attribute and/or similarity ratings) and preferences (e.g., brand preference ratings) for a set of brands in a derived perceptual/preference space (see DeSarbo and Wu 2001; Hair et al. 1998; Lilien and

[24] In practice, both methods may be combined. For example, the evaluation of positioning effectiveness may partly be judged based upon the extent to which the intended positioning is congruent with the perceived positioning as well as the magnitudes of the competitors` brand ratings.

Rangaswamy 2003).[25] More specifically, these maps, typically constructed with Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) techniques (see Caroll and Green 1997 for an overview), enable to depict the actual locations of brands in a multidimensional space, as well as ideal points (or vectors) that correspond to individual consumers' (or homogenous segments') preferences for a hypothetical brand (e.g., preferred combination of attributes). With ideal point models it is assumed that the closer the focal brand is located to the ideal point of a particular segment on the map, the higher is the likelihood that the brand is being preferred by that segment (see, for example, DeSarbo, Young, and Rangaswamy 1997).[26] Several authors discuss the spatial distance between the ideal point (e.g., ideal combination of attributes) and the current position of the focal brand, (as well the distance between the focal brand and competitor brands) as a measure of a brand's positioning effectiveness (e.g., Carpenter and Nakamoto 1989; Dillon, Domzal, and Madden 1986; Myers 1996; Seggev 1982; Winer 2004). In other words, effective positioning is determined by the spatial closeness of the focal brand`s actual position to an ideal point location in the perceptual space, while avoiding competition (Rust and Donthu 1988).

Although perceptual/preference mapping techniques (and attribute-based approaches in general) are highly useful methods in positioning analysis, they may be subject to some specific limitations and assumptions in the context of positioning effectiveness measurement that may justify the need for an alternative or complementary measurement instrument.

First, as many brands need to be rated in terms of attributes, similarity or preferences, these techniques implicitly assume high-level brand knowledge of respondents (Urban and Hauser 1993; Punj and Moon 2002). For example, Dröge and Darmon (1987) note that consumers may not be that familiar with all brands they are asked to evaluate and may therefore face difficulties rating them based on specific attributes.

[25] However, the view that preferences are part of positioning is criticized in the literature. Crawford, Urban, and Buzas (1983, p. 3), for example, criticize that "some authors see creating perceptions as part of creating preference. Preferences, however, may or may not follow from perception of image. Positioning requires perception of a comparison among products and services. If there is no perception, there can be no positioning – only attempts at it. Therefore, positioning does not depend on the actual development of preference in the marketplace."

[26] Hence, the consumers' predicted utility is inversely related to the spatial distance between the ideal point and the actual brand position in the derived space.

Second, in case of methods based on attribute ratings, the attributes must be known in advance (therefore prior marketing research needs to be conducted to identify them) and it is assumed that the attributes are valid (relevant) and complete (Aaker, Kumar, and Day 1998; Hauser and Koppelman 1979; Myers 1996; Seggev 1982). As noted by Steenkamp, van Trijp, and Berge (1994, p. 15) "presenting all consumers with the same set of *a priori* specified attributes assumes that (1) all attributes used in the study are relevant to all consumers, (2), no other attributes are relevant to certain groups of consumers, and (3) consumers attach the same meaning to an attribute. The general validity of these assumptions can be questioned.[27]

Third, most perceptual mapping techniques generally "assume that all products are differentiated via only differences in levels of *common* physical or perceptual attributes, thereby ignoring the effects of differentiation due to perceptual factors such as perceptions unique to a product" (Chaturvedi and Carroll, 1998, p. 268, emphasis added). As a result, perceptual factors which may be *unique* to a brand cannot be sufficiently explained.

Fourth, consumers "may not perceive or evaluate objects in terms of underlying attributes but as a whole that is not decomposable in terms of separate attributes" (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 856). Related to this, in some product categories such as commodity goods or experience goods, product features or benefits that may set a brand apart from competitors are sometimes missing or at least difficult to identify (Mahajan and Wind 2002; Schmitt 1999).

Fifth, for very abstract positioning strategies, such as surrogate positioning, in which companies do not claim the superiority of a brand's features or benefits, but rather say something that leads consumers to derive to individual conclusions (Crawford 1985, Friedman and Lessig 1987), the effectiveness of the positioning may not be reflected into the focal brand attribute ratings. These positioning alternatives are sometimes very difficult to articulate and may be unique to the focal brand (Aaker 1991).Typical example of the use of surrogate positioning are Coca Cola claiming

[27] Note, however, that this issue could be reduced by collecting free response data (see Green, Wind, and Jaoin 1973).

the "real thing"; Jeep claiming "the Original" or VW that positions its Golf brand on a certain user-lifestyle – such as "for people who do not want to grow up" (or best selling etc.).

An alternative to attribute-based methods, would be to use joint-space maps based on similarity data and preference/choice data (see Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003; Myers 1996). However, maps based on similarity data have the problem that the resulting dimensions are difficult to interpret (DeSarbo, Young, and Rangaswamy 1997; Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003) and of limited diagnostic use to managers (e.g., Hair et al. 2006). Moreover, with similarity data in particular, the selection of the relevant competitors is crucial for the resulting maps (Wind 1982) – thus, the company faces the problem who to integrate and who not to integrate (Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003; Schmitt 1999).[28]

Sixth and related to the latter issue, the company instead of the consumer determines the competition (i.e., the frame of reference). As a consequence, the frame of reference is frequently very narrowly defined – brands that do not fall "directly" into the focal product category may not be taken into account (Schmitt 1999).

But perhaps most importantly, perceptual mapping techniques, and effectiveness measurement approaches based on product-category specific attributes in general, are not appropriate to test theoretical relationships between constructs (e.g., linking positioning effectiveness with relevant antecedents and outcomes). Furthermore, attribute-based positioning techniques are only applicable to a limited extend in other product categories, as the focal attributes upon which the brands are evaluated tend to be product category specific.

Table 6 summarizes the main issues and assumptions associated with measurement approaches that are based on product category-specific attributes.

[28] Note that this problem may also be present after having conducted qualitative studies (see Chapter 2). Moreover, remark that the in the case of methods based on similarity ratings, numerous pairs of objects need to be rated or rank-ordered (Katahira 1990), which may create problems in product categories in which there are only a few brands; similarity-based methods require a minimum number of objects (at least eight alternatives) to derive stable solutions (Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003; Myers 1996). In addition, if a brand is significantly similar or dissimilar from competing brands *only*, it does not necessarily mean that the positioning is also effective (Wind 1982; Dickson and Ginter 1987). Thus, it needs more than similarity/dissimilarity ratings to judge positioning effectiveness.

Table 6: Summary of Major Issues with Attribute-based Measurement Approaches

Main Assumptions and Issues	***Source Examples***
Inappropriate for testing relationships between constructs	
Generalizability to other product categories	
High brand knowledge	Bijmolt et al. 1998; Urban and Hauser 1993
Completeness, relevance and a-priori knowledge of attributes	Aaker, Kumar, and Day 1998; Hauser and Koppelman 1979; Myers 1996; Seggev 1982; Steenkamp, von Trijp, and Berge 1994
Differences on common perceptual dimensions	Chaturvedi and Carroll 1998
Decomposability of brands	Churchill and Iacobucci 2002;
Absence of product-category attributes in some product categories	Mahajan and Wind 2002; Schmitt 1999

Having discussed the most widely recognized methods for assessing positioning effectiveness, we will, in a next step, present an alternative and complementary measurement approach of positioning effectiveness that is designed to overcome some of the limitations of existing approaches. Specifically, our goal is to develop a measure that can be applied in various product categories, which enables researchers to compare the positioning effectiveness of brands in various product categories. In measuring positioning effectiveness, we focus, similarly to the last category of measurement approaches on the perceived positioning only.

We base the development of the positioning effectiveness measurement tool on the consumer-active concept of positioning namely that positioning is something that occurs in the minds of consumers – the process of forming a perceived position in relation to competitors in consumer minds (Crawford 1985). We are thus interested in measuring whether the positioning in the mind of the consumer leads to its desired outcomes – that is the extent to which the brand takes a valuable and distinctive location in the perceptual space of consumers.[29]

We argue that the positioning effectiveness is best conceptualized and operationalized as a multidimensional construct with distinct but mutually reinforcing dimensions. Appling only one facet of positioning effectiveness at a time has been subjected to criticism (e.g., Dillon et al. 2001; Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002; Seggev 1982; Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003), since the success of (a) positioning (strategy) cannot be adequately evaluated by a single measure. Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann (2003, p. 310), for example, highlight that "[multidimensional measures of attitude] can reveal brand differences/positions that may not be apparent when a single dimension attitude measure is used." Consequently, a mere one-dimensional measure does not capture the full domain of the positioning effectiveness construct.

[29] Note however, that the mere application of the measure does not reveal how effective the intended/targeted positioning is –we can not assess whether the specific strategies or positioning employed by the company is effective or not. This would require to link the intended/actual positioning with the positioning effectiveness measure.

CHAPTER 5: POSITIONING EFFECTIVENESS: MEASURE DEVELOPMENT

This chapter provides a comprehensive conceptualization of the positioning effectiveness construct from a consumer perspective. Based on this conceptualization, we subsequently describe the development and validation of a new multidimensional measure of positioning success and establish its psychometric soundness.

Conceptualizing Positioning Effectiveness

Conceptually, we base our measure of positioning effectiveness on the very essence of brand positioning as "emphasising the distinctive characteristics that make it *different* from its competitors and *appealing* to the public" (Kapferer 2004, p. 99; emphasis added); achieving this is the ultimate objective of every positioning initiative (Cravens 2000; Dibb and Simkin 1993; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Myers 1996).[30] This indicates that two cornerstones of positioning success are *differentiation* (i.e., the brand must be perceived as distinct from competing brands and/or perceived as unique in relation to competitor offerings) and *favorability* (i.e., the brand must be accompanied with positive associations; the brand needs to appeal to the head and/or heart of consumers [Mahajan and Wind 2002]) that need to occur *simultaneously*.

Regarding the latter dimension, it has been pointed out that "the favorability of consumers' predispositions toward a brand is perhaps the most basic of all brand associations" (Dacin and Smith 1994, p. 230), where brand associations contain the meaning of the brand for consumers (Pullig, Netemeyer, and Biswas 2006). Favorability determines whether consumers have created a set of positive brand associations, which has been discussed as a key characteristic of a well-positioned brand (Aaker 1991; Dillon et al. 2001; Keller 2003). If consumers think or feel that the brand's features and/or benefits can satisfy their needs and wants, they perceive the brand as

[30] Essentially, Dibb and Simkin (1993, p. 17) state that "positioning is arranging for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive and desirable place – relative to competing products – in the minds of target customers."

being favorable (Keller 1993).[31] Favorability can capture both brand-specific associations (e.g., evaluations of product features) as well as more general impressions about a brand (Dillon et al. 2001)[32]. In essence, this dimension assures that value (of any kind) is created to consumers (Brooksbank 1994) and that a single or a set of brand associations that are appealing to consumers are delivered by the brand (Evans 2003).

As far as the differentiation dimension is concerned, it has been argued that "when a firm or provider establishes and maintains a distinctive place for itself and its offerings in the market, it is said to be successfully positioned" (Shostack 1987, p. 34). Indeed, "the most basic principle of positioning is that you must be different in some way from all your competitors" (Myers 1996, p. 171). Brand differentiation is defined as "the degree to which a brand is perceived by the consumer to differ from its competition on any physical or non-physical brand characteristic including price" (Dickson and Ginter 1987, p. 4). Differentiation can give consumers a reason to buy a brand; hinders a brand becoming a commodity product; increases barriers to entry; reduces price sensitivity (Boulding,Lee, and Staelin 1994; Day 1990; Hooley, Saunders, and Piercy 2004; Myers 1996). Ultimately, brand differentiation has been shown to be positively related to future stock returns (Mizik and Jacobson 2008). It is important to note that "differentiation occurs not only because of differences in the *common* perceptual space, but also because each brand is perceived to have its own stamp of "*uniqueness*" in the marketplace, concretely realized in the form of a dimension specific to that brand" (Chaturvedi and Carroll 1998, p. 269, emphasis added). Following the latter authors and in line with Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout (2002, p. 83) who warn that "it is important to avoid a one-dimensional view of differentiation", we conceptualize brand differentiation as comprising two dimensions, namely dissimilarity and uniqueness. Branding literature considers both to be components of successful brand positioning (Keller 2003).

[31] Theoretically, the favorability dimension can capture both cognitive brand associations (e.g., attribute-based associations) as well as affective associations (value-based associations) that deliver symbolic or experiential benefits to consumers (see Mahajan and Wind 2002; Pullig, Netemeyer, and Biswas 2006).

[32] However, consumers may also have associations that are harmful to the brand, for example, the brand is perceived as too expensive (Aaker and Keller 1990). These associations may not be valued by consumers and thus be reflected in negative brand beliefs.

Dissimilarity refers to "how similar or distinct the brand is perceived to be in comparison with other brands in the product category" (Sujan and Bettman 1989, p. 454). Over time, consumers develop a schema or set of expectations and beliefs about competitor brands that constitute a product category (Keller 2003, Myers-Levy and Tybout 1989; see also Chapter 3). Perceived dissimilarity is subsequently driven by whether the focal brand corresponds to these expectations – that is attributes (i.e., associations) that are representative of the evoked set in the product category (Punj and Moon 2002; Sujan and Dekleva 1987). Attributes on which the focal brand has values that are about equal with competitor brands will cause perceived similarity, whereas attributes on which the brand has values that are different, will cause the brand to be perceived as relatively dissimilar (Bijmolt et al. 1998; Tversky 1977). Put differently, when a brand is seen as having attributes that have similar values with other brands in the product category (i.e., shared associations, beliefs), its perceived dissimilarity is low (Johnson 1986; Johnson and Horne 1988; Tversky 1977, Sujan and Dekleva 1987). Conversely, when a brand is perceived as possessing attributes that have different values, its perceived dissimilarity is high (Tversky 1977). A combination of both leads to the overall internal mental representation of dissimilarity (Bijmolt et al. 1998). In this context, research on this subject contends that consumers tend to use cognitive cues tied to the focal brand (mainly in the form of product features or highly salient attributes) when determining the dissimilarity of a brand (Creusen and Schoormans 1997; Derbaix and Sjöberg 1994; Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993). Thus, overall, dissimilarity addresses differences that occur in the "common" (i.e., shared) perceptual space of a brand in relation to competitor brands (Chaturvedi and Carroll 1998).

Uniqueness, on the other hand, captures "the differentiation that a brand enjoys in the marketplace vis-à-vis its competitors by virtue of perceptions unique to that brand, or other perceptual brand-specific effects" (Chaturvedi and Caroll 1998, p. 269). Sources of perceived brand uniqueness can be all types of associations – for example, secondary associations in which consumers link a brand with a famous writer or person (e.g., Omega Seamaster and James Bond) or with the pioneer status of a brand (e.g., Jeep Wrangler being the Original) as well as unique feature associations (e.g., Honda's motorcycle airbag system). If the focal brand is perceived as unique, a niche or submarket is created for the latter and the brand is not viewed as a prototypical example in that product category (Sujan and Bettman 1989) – the brand is seen as being one of a kind (Franke and Schreier 2008). Indeed, "products and their uses or displays that become classified as being outside of the norm may serve as recognizable symbols of uniqueness of specialness" (Tepper-Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001, p. 50). The major difference between dissimilarity and uniqueness is that the former refers to whether the brand has attributes (i.e., associations) *in* common with competitors, and the latter refers to whether the brand possesses attributes (i.e., associations) that *are* common or not. [33]

In addition to favorability and differentiation (comprising dissimilarity and uniqueness), two other dimensions of positioning effectiveness have been proposed, namely credibility (of the differentiation) (Jobber 2004; Keller 2003; Kotler 2003; McKenna 1985; Myers 1996; Ries and Ries 2002; Tybout and Sternthal 2005) and sustainability (Evans, Moutinho, and van Raaij 1996; Jobber 2004; Keller 2003; Kotler 2003; Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002).[34]

Brand credibility is defined as "the believability of the product position information contained in a brand, which depends on the willingness and ability of the firms to deliver what they promise" (Erdem, Swait, and Valenzuela 2006, p. 34). Thus, an effectively positioned brand needs to have consumers' confidence and trust in the position it takes in the perceptual space (Dröge and Darmon 1987). Credibility tends to reduce consumers' feelings of scepticism and irritation towards brands as it makes claims more meaningful and convincing to consumers (Yoo and MacInnis 2005). Moreover, the believability of a brand's position can increase perceived quality, reduce consumers' perceived risk and information costs. Ultimately, credibility can affect price sensitivity (Erdem, Swait, and Louviere 2002) and has a positive impact on brand consideration and choice (Czepiel 1992; Erdem and Swait 2004). Following existing brand positioning literature (Braig and Tybout 2005; Keller 2003), we conceptualize the credibility dimension as the extent to which the differences between the focal brand and competitor brands are believable

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[33] It needs to be noted that differentiation alone does not imply that the brand is also superior on important and desirable attributes.

[34] Furthermore, it is frequently argued that brands need to be positioned on *meaningful* dimensions (e.g., Myers 1996; Day 1990). However, as shown by Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto (1994) differentiating brands on *meaningless* dimensions may also be a tool for effective positioning that eventually can lead to increased preference.

from a consumer's viewpoint. This is consistent with Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout (2002), who advocate that strong positioning requires that the points of differences are also believable.

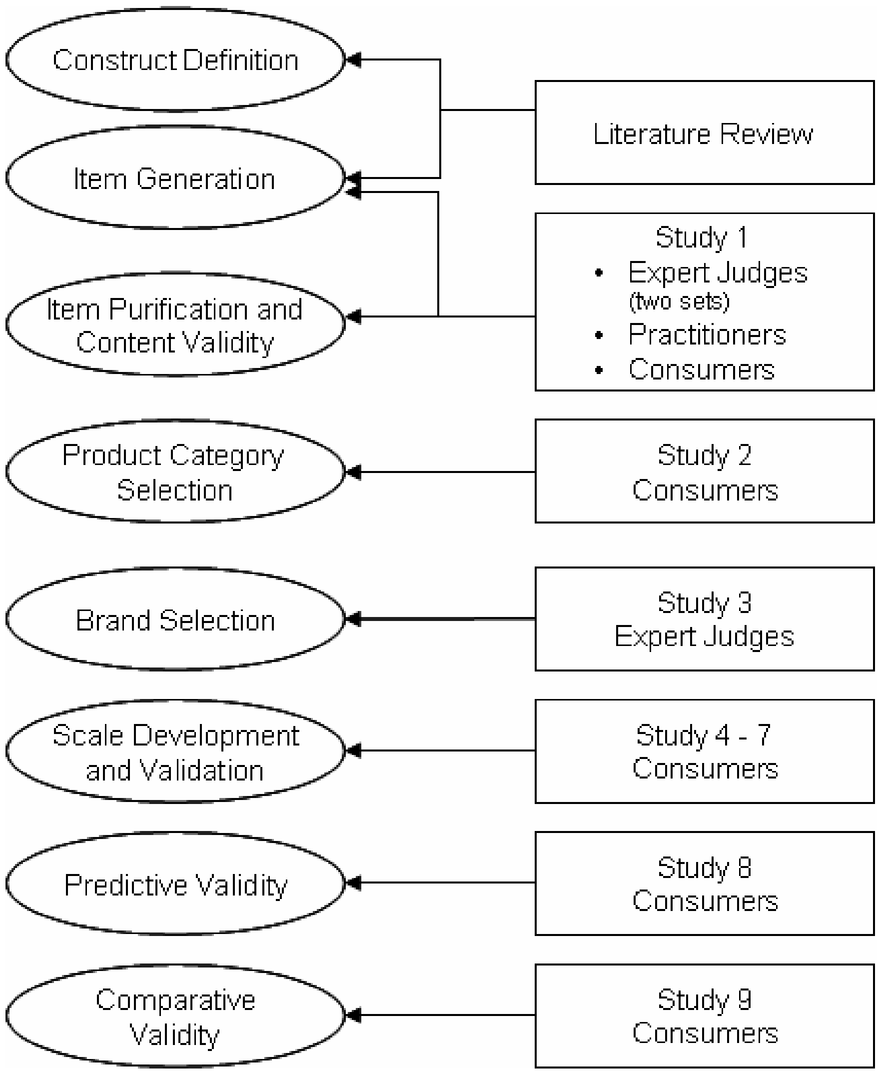
Finally, *sustainability* refers to a brand position which is hard to attack from competitors, defensible, and pre-emptive (Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002, Keller 2003). Ideally, a positioning strategy should be difficult to copy (e.g. Cravens 2000; Evans, Moutinho, and Van Raaij 1996; Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002) and should have the ability to achieve a differential advantage for a prolonged period of time (Czepiel 1992, de Chernatony 2006). Indeed, Pham and Muthukrishnan (2002) argue that positioning decisions should not solely be based on the favorability of brand evaluations, because they do not take into account how well a brand deals with future challenges. Note that, unlike favorability, differentiation (dissimilarity and uniqueness) and credibility, the sustainability of a positioning strategy can only be measured a-posteriori using longitudinal data. In a cross-sectional context, only the favorability, differentiation (dissimilarity and uniqueness) and credibility of positioning can be assessed and it is on these dimensions that our measure of positioning effectiveness is based. However, the uniqueness dimension enables marketers to make inferences whether the brand has a *sustainable* differential advantage (Dillon et al. 2001; Keller 2003).

Scale Development

Construct Definition

Based on the discussion above, we conceptually define positioning effectiveness as the extent to which a brand is perceived to occupy a favorable, dissimilar, unique, and credible position in the minds of (target) consumers. Consistent with this definition, we formally model positioning effectiveness as a multidimensional construct (Edwards 2001) captured by a set of four interrelated dimensions (favorability, dissimilarity, uniqueness, and credibility) which jointly describe a brands overall positioning success from a consumer perspective. Based on this conceptualization, we subsequently developed a scale measuring the positioning effectiveness construct, following the procedure illustrated in Figure 6. Each step of the development process is described in detail hereafter.

Figure 6: Overview of the Scale Development Process



Study 1: Item Generation, Selection, and Content Validity Assessment

Following established guidelines for scale development (i.e., DeVellis 2003; Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003; Spector 1992), we derived an initial item pool by undertaking a comprehensive literature review and identified items from established scales that tapped into the domain of the four conceptual dimensions namely favorability (e.g., Alpert and Kamins 1995; Huber and Holbrook 1979; Sujan and Dekleva 1987)[35], dissimilarity (e.g., Bijmolt et al. 1998; Dacin and Smith 1994 ; Dröge and Darmon 1987; Muncy 1996; Sujan and Bettman 1989), uniqueness (e.g., Sujan and Bettman 1989; Tepper Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001) and credibility (e.g., Beltramini 1988; Brackett and Carr 2001; Kent and Allen 1994; Erdem and Swait 2004; Yoo and MacInnis 2005). In addition, we asked six expert judges who were highly knowledgeable of the brand positioning concept to generate additional items based on the conceptual definitions of the four positioning effectiveness dimensions. A total of 31 items were developed by these procedures.

From this initial pool of items, we removed items that were identical, ambiguous or semantically equivalent, and coded the remaining items (26 in all) into a seven-point semantic differential format; the latter's application is specifically recommended in positioning analyses (e.g., DeVellis 2003; Holbrook and Huber 1979).

Next, in order to assess the content validity of the identified items, we used a second panel of six expert judges (marketing faculty members being familiar with the positioning literature) and provided them with definitions of the four effectiveness dimensions. Following Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma (2003), we asked the judges to independently (a) allocate each item to one of the four conceptual dimensions, (b) rate each item with regard to its representativeness of the construct's domain on a 3-point scale (i.e., "not representative", "somewhat representative", clearly representative"), and (c) evaluate the appropriateness of the semantic opposites and the wording of the item-pairs. To ascertain that the generated items were tapping their intended dimensions, we employed Anderson and Gerbing's (1991) proportion of substantive agreement

[35] Formally, following Huber and Holbrook (1979), we model the items of the favorability dimension (e.g., good/bad) as a set of very *subjective* attributes as opposed to rather objective (product category-specific) attributes (such as fast/slow).

index (*psa*) which indicates the proportion or respondents who assign a focal item to its intended construct. We found that 91.2% of the sortings were as theoretically expected, which is highly satisfactory. Anderson and Gerbing (1991) further suggest a more stringent test, namely the substantive validity coefficient (*csv*), which also takes the extent to which respondents assign an item to a "wrong" (i.e., not intended) dimension into account. The ranges for *csv*-values range from -1.00 to 1.00, with 1.00 indicating that all items were assigned to the intended factor and not to any other factor. Note, that the *psa* and *csv* values are distinct from indices of interrater reliability as with the latter "only simple agreement in assignment to the same category is needed to contribute to their values, irrespective of which category is chosen" (Anderson and Gerbing 1991, p. 734). Further note that this test method also provides feedback on the adequacy of the construct (dimension) definitions (Anderson and Gerbing 1991). An overall *csv* score of .85 was obtained, confirming that the items possess a high level of substantive validity. The latter is a subform of content validity, indicating that the items are generally reflective of, or theoretically related to some construct of interest (Anderson and Gerbing 1991). Based on the *psa* and *csv* values as well as on the extent to which the items were judged to be representative of the dimensions (five out of six judges needed to rate items to be at least "somewhat representative" of the construct to be retained) we eliminated one item. Furthermore, with the exceptions of some minor issues with the wording, the descriptions of the items as semantic opposites were found to be appropriate by the judges.

In a third step, content validity (and more specifically face validity) of the items was further established by having eight marketing research professionals to review the soundness and completeness of our conceptualization of positioning effectiveness as well as the generated items' relevance and adequacy with respect to what was intended to be measured. The practitioners could not detect any facets and/or items which had been omitted and confirmed the appropriateness of the included items. Overall, the comprehensive item generation, and screening process led to a pool of 25 items.

Finally, following Reynolds, Diamantopoulos, and Schlegelmilch (1993), we pretested how the generated items and their framing actually worked in an empirical setting. For this purpose, we conducted a pilot study in which 45 consumers, distinct in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, rated a set of stimuli (six compact car brands) on the item pool. After the completion of the task, interviewers used the debriefing approach (Hunt, Sparkman and Wilcox 1982; Martin 2004) to generate information from respondents with regard to clarity, difficulty, and readability of the questions. The overall feedback obtained from consumers was very positive, however, one item was found to be problematic and thus eliminated. The resulting 24-item pool was retained for further (quantitative) analysis.

Study 2: Product Category Selection

Consistent with our aim of developing a positioning effectiveness measure that would be applicable across different product categories and positioning strategies, we based the scale development process on data derived from four different product categories and, within each product category, we selected (at least) four brands each following a distinct positioning strategy. This constellation (four product categories/four brands per product category) should ascertain the necessary level of generalizability.[36]

Specifically, drawing from a review of the relevant literature (e.g., Ratchford 1987; Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003) and following discussions with several colleagues involved in branding and consumer research, we sought to identify product categories that were expected to be distinct in terms of a wide range of product-category characteristics, namely technological turbulence (e.g., Jaworski and Kohli 1993), product parity (e.g., Muncy 1996), utilitarianism (e.g., Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003), symbolism (e.g., Sweeney and Soutar 2001), hedonism (e.g., Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003), and utilitarianism (e.g., Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003), as well as the overall, think, and feel involvement in the purchasing decision (e.g., Ratchford 1987). Based on this process, we selected automobiles, shower gels, cell phones, and wrist watches as potential focal product categories. In order to empirically confirm that the identified product categories indeed varied in terms of the aforementioned product-category characteristics we asked a sample of 50 consumers (varying in age, sex, and education) to rate the four product categories (in a random order) on each characteristic using established scales as shown in Table 7.

[36] Note that in the automobile category we selected six instead of four brands. However, the six brands represented altogether four distinct positioning strategies.

Table 7: Construct Measurement (Study 2)

Construct	*Description*	*# of items*	*Stand. Item Loadings*[a]	*Composite Reliability*	*AVE*	*Source of Measure*
Technological Turbulence	Refers to the extent of technology changes in a product category.	4	.81-91	.92	.75	Jaworski and Kohli (1993)
Product Parity	Refers to the extent to which consumers perceive differences between brands in a product category as small.	4	.64-.85	.83	.55	Muncy (1996)
Utilitarianism	Is an attitudinal dimension derived from the functions performed by products in a product category.	4	.76-.84	.88	.64	Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann (2003)
Hedonism	Is an attitudinal dimension resulting from sensations derived from the experience of using products in a product category.	4	.77-.95	.92	.75	Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann (2003)
Symbolism (Social Value)	Refers to the extent to which products in a product category enhance consumers' social self-concepts.	4	.68-.86	.87	.63	Bhat and Reddy (1998); Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
Overall Involvement	Refers to the importance and relevance of purchase decisions in a product category.	4	.80-.96	.92	.75	Ratchford (1987)
Think Involvement	Refers to the extent to which purchase decisions in a product category are based on rational decision criteria.	3	.71-89	.84	.64	Ratchford (1987)
Feel Involvement	Refers to the extent to which purchase decisions in a product category are based on affective decision criteria.	3	.75-.86	.78	.55.	Ratchford (1987)

[a]Ranges of the factor loadings for the items comprising the measure as based on a confirmatory factor analysis.
Notes:
AVE = Average variance extracted

Subsequently, we modeled the product category as a fixed factor and the respective composite scale scores on the product characteristics as dependent variables and performed a series of within subjects (repeated measures) analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to reveal significant differences between the four product categories. The ANOVA results (see upper panel of Table 7) confirmed that the chosen product categories differed on all but one of the characteristics involved[37], thus strongly supporting their suitability as settings for scale development purposes. The lower panel of Table 8 presents the classification of the product categories according to their composite scores on the product class characteristics into low (LO), medium (MED), and high (HI) scores;the LO/MED/HI labels reflect pairwise significant differences at the 5% level.

[37] The only exception being utilitarianism, for which relatively high scores were obtained in all four product categories.

Table 8: Product Category Characteristics

	Technology	Brand Parity[a]	Utilitarianism	Hedonism	Symbolism	Overall Involvement	Think Involvement	Feel Involvement
				Mean Values (Standard Error)[b]				
Automobiles	4.60 (.20)	4.61 (.21)	6.05 (.13)	4.52 (.20)	3.94 (.21)	5.37 (15)	5.59 (.15)	3.77 (.20)
Wristwatches	2.61 (.18)	3.75 (.19)	5.80 (.16)	4.46 (.19)	4.44 (.22)	3.41 (.22)	3.67 (.19)	4.99 (.21)
Shower gels	2.88 (.18)	3.80 (.19)	5.97 (.14)	3.86 (.18)	3.59 (.23)	2.19 (.18)	4.10 (.23)	4.83 (.21)
Cell phones	5.65 (.19)	4.94 (.17)	5.91 (.16)	4.70 (.18)	3.73 (.22)	3.74 (.20)	5.21 (.18)	3.97 (.21)
F-value (3 d.f.)	69.01	14.82	.83	5.56	3.02	58.26	24.96	9.99
p-value	.000	.000	n.s.	.001	.032	.000	.000	.000
				Classifications based on significant pairwise comparisons (ANOVA)[c]				
Automobiles	MED	MED	HI	HI	MED	HI	HI	MED
Wristwatches	LO	HI	HI	HI	HI	MED	MED	HI
Shower gels	LO	HI	HI	MED	MED	LO	MED	HI
Cell phones	HI	MED	HI	HI	MED	MED	HI	MED

[a] Items are reversely-scored
[b] Technology and Brand Parity were measured with 7-point Likert scales; all other constructs were measured with 7-point semantic differential scales.
[c] corresponding to significant differences at the 5% level.; LO = low scores on the product category characteristics, MED = medium scores, HI = high scores

Study 3: Brand Selection

Having selected relevant product categories, we next focused on identifying specific brands within each category employing different positioning strategies. To this end, we first located numerous print advertisements (from a wide range of different types of magazines) of brands belonging to the product categories analyzed in Study 2. In a next step, we performed content analysis of the identified advertisements, which has been shown to be a sound and widely accepted approach for identifying the actual positioning strategies of brands (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999; Blankson and Kalafatis 2007; Easingwood and Mahajan 1989; Crawford 1985). More specifically, three experts independently coded the advertisements with the help of an expanded version of Crawford's (1985) well-established positioning typology, which also encompassed prominent positioning typologies (i.e., Aaker and Shansby 1982; Keller 2003; Kotler 2003, Hooley, Saunders and Piercy 2004; Wind 1982). Following the coding task, we selected brands that (a) were classified as employing different positioning strategies (e.g., feature positioning, user positioning, emotional positioning, pioneer positioning, etc.), and (b) where coders unanimously agreed on their classification. This procedure yielded a total of sixteen brands (six in the automobiles category and four in each of the remaining categories) using distinct positioning strategies that we subsequently used as stimuli for the scale development process.

Studies 4 – 7: Scale Development and Validation

For data collection purposes, we generated a sample of 300 consumers varying in sex and age[38] and assigned them to one of the four product categories analyzed in Study 2. Each respondent rated four brands depicted in the advertisements (as identified in Study 3) on the item pool, producing 600 evaluations in the automobile class (respondents evaluated either a set of four economy cars, or a set consisting of two saloon cars and two station wagons), 200 in the wristwatch category, 200 in the shower gel category, and 200 in the cell phone category, resulting in a total of 1,200 evaluations. This design is similar to that of Voss, Spangenberg, and

[38] Automobiles: n = 150; age = 30.7 [18 to 59 years], 48% women; shower gels: n =50, age = 28.9 [20 to 56 years], 64% women; mobile phones: n = 50, age = 29.7 [18 to 50 years], 54% women; and wrist watches: n = 50, age = 31.8 [18 to 60 years], 60% women;

Grohmann (2003) who, like us, “chose to maximize generality by having a large number of stimuli rated rather than maximizing model fit by focusing only on one or a few stimuli” (p. 313). Furthermore, it is in the very nature of the positioning construct that consumers do not judge a brand in isolation; positioning is “a *relative* concept, in that it refers to a *comparative* assessment by the consumer” (Aaker, Batra, and Myers 1992, p. 131; emphasis added).
The order in which the brands were presented to the respondents was randomly rotated to avoid potential order bias (Mitchell and Jolley 1996)

Concerning the use of advertisements as concrete stimuli for positioning analysis, Wind (1982) points out that “the researcher should develop stimuli, which are as close as possible to those with which consumers will eventually be confronted in the real world.” In this respect, the brand information contained in advertising is viewed as the major tool to build up a brand’s position (Krishnan 1996; Lilien and Rangaswamy 2003). Based on the positioning information reflected in advertisements, consumers form their own perceptions of the brand and position the latter in their minds.

The use of advertisements as stimuli is further grounded in the fact that brand ratings, based on a mere exposure to the brand name only, have been found to be problematic in positioning studies, since consumers’ judgments may be biased due to lack of knowledge and familiarity with the focal brands (Bijmolt et al. 1998; MacKey and Zinnes 1986). Using advertisements as concrete stimuli reduces this problem - as pointed out by Wedel et al. (1998, p. 77) “advertising or product experience provide information to consumers that makes them more aware of and more sensitive to changes in product characteristics (including price).”

An examination of descriptive statistics of the individual items revealed that the latter’s properties were satisfying. On a 7-point scale, all item standard deviations were at least 1.5 and the means were near 4, which can be considered as ideal (DeVellis 2003).
Following established practices in scale development (e.g., DeVellis 2003; Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003; Spector 1992; Steenkamp and van Trijp 1991), we first conducted a series of

exploratory factor analyses[39] (EFAs) on the pool of items (n = 24) for each product category; these revealed a four-factor structure, corresponding to our four conceptual dimensions of positioning effectiveness (see Table 9). Items that loaded below .50 on a factor or items that loaded on more than one factor were subsequently dropped. This process reduced the original scale to 20 items, with each dimension being represented by four to six items. The factor structure was stable across the four product categories and the four-factor solution explained between 78% and 83% of the common variance in the items. In addition, coefficient alpha estimates of internal consistency for each dimension were highly satisfactory across all four product categories (.93 - .97 for favorability; .90 - .95 for dissimilarity; .94 - .95 for uniqueness; .95 - .96 for credibility)

[39] We ran the factor analyses using principal axis extraction with both promax and oblimin rotations; almost identical results were obtained with both methods. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation also produced similar results.

Table 9: EFA Results

	Study 4 Automobiles				Study 5 Wristwatches				Study 6 Shower gels				Study 7 Cell phones			
	Factor				*Factor*				*Factor*				*Factor*			
Items	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
D1				.93				.97				.99				.90
D2				.79				.89				.87				.91
D3				.78				.78				.82				.70
D4				.85				.91				.76				.82
F1		.86					.85				.83			.86		
F2		.98					1.00				.96			.97		
F3		.94					.93				.82			.95		
F4		.93					.94				.94			.96		
F5		.81					.82				.67			.82		
U1			.88			.86			.96						.90	
U2			.92			.90			.84						.83	
U3			.89			.93			.87						.93	
U4			.85			.93			.84						.80	
U5			.77			.95			.81						.89	
U6			.67			.57			.82						.73	
C1	.84				.93					.79			.97			
C2	.90				.91					.91			.97			
C3	.90				.99					1.04			.91			
C4	.80				.89					.79			.78			
C5	.82				.85					.77			.80			
C6	.91				.88					.78			.76			
Explained Variance	54%	14%	7%	4%	54%	14%	8%	7%	49%	18%	7%	5%	55%	11%	8%	7%
	78%				83%				79%				80%			
Alpha	.95	.96	.95	.91	.96	95	.97	.94	.94	.95	.93	.94	.95	.97	.95	.90

Notes:
Items in bold compose the final scale
Factor loadings < .3 are not shown
Coefficient Alpha is based on the final set of items.
D = Dissimilarity
F = Favorability
U = Uniqueness
C = Credibility

In a next step, we performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses (Gerbing and Anderson 1988) on each of the four product categories, whereby items were allocated to their corresponding factors on the basis of the EFA results (Gerbing and Hamilton 1996). Examination of the fit statistics and modification indices revealed that the four-factor model could be further improved. We thus eliminated problematic items one at a time, starting with the one displaying the highest modification index. In total, we removed 3 items because they were cross-loading or because of correlated measurement errors; both properties are inconsistent with unidimensional measurement (Bagozzi 1983; Danes and Mann 1984). The final CFA models contained a set of 17 items, four capturing favorability, dissimilarity, and uniqueness and five items capturing credibility, respectively (see Table 10).

Table 10: Measurement Items

Compared to competing brands, this brand is *(Dissimilarity)*

1. identical/distinct
2. similar/dissimilar
3. does not set itself apart /sets itself apart
4. same/different

What is your opinion toward _________ (regarding the brand)? *(Favorability)*

1. good/bad
2. like/dislike
3. positive/negative
4. appealing/not appealing

Compared to competing brands, this brand is *(Uniqueness)*

1. unique/not unique
2. extraordinary/ordinary
3. atypical/typical
4. special/standard

The differences between this brand and competitors is *(Credibility)*

1. believable/not believable
2. plausible/implausible
3. convincing/not convincing
4. trustworthy/untrustworthy
5. realistic/unrealistic

As can be seen from the upper panel of Table 11, the overall fit statistics of the final CFA models were satisfactory (Hu and Bentler 1999). In addition to high composite reliabilities of the dimensions (Bagozzi and Yi 1988) across all product categories, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each dimension were also well above the recommended benchmark of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981), thus supporting convergent validity; in addition, all factor loadings were positive and highly significant (see Table 12).

Table 11: Four and Three-Factor Specification of Positioning Effectiveness: CFA Results

Proposed Model: Four-Factor Specification of Positioning Effectiveness

	χ^2	*d.f.*	*NNFI*	*CFI*	*RMSEA*	*SRMR*
Automobiles	400.93	113	.987	.989	.065	.039
Wristwatches	214.90	113	.983	.986	.069	.047
Shower gels	288.51	113	.967	.973	.088	.050
Cell phones	248.67	113	.980	.983	.078	.052

Alternative Model: Three-Factor Specification of Positioning Effectiveness

	χ^2	$\Delta\ \chi^2$	*d.f.*	Δ *d.f.*	*NNFI*	*CFI*	*RMSEA*	*SRMR*
Automobiles	1700.60	1299.67	116	3	.941	.949	.151	.08
Wristwatches	1339.12	1124.22	116	3	.862	.883	.237	.21
Shower gels	993.52	705.01	116	3	.894	.910	.195	.09
Cell phones	687.65	438.98	116	3	.919	.931	.157	.11

Notes:
$\Delta\ \chi^2$ = Chi Square difference between the four-factor specification and the three-factor specification.
Δ d.f = Difference in degrees of freedom between four-factor and the three-factor specification.
NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index
CFI = Comparative Fit Index
RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

Table 12: Composite Reliabilities, Average Variance Extracted, Standardized Loadings, and Discriminant Validity Tests

	Study 4: Automobiles						**Study: 5 Wristwatches**					
			AVE/Squared correlations						AVE/Squared correlations			
	CR	*λ*	*Fav.*	*Dis.*	*Uni.*	*Cred.*	*CR*	*λ*	*Fav*	*Dis*	*Uni.*	*Cred.*
Favorability	.96	.91-.95	**.86**				.97	.90-.96	**.88**			
Dissimilarity	.92	.77-.91	.08 [a]	**.73**			.94	.83-.93	.04	**.80**		
Uniqueness	.95	.89-.94	.28	.48	**.83**		.96	.89-.94	.34	.20	**.85**	
Credibility	.95	.86-.92	.38	.24	.45	**.79**	.97	.89-.94	.42	.07	.42	**.85**

	Study 6: Shower gels						**Study 7: Cell phones**					
			AVE/Squared correlations						AVE/Squared correlations			
	CR	*λ*	*Fav.*	*Dis.*	*Uni.*	*Cred.*	*CR*	*Λ*	*Fav*	*Dis*	*Uni.*	*Cred.*
Favorability	.93	.85-.92	**.77**				.97	.92-.96	**.88**			
Dissimilarity	.94	.87-.92	.01	**.80**			.90	.73-.93	.10	**.70**		
Uniqueness	.95	.89-.91	.16	.47	**.81**		.95	.89-.92	.40	.21	**.81**	
Credibility	.95	.85-.91	.43	.16	.25	**.78**	.93	.83-.92	.44	.14	.47	**.79**

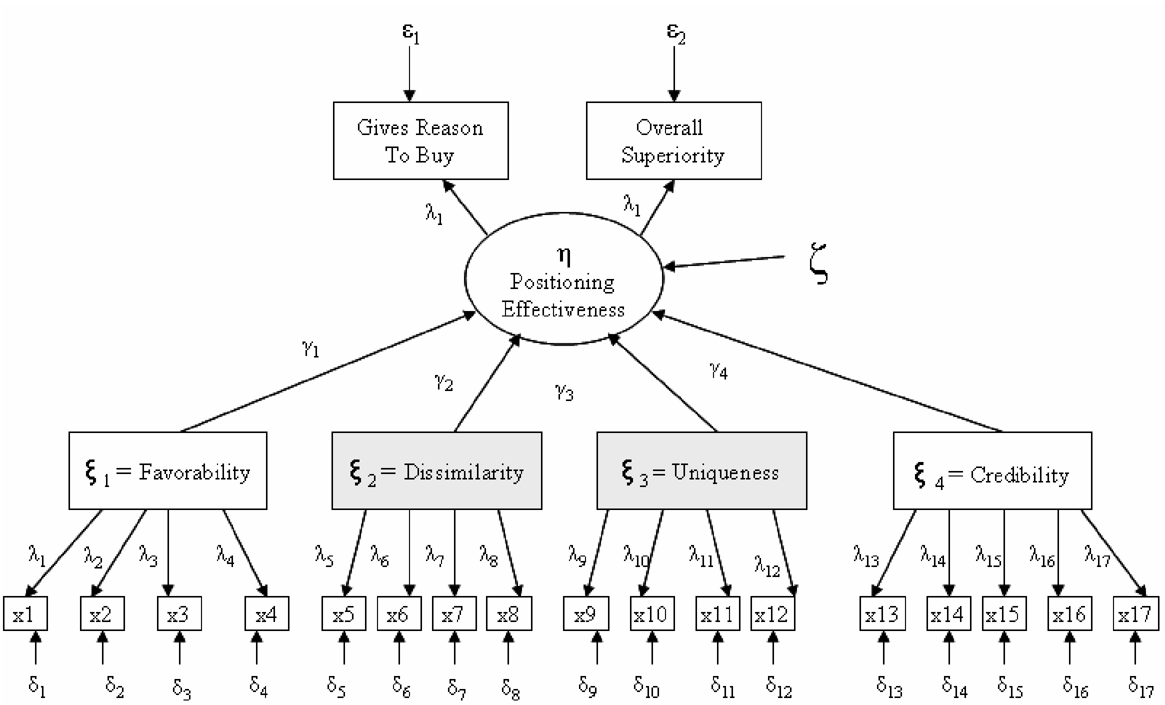
Notes:
CR = Composite reliability
Average variance extracted shown in bold on the diagonal of the squared inter-factor correlation matrix
λ = Standardized loadings (range)
Fav. = Favorability, Dis. = Dissimilarity, Uni. = Uniqueness, Cred = Credibility
[a] = refers to squared interfactor-correlations

We assessed discriminant validity by comparing the squared correlations between the four dimensions with their individual AVEs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Table 12 demonstrates discriminant validity, since the AVE estimates clearly exceed the squared between-factor correlations. Of particular interest, in this context, is the magnitude of the correlations between the two dimensions capturing differentiation (i.e., dissimilarity and uniqueness), which ranges between .45 (for wrist watches), and .69 (for cars) thus indicating a positive but moderate relationship between the two dimensions and supporting our conceptual distinction between them. Nevertheless, to formally assess the appropriateness of our hypothesized four-dimensional structure, we compared the fit of our four-factor model with that of a three-factor model in which differentiation was specified as a single factor. For this purpose, we estimated a second CFA model with the dissimilarity and uniqueness items being allocated to the same factor. The χ^2-square difference test results displayed in Table 11 (lower panel) indicate that across all product categories, the four-factor model fits the data significantly better than the three-factor model. This provides strong support for the superiority of our four-factor specification of the positioning effectiveness construct.

We next tested the nomological validity of our measure by linking it to constructs that were theoretically expected to be related to positioning effectiveness.

First, we specified positioning effectiveness as a higher-order construct formed by the four (first-order) dimensions and linked it to two "global" items, measured on 7-point scales, namely *reason to buy* (indicating whether the brand gives consumers a cogent reason to buy) and *overall superiority* (indicating whether the brand is perceived to be overall superior in relation to competitor brands) (see Figure 7). We expected positive relationships between positioning effectiveness and these two items as the latter have been identified in the literature as being important outcomes of a well-positioned brand (e.g., Kotler 2003; Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002; Keller 2003; Keller and Lehmann 2006; Mühlbacher, Dreher, and Gabriel-Ritter 1993). Formally, this higher-order specification falls in the Type II category of higher-order models as specified by Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2003 (i.e., first-order reflective, second-order formative).

Figure 7: Higher-Order Specification of Positioning Effectiveness



Estimation of the higher-order model revealed positive and significant standardized path coefficients between positioning effectiveness and reason to buy (automobiles $\beta = .80$, $p < .01$; wristwatches $\beta = .86$, $p < .01$; shower gels $\beta = .85$, $p < .01$; cell phones $\beta = .86$, $p < .01$) as well between positioning effectiveness and perceived overall superiority of the brand (automobiles $\beta = .83$, $p < .01$; wristwatches $\beta = .83$, $p < .01$; shower gels $\beta = .67$, $p < .01$; cell phones $\beta = .77$, $p < .01$). These results are fully consistent with expectations and support the nomological validity of our measure. Essentially, the four first-order dimensions collectively explained around 70% of the variance in the second-order construct (R^2-values ranging from .67 to .78) which is highly satisfactory because, with formative specifications, "as the variance of the residual increases, the meaning of the construct becomes progressively ambiguous" (Williams, Edwards, and Vandenberg 2003, p. 908).

As a further test of nomological validity, we related the set of positioning effectiveness dimensions to overall attitudes towards the corporate (parent) brand. According to corporate brand association theory (e.g., Brown and Dacin 1997), corporate brand attitudes should have a positive impact on product brand perceptions. Consumers may, for example, form positive corporate brand attitudes because they perceive a corporate brand as being highly social responsible (such as the Body Shop brand), or as possessing superior corporate abilities (such as the Apple brand). These corporate brand associations are expected to impact on consumers' individual brand perceptions (Brown and Dacin 1997; see also Keller 2003). As Biehal and Sheinin (2007, p. 12) note "a single product may be representative of a corporate positioning and therefore be influenced by it". This attitude transfer process is also evident in brand extensions, where attitude toward the parent brand is a significant and important predictor of consumers evaluations of brand extensions (Bottomley and Holden 2001; Yeung and Wyer 2005). Note, however, that the direction of the transfer process may also be reverse – consumers' perceptions of the invidual brand can also affect the attitude towards their parent brand (Keller and Aaker 1992).

Based on the above, we expected a positive relationship between overall corporate brand attitudes and the four dimensions of positioning effectiveness. To test this relationship we computed the inter-factor correlations between the positioning effectiveness dimensions and overall corporate brand attitudes; the latter was measured with two items drawn from established scales (e.g., Kirmani, Sood, and Bridges 1999; Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 1998) and its reliability across product categories ranged between .80 and .91. As Table 13 shows, consistent with our theoretical expectations, the results revealed positive and significant intercorrelations between the positioning effectiveness dimensions and corporate brand attitudes across the four product categories, thus further supporting our measure's nomological validity.

Table 13: Nomological Validity: Correlations with Overall Corporate Brand Attitudes

	Favorability	*Dissimilarity*	*Uniqueness*	*Credibility*
Automobiles	.61*	.28*	.47*	.50*
Wristwatches	.60*	.09	.52*	.61*
Shower gels	.78*	.22*	.51*	.63*
Cell phones	.68*	.41*	.58*	.61*

* = significant at $p < .05$

Study 8: Predictive Validity

Predictive validity refers to "the ability of a measure to effectively predict some subsequent and temporally ordered criterion" (Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003, p. 76). To demonstrate predictive validity, we assessed the extent to which our new scale can effectively predict purchase intention. Normative literature (e.g., Cravens 2000; Day 1990) as well as empirical research (Roth 1992; 1995) note that positioning success has a positive impact on sales. Since effective positioning is advocated to be associated with a higher probability of purchase of the given brand (Wind 1982), we propose that purchase intention constitutes a good criterion for testing our scale's predictive validity.

Contrary to the Studies 4-7, we tested predictive validity at the line brand level (Keller 2003), since we aimed at investigating the applicability of our measure in conditions, where respondents are *not* presented with any product-specific information (such as an image of the product, and/or product-specific information as typically contained in advertisements). In such a study setting, consumers must base their ratings solely on their existing brand knowledge to infer attributes or benefits of products constituting a line of brands and consider how well the core brand (e.g., Sony) has the capabilities to produce a set of individual brands (Erickson, Johansson, and Chao 1984; Keller 2003; Keller and Aaker 1992).

For purposes of this study, we identified four cell phone brands namely Nokia, Motorola, Sony Ericsson, and Samsung which, according to International Herald Tribune 2007, represent the four main global competitors in the cell phone market and together account for more than two thirds of the latter's worldwide sales (see International Herald Tribune 2007). Data on the four brands were collected during a period of six weeks by a professional marketing research agency via computer-assisted personal (face-to-face) interviews from a representative panel of 303 respondents. Each week a distinct sub-panel of fifty respondents, was asked to rate a different pair of cell phone brands (two out of the four brands) on our positioning effectiveness measure as well as on a three-item bipolar purchase intention scale (the purchase is: improbable/probable; possible/impossible; uncertain/certain) adopted from Bearden, Lichtenstein, and Teel (1984). The latter's internal consistency was highly satisfying (Nokia α = .94; Motorola, α = .96; Sony Ericsson, α = .95; Samsung, α = .96). Consumers were only provided with the cell phone brand name (i.e., Nokia cell phones, Motorola cell phones, Sony-Ericsson cell phones, and Samsung phones) and no additional information; the order in which the brand names were presented was randomly rotated. This process resulted in a total number of 606 evaluations from respondents who were on average 36 years old (SD = 14), balanced in sex (51 % female), and varying in income, occupation and education.[40]

For each brand, we subsequently ran a structural equations model with the positioning effectiveness dimensions as exogenous (latent) variables and purchase intentions as the endogenous (latent) variable. The resulting structural path coefficients indicate that, with the exception of dissimilarity, all positioning effectiveness dimensions have a significant and positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions, with favorability exhibiting the strongest impact (Table 14). Moreover, the four effectiveness dimensions collectively explained about 70% of the variance in purchase intentions. Overall, these results provide strong evidence of our measure's predictive validity.

[40] Nokia, n = 149; 56% women, age = 36.6 [12 – 65]; Motorola, n = 149, 50% women, age = 35.7 [12 - 63]; Sony-Ericsson, n = 155, 48% women, age = 35.8 [13 – 65]; Samsung, n = 153, 49% women, age = 35.8 [12- 59].

Table 14: Predictive Validity: Impact on Purchase Intentions

	Standardized Path Coefficients				
	Favorability	*Dissimilarity*	*Uniqueness*	*Credibility*	R^2
Nokia	.69*	.03	-.10	.25*	.698
Motorola	.68*	-.12	.24*	.07	.769
Sony-Ericsson	.51*	-.05	.14	.30*	.750
Samsung	.61*	-.11	.22*	.11	.727

* = significant at p < .05

Study 9: Comparative Validity

We assessed comparative validity by comparing the predictive abilities of our scale relative to that of basic (i.e., attribute-based) positioning analysis (see Myers 1996 for an overview). Specifically, we sought to ascertain that our scale is able to explain overall perceived superiority at least equally well as a basic attribute-based approach, in which consumers rate the perceived performance of a brand on a set of relevant attributes (i.e., features and benefits). We chose overall superiority as a criterion, since it is regarded to be an important outcome of positioning success (Keller 2003; Cravens 2000).

To demonstrate comparative validity, we first selected three brands of fast food chains as stimuli. We chose fast food brands because (a) we aimed at testing our measure also in the service industry and (b) because the focal product category offers a high number of identifiable attributes, which makes the application of an attribute-based measurement approach particularly attractive. Next, following established procedures in positioning analysis (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Huber and Holbrook 1979; Myers 1996; Seggev 1982; Urban and Hauser 1993), we used a combination of secondary research and exploratory research techniques to derive attributes that are likely to influence consumers' superiority perceptions in the focal product category. From the literature, we generated an initial set of attributes largely based on a sample questionnaire testing the quality of fast food restaurants in a study by Myers (1996). We also independently asked eight consumers buying regularly at fast food restaurants to write down attributes that they thought to be important and desirable in the focal product category. In a next step, we conducted a focus group, in which we provided the participants with the list of all the attributes generated by the above procedures. Finally, based on the focus group discussion, the 20 attributes that were agreed to be most relevant were pre-tested on 24 consumers, leading to a few minor changes in the wording. The final set of attributes and the associated measurement format is shown in Appendix 1. In this context, it needs to be pointed out that the inclusion of more attributes was not possible due to length restrictions of the questionnaire (the respondents rated three brands on the 20 attributes as well as on the 17 scale items) which may have negatively influenced consumers' response behavior (see for example, Myers 1996). Furthermore 20 attributes is considered as falling within the typical (but lower) range of attributes used in such studies (Myers 1996; see also Urban and Hauser 1993)

Having identified relevant attributes, we drew a purposive sample of 100 consumers who (a) were highly familiar with the three fast food brands, (b) had already been in these restaurants, and (c) actually bought food at one of these restaurants at least once within the last three months. The respondents were on average 26.8 years old (range 18 - 69; SD = 9.0). 52 % of the respondents were female, 48 % were male. Two thirds of the respondents were students, the rest were on the job market or retired. The questionnaire was administered in a face-to-face setting, whereby respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire that contained the 20 attributes and the items of our positioning effectiveness measure, in addition to socio-demographic data.

Based on established literature (Myers 1996; Urban and Hauser 1993), we subjected the data on the 20 attributes to a principal component analysis with varimax rotation to remove common brand-wide correlation across attributes. The analysis revealed a five-factor solution with eigenvalues above 1, which explained 64 % of the total variance in the data. We then conducted a multiple regression analysis with the five factor scores as independent variables and overall superiority as the criterion variable; the latter was measured by two items borrowed from Buchanan, Simmons and Bickart (1999) and showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .76$).

Subsequently, we repeated the multiple regression analysis but with the four dimensions of positioning effectiveness as predictors. Table 15 shows the combined results.

Table 15: Comparative Validity: Impact on Overall Superiority Perception

	Standardized Coefficient
Attribute Ratings (R^2 = .16)	
Factor 1	.36*
Factor 2	.12*
Factor 3	.13*
Factor 4	-.01
Factor 5	-.05
Effectiveness Dimensions (R^2 = .45)	
Favorability	.32**
Dissimilarity	-.14*
Uniqueness	.14*
Credibility	.41**

* = p < .05
** = p < .01

A comparison between the results of the two regression analyses provides clear empirical support for the comparative validity of our positioning effectiveness scale, since the four effectiveness dimensions explain significantly more variance in the dependent variable than the five attribute-derived factor scores (45% vs. 16% respectively).

Summary

The present study extends current knowledge on brand positioning by developing and validating a four-dimensional consumer-based scale of the positioning effectiveness construct. By conducting nine complementary studies assessing the scale's dimensionality, reliability, and validity, we have demonstrated that our measure possesses sound and stable psychometric characteristics. We have further shown that our measure is applicable across various brands in distinct product categories (also in services) and that it behaves in a sound way both with and without presenting stimuli containing brand-specific information to consumers. Nomological validity was established by confirming the theoretical notion that successful brand positioning both gives consumers a reason to buy the focal brand, and leads to perceived overall superiority of the latter. The expected (positive) relationship between the dimensions of positioning effectiveness at the individual brand level and corporate brand attitudes was also supported. In addition, predictive validity was demonstrated by the strong relationship between our measure and purchase intentions. Finally, we benchmarked our scale against a basic attribute-based approach and found that it outperformed the latter in terms of predicting consumers' overall perceived superiority of a brand.

CHAPTER 6: MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGIES FROM A CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

A rather thorny issue in brand positioning research concerns the question of which positioning strategy is "best"; for example, do brands which are positioned on tangible brand aspects (i.e., features) perform better than brands positioned on intangible aspects (e.g., user imagery)? Interestingly, past empirical research has not paid much attention to this question (Keller and Lehmann 2006; Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002). Having (a) established that similar positioning strategies are grouped together (see Chapter 3) and (b) developed a consumer-derived scale of positioning effectiveness (see Chapter 5), the purpose of the current study is to compare the effectiveness of the major prototypical positioning strategies of real brands from a consumer perspective and thus provide brand managers and advertising professionals with empirically-based insights for making sound positioning decisions. For this purpose, we use the main positioning bases as outlined in Table 2 in Chapter 2, namely feature positioning (i.e., concrete attribute positioning), direct benefit positioning, indirect benefit positioning, and user (surrogate) positioning.

Based on Chapter 5, we conceptualize positioning effectiveness as a multidimensional construct capturing consumers' evaluations of a brand's position in terms of credible and favorable differentiation in relation to competing brands thus enabling an assessment of the extent to which the brand in question occupies a credible, distinct, and positively-valued position in the minds of consumers. Our comparison of positioning strategies is therefore undertaken along three key dimensions (i.e., favorability, differentiation, and credibility) which *jointly* determine overall positioning success; our analysis also controls for extraneous influences such as corporate brand associations or advertising creativity that may potentially confound the effect of positioning strategy on the aforementioned dimensions.[41]

[41] Note that in scope of this study, we only use the uniqueness dimension to capture differentiation. This is particularly due to the issue that the brands evaluated in this study are major brands; as already mentioned in Chapter 2 before, the core objective for such brands is to create points of differentiation (i.e., uniqueness perceptions) rather than points-of-association (i.e., similarity perceptions).

More specifically, in order to reveal the *direct* impact of the currently applied positioning strategies on consumers' perceptual space, we advocate that consumers should be exposed to the actual positioning in the form of marketing communications. In case advertisements (reflecting the actual positioning) are used, however, it is of paramount importance to control for (covary out) (a) the level of brand familiarity and existing brand beliefs (e.g., Park, Mothersbaugh, and Feick 1994), which are, for example, created through prior brand experience, marketing communications, and/or word-of-mouth (Krishnan 1996) (b) ad creativity, which is, for example, reflected in the artwork of the ad (e.g., Kent and Allen 1994), and (c) the transfer of corporate brand associations to the product brand (e.g., Biehal and Sheinin 2007; Brown and Dacin 1997).

In the next section, we present a series of hypotheses aimed at assessing differences of prototypical positioning strategies in terms of positioning effectiveness. More specifically, theoretical arguments underpinning different positioning strategies are provided and several hypotheses regarding their relative effectiveness are derived. This is followed by a description of the measures applied, the research design and the presentation of the results. In a final step the findings are discussed and limitations of the study are acknowledged.

Study Hypotheses

Contrasting the major positioning bases outlined in Table 2 (i.e., feature, direct benefit, indirect benefit and user/surrogate positioning; Chapter 2) against each other, several arguments might be brought forward to suggest that benefit and surrogate positioning are likely to be perceived by consumers as more effective positioning strategies than feature positioning.

An initial argument for this is that consumers buy benefits and not features (Sengupta 2005). Benefits that are realized from the brand are more relevant to the consumer's evaluation than the physical characteristics (i.e., features) of the brand (Bagozzi 1986) because they are actually intended to solve a need or a problem. Moreover, brands increasingly introduce features that fail to provide consumers with benefits that are meaningful and important to them (Broniarczyk and

Gershoff 2003). In this respect, current markets are crowded with brands that consist of almost identical and common features (Ries and Trout 1986) - setting oneself apart from competitors with feature-based positioning may thus be very difficult (Aaker 2003), particularly in product categories where the performance of products is perceived as very similar (Majahan and Wind 2002; Vriens and ter Hofstede 2000). Essentially, Thompson, Hamilton, and Rust (2005) find that consumers experience a feature fatigue. Furthermore, contemporary technological progress can be so rapid that the differential advantage created by feature positioning might only be short-lived (Hsieh 2002) because features can easily be copied by competitors (Moe and Fader 2001). As a result, feature positioning may simply lead to "me-too" perceptions (Lefkoff-Hagios and Mason 1993). In fact, "consumers are more likely to agree on the similarity of physical characteristics [features] than on more abstract information" (Gutman 1982, p. 63).

A final drawback of feature positioning, which especially becomes evident in highly technological or complex product categories (i.e., digital cameras, computers, automobiles), concerns the fact that the communicated product-related information (i.e., features) may sometimes be too product category-specific to be comprehensible to consumers (Mukherjee and Hoyer 2001; Mahajan and Wind 2002; Vriens and ter Hofstede 2000).

In light of the above, it is not surprising that "benefits are felt [by managers] to be more effective than features as positioning approaches" (Crawford 1985, p. 253; see also Wind 1982). Benefit as well as surrogate positioning strategies tend to produce more self-relevant meanings which are closer to consumers' needs and values, and should be thus more strongly related to brand attitudes than information that creates meanings about the product (MacInnis and Jaworski 1989). Indeed, "consumers should be more persuaded by thoughts about what products can do for them and a product's relevance to personal goals or objectives than by thoughts about physical product characteristics" (Graeff 1997, p. 178). For example, with user positioning – a widely employed form of surrogate positioning (see Crawford 1985 and Table 2) – favorability is created by associating consumers with their desired or actual membership group, role or self-image (Hong and Zinkhan 1995; Sirgy 1982; Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993) and thus consumers needs for self-expression or social-approval are satisfied (Belk 1988; Sirgy 1982). Moreover, user positioning is believed to be much harder to be duplicated (Ennis 1982). A further argument for the superiority of benefit and surrogate positioning over feature positioning is the premise that abstract positioning strategies (i.e., benefit and surrogate positioning) provide more information to consumers than concrete positioning options (i.e., feature positioning), as they are inclusive of the respective features (Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002). Specifically, consumers who are exposed to benefit from surrogate information may (implicitly) also *infer* the features that underlie the focal benefit (Snelders and Schoormans 2004), or are associated with the surrogate (Friedmann and Lessig 1987).

Based on the above discussion, we therefore expect that:

H1: Benefit positioning is more effective than feature positioning.
H2: Surrogate (user) positioning is more effective than feature positioning.

When contrasting benefit and surrogate positioning strategies, it is widely acknowledged that benefit positioning is the most superior positioning strategy (Schiffman and Kanuk 2007; Wind 1982). However, this belief is primarily grounded in the argument that consumers tend to value brands based on their (expected) benefits per se (Ratneshwar et al. 1997). Benefits, by their very nature, are the primary motivation underlying consumers' preferences (Myers and Shocker 1981; Ratchford 1975). Indeed, drawing on information processing literature, Leffkoff-Hagius and Mason (1993) found that benefit information is more relevant in shaping preferences than feature or surrogate (i.e., user, imagery) information. This leads to the expectation that benefit positioning is more effective than surrogate positioning.

However, there are also compelling arguments favoring surrogate positioning over benefit positioning. Specifically, surrogate positioning tends to create brand associations about *external* aspects of the brand (e.g., secondary brand associations) and can, therefore, be regarded as an alternative means for effectively differentiating a brand from competitor brands (Bridges, Keller, and Sood, 2000; Keller, 1993; Kalra and Goodstein, 1998). Surrogate positioning strategies have the advantage that they can give *individual* meanings to consumers. For example, the automobile producer *Renault* associates various of its models with Formula 1: some consumers might infer that their cars are commensurate with the state-of-the art in automobile technology, others transfer the luxury and exclusivity associated with Formula 1 to the brand, and still others may make associations of excitement, risk, and cosmopolitanism. Thus, the associations created by surrogate information are "tailor-made" and may correspond better to individual consumer needs than benefit positioning strategies. Surrogate positioning may further constitute a sound way to attract a variety of different segments and, therefore, be particularly appropriate for major brands (Aaker and Shansby 1982; Friedmann and Lessig 1987).

Benefit as well as surrogate positioning strategies are also associated with weaknesses. One potential downside of benefit positioning is that it is, along with feature positioning, the most frequently used positioning strategy in the marketplace (Crawford 1985). As a result, consumers may become tired of hearing the same "old" (feature and benefit) arguments drawing to the superiority of these brands. Surrogate positioning strategies, on the other hand, are deemed to be more risky than benefit positioning strategies (Aaker and Shansby 1982) as they may lead to a confused brand image (Bridges, Keller, and Sood 2000) since, inevitably, some control of the latter is given up (Keller 1993). The main reason for this is that, as already noted, surrogate positioning information may be interpreted completely differently by different consumers (Crawford 1985) – an advantage which, however, can also turn out to be a weakness. Specifically, making associations about external aspects of a brand via surrogate positioning is only viable if consumers *already* have existing associations with the used surrogate (e.g., company, person, an event, etc.) and these associations are *in line with* the desired brand associations (Keller 1993; Krishnan 1996; MacInnis and Jaworski 1989); should there be a deviation, surrogate positioning is likely to fail.

Given the presence of numerous relative strengths and weaknesses of benefit versus surrogate positioning, it is not possible to postulate a-priori which strategy is likely to outperform the other. Hence, we only offer an exploratory hypothesis specifying the existence of differences in the effectiveness of the two strategies but not their direction. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

H3: Benefit and surrogate positioning differ in terms of their effectiveness.

Benefit positioning can be further subdivided into direct (functional) benefit positioning and indirect (experiential/symbolic) benefit positioning (see Table 2).[42] Direct benefit positioning refers to the communication of the intrinsic advantage of using or possessing the brand (Crawford 1985; Keller 1993). Direct benefits are primarily derived from brand features and tend to be functional in nature. Indirect benefits, on the other hand, are conceptualized as "follow-on" results from direct benefits (Crawford 1985; Keller 1993; Gutman 1982) and tend to satisfy experiential (i.e., sensory pleasure, fun, excitement, cognitive stimulation, etc.) or symbolic (i.e., self-fulfillment, social acceptance and approval, self-esteem, etc.) needs (Keller 1993; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986). Accordingly, implementing indirect benefit positioning may be specifically valid for hedonic goods (e.g., designer clothes, luxury watches, sports cars, etc.), which base their superiority on fun, pleasure and excitement (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000; Schmitt 1999). However, in utilitarian product categories (e.g., alkaline batteries, vacuum cleaners, glue, computers, etc.) direct benefit positioning which creates primarily performance-related associations (Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002) may be more congruent with consumers' needs (utilitarian) and, therefore, also more effective than indirect (experiential/symbolic) positioning (Johar and Sirgy 1991). As in the current study, we examine the relative effectiveness of alternative brand positioning strategies using a utilitarian product category (compact cars) as our empirical setting, we expect that:

H4: Direct benefit positioning is more effective than indirect benefit positioning.

To test our research hypotheses regarding the relative superiority of different positioning strategies, we employ three complementary measures of consumer-judged effectiveness as discussed below.

[42] As discussed before, attribute positioning can be conceptually subdivided into concrete attribute (i.e., feature) positioning and abstract attribute positioning. However, the latter is very similar to direct benefit positioning, making a distinction between the two difficult in practice (Snelders and Schoormans 2004).

Study 1

Research Design and Methodology

To compare the effectiveness of distinct positioning strategies we chose the compact car market as our empirical setting. This choice was based on a pilot study (using content analysis of advertisements) in different product categories, which revealed a great deal of variety in the positioning strategies followed by firms in the automobile market.[43] Furthermore, positioning is highly relevant in this market as also reflected in a wide array of positioning studies for automobile brands (e.g., Johansson and Thorelli 1985; Meade 1987; Wilkes 1977).

We selected four print advertisements of compact cars, each employing a different brand positioning strategy. A summary description of the ads and the specific positioning strategy associated with each (as based on Table 2) is given in the upper panel of the Appendix 3.[44] Our selection of ads was based on a content analysis of advertisements which has been shown to be a sound and widely accepted approach for identifying the actual positioning strategies of brands (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra, 1999; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2007; Crawford, 1985; Easingwood and Mahajan, 1989) and which is consistent with the view that "the way a product is positioned in advertising or other efforts is more meaningful than the way the marketers intended it to be positioned" (Crawford 1985, p. 245). To characterize the brands' positioning strategies, we used an expanded version of Crawford's (1985) well-known positioning typology which also encompassed the schemes proposed by Aaker and Shansby (1982), Kotler (2003), and Wind (1982).

Each ad was coded independently by three expert coders into one of the four focal categories, representing distinct positioning strategies, notably (1) feature positioning, (2) direct benefit positioning, (3) indirect (experiential/symbolic) benefit positioning, and (4) user positioning. There was full (100 %) agreement among the coders confirming the correct classification of positioning strategies. As with practically all car brand advertisements, the chosen set of ads

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[43] Further details on the pilot study are available, upon request, from the author.

[44] The actual ads used are available, upon request, from the author; copyright reasons prevent the display of the ads in this dissertation.

contained a picture of the brand, a main positioning claim and also additional small-fonted brand information.

The selected ads were subsequently shown to a purposive sample of 50 consumers of different ages, education levels and occupation; males and females were approximately equally represented. Each respondent rated the four brands illustrated in the ads with regard to the positioning effectiveness measures (notably favorability, differentiation, and credibility) and control variables (to be discussed below). The order in which the ads were presented to respondents was randomly rotated to minimize order effects (Mitchell and Jolley 1996). Further, in an attempt to safeguard external validity, respondents were simply asked to fill in the questionnaire relating to each ad and were not given any additional processing instructions on, for example, how carefully they should read the ad or what to focus on.

Given that several extraneous influences may confound consumers' evaluations of the effectiveness of positioning strategies (e.g., Desai and Ratneshwar 2003; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991; Pham and Muthukrishnan 2002), three sets of covariates were also included as potential control variables. The first set aimed at controlling for *brand-specific* effects and included advertising creativity and corporate brand attitudes.

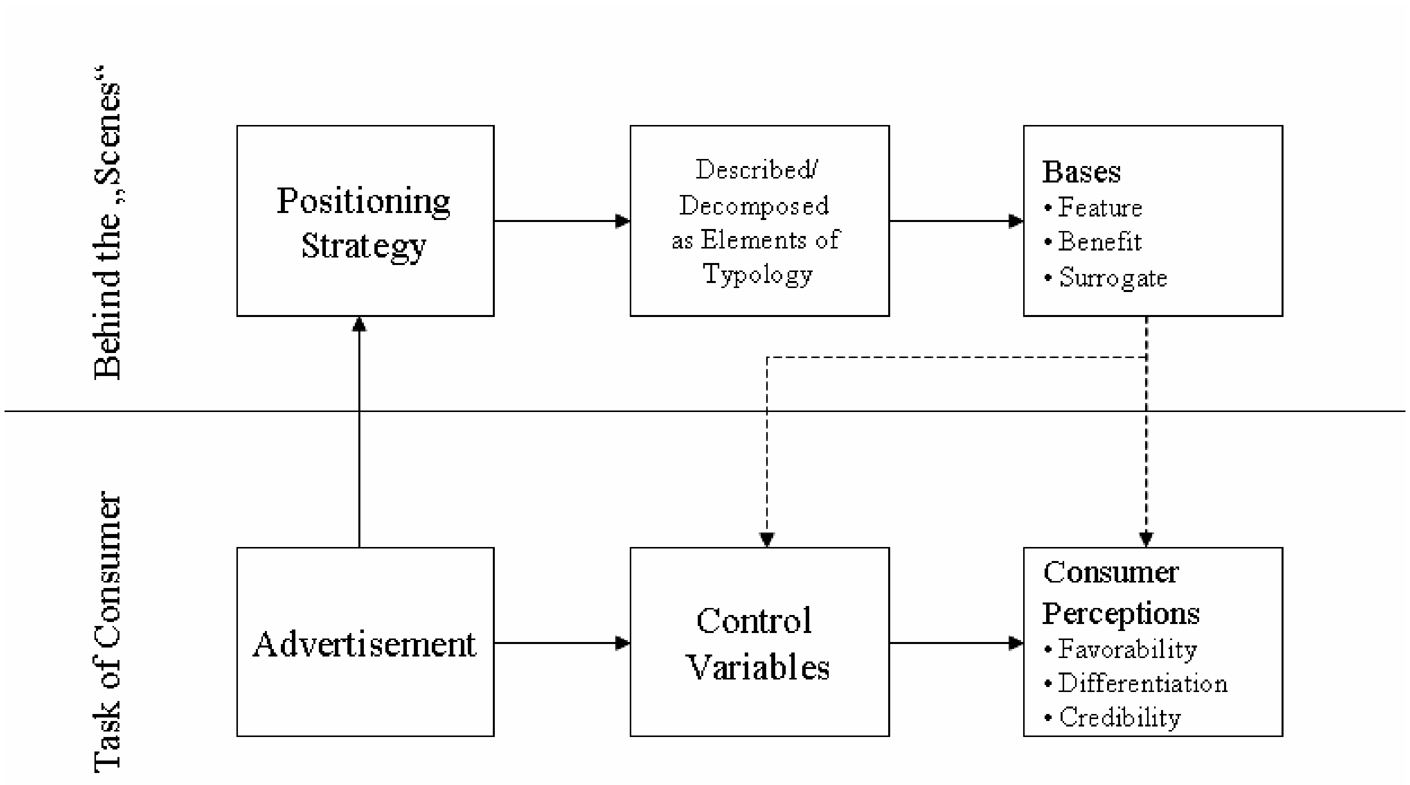
Advertising serves as a means of transport of positioning (Dillon, Domzal, and Madden 1986; Seggev 1982) in that any advertisement typically consists of a creative/artwork part and a positioning part (containing brand information). Via the creative element of the ad, the attention of the consumer is grabbed and directed to the positioning of the brand (Easingwood and Mahajan 1989). Trout and Rivkin (1996) advocate that advertising with imagery alone and without any positioning claim gives consumers no reason to buy the brand.

Hence, advertising basically consists of a creativity part (executional part) and a positioning part (positioning claim). By controlling for the creativity part of the ad, we are able to extract the positioning part of the ad. Ad creativity, which is reflected, among others, in the artwork, cleverness, and originality of the advertisement, is prominent into effectively transferring the positioning in consumers' minds (Zinkhan 1993; see also Bhat and Reddy 1998). Thus, by incorporating ad creativity as a covariate, we control for ad execution as a confounding factor, which may potentially lead to attitude transfer from the executional part of the ad to the brand (Moriarty 1983).

With specific reference to corporate brand attitudes, we sought to control for the transfer of existing corporate brand (image) associations to the positioning of the brand (Aaker 1996; Brown and Dacin 1997; Keller 1993; Keller 2003) as well as context effects (Brown and Dacin 1997). For instance, based on the corporate brand name (e.g., Renault, Ford, etc.) and the corresponding corporate image associations (e.g., high quality or innovative corporate image associations), consumers may form perceptions about the price, design, quality, technology, etc. of the various product brands (e.g., Renault Clio, Renault Megane, etc.).

The second set of covariates sought to capture *product class* effects and included product class knowledge (e.g., Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Johar and Sirgy 1991; Laczniak and Carlson 1989; Sujan and Bettman 1989) and product class involvement (e.g., Johar and Sirgy 1991; Sujan and Bettman 1989), which are likely to bias consumers' ratings of brand's positioning effectiveness. Essentially, these covariates intended to control for consumers' magnitude of existing associations reflected in consumers' levels of expertise and familiarity with brands in a product class, which have been shown to moderate the perceptions of positioning strategies (e.g., Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Desai and Ratneshwar 2003; Dube and Schmitt 1999). The final set of covariates consisted of *socio-demographic* characteristics (namely age, sex, education and income), which might also influence consumers' perceptions of positioning (e.g., Friedman and Lessig 1987; Munn 1960; Williams and Drolet 2005; Wolin 2003). Figure 8 summarizes the measurement process of brand positioning strategies in a graphical form.

Figure 8: Suggested Approach to Measure the Effectiveness of Brand Positioning Strategies



Measures

The description of the constructs included in Study 1, their measures and associated psychometric information are shown in Table 16.[45] The unidimensionality of the measures was established by running confirmatory factor analyses which revealed a stable structure both for the positioning effectiveness measures and the control variables (Gerbing and Anderson 1988). Further, a series of confirmatory factory analyses (CFAs) was performed for each effectiveness dimension, attitude towards the ad (creativity) and corporate brand attitude. The standardized factor loadings are all high and significant and the reliability of the measures is very satisfactory (all construct reliabilities exceed .80). In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) values clearly exceed the benchmark of 0.5 indicating convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). While the dimensions of the positioning effectiveness measure are all positively correlated, their coefficients lie below the .70 benchmark thus also demonstrating discriminant validity (Ping 2004). In summary, all measures used in Study 1 display highly acceptable psychometric properties.

[45] Note that only the uniqueness items were used for capturing differentiation.

Table 16: Construct Measurement (Study 1)

Variable	*Description*	*# of items*[a]	*Stand. Item Loadings*[b]	*Composite Reliability*	*AVE*	*Source of Measure*
Effectiveness Measures						
Favorability	The degree to which consumers have positive (favorable) perceptions towards a brand.	4	.87 - .96	.85	.84	**see Chapter 5**
Differentiation	The degree to which a brand is perceived as unique compared to competitor brands.	4	.82 - .91	.93	.76	
Credibility	The degree to which consumers perceive the differences between the focal brands and competitor brands as believable.	4	.88 - .97	.96	.87	
Control Variables						
Ad Creativity	The extent to which consumers view the advertisements as creative, well-designed, entertaining, clever, and attention grabbing (Moriarty 1983; Schlinger 1979).	5	.77 - .94	.92	72	Bello, Pitts, and Etzel (1983); Moriarty (1983); Schlinger (1979)
Attitude toward Corporate Brand	The degree to which consumers have a positive attitude towards the parent brand or organization (Kirmani, Sood, and Bridges 1999).	4	.77 - .94	.92	.75	Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran (1998); Kirmani, Sood, and Bridges (1999)
Involvement (Product Class)*	Consumers' perceived relevance of (objects in) a product class based on inherent needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky 1985).	3	.87 - .99	.95	.86	Beatty and Talpade (1994)
Knowledge (Product Class)*	Consumers' perceptions of what and/or how much they know about a product class" (Park, Mothersbaugh and Feick 1994)	3	.64 - .92	.87	.69	Park, Mothersbaugh, and Feick (1994)

[a] Items for attitude toward the ad, involvement (product class) and knowledge (product class) were measured on a seven-point "strongly disagree/strongly agree" scale; all other constructs were measured on 7-point bipolar semantic differential scales.
[b] Ranges of the factor loadings as based on the CFAs
*Due to only three items available, we set two loadings equal to each other prior to performing the CFAs.

Analysis Procedure

Given that all participants in Study 1 were exposed to all four advertisements, an analysis strategy appropriate for a within-subjects research design was adopted. More specifically, in a first step, we ran two repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) with the brand-specific covariates (i.e., corporate brand attitudes and ad creativity) as dependent variables to investigate whether we needed to adjust for the impact of these potentially confounding variables. The analyses revealed that the four brands did not differ in terms of ad creativity (F [3, 47] = .67, p >.10) and corporate brand attitude (F [3, 47] = 1.89, p >.10); thus, these covariates were excluded from further analysis.

In a next step, we tested the influence of product-class and socio-demographic variables on each of the three effectiveness dimensions (i.e., favorability, differentiation and credibility) using repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). In particular, we modeled each effectiveness dimension as the main (within-subjects) effect, sex and education as between-subjects factors, and product class knowledge, product class involvement, income, and age as covariates. We identified product class involvement, age and income as significant covariates; all other covariates were not significant and dropped from further analysis. In a final step, we ran a repeated measures ANCOVA on each effectiveness dimension together with their respective significant covariates identified in the previous stage. Prior to conducting the ANCOVAs, we tested whether the assumption of sphericity was met across all comparisons. Sphericity refers to the equality of the variances of the differences between each level of the repeated measures factor and requires that the variances of each set of difference scores are equal. The application of Mauchly's tetst to our data revealed that the assumption of sphericity was fulfilled across all comparisons.

Findings

As can be seen from Table 17, the analysis revealed significant main effects of positioning on all three effectiveness dimensions. Moreover, the effect sizes as reflected in the partial eta squared (η^2) values can be regarded as high across all dimensions (Cohen 1988), indicating that the type of the positioning strategy has a strong impact on positioning effectiveness. We also conducted a power analysis which revealed that the sample size is large enough to generalize the results. For all dimensions, the power statistics – based on an alpha of .05 – exceed .99 which reveals that our analysis is associated with high levels of statistical power. With respect to the covariates, as expected, product class involvement had a significant effect on favorability ($F [1, 48] = 4.59$, $p < .05$), whereas involvement, age and income produced significant effects on credibility ($F [1, 46] = 4.69$, $p < .05$; $F [1, 46] = 5.48$, $p < .05$; and $F [1, 46] = 3.58$, $p < .10$, respectively).

Table 17: Results of Study 1 (Within-Subjects Design)

	Mean values (Adjusted Mean Values)		
Positioning Strategies	Favorability	Differentiation	Credibility
Feature Positioning	3.75 (3.75)	2.17	3.27 (3.27)
Direct Benefit Positioning	4.68 (4.68)	2.67	4.13 (4.13)
Indirect Benefit Positioning	4.16 (4.16)	2.56	3.95 (3.94)
Surrogate (User) Positioning	4.30 (4.30)	2.68	4.14 (4.14)
F-Value (3 d.f.)	3.55	3.47	6.16
p-value	< .05	< .05	<.01
Partial Eta Squared (η^2)	.19	.18	.30
Significant Covariates	3^b		3^b, 5^b, 8^a
Covariates	1 = attitude toward corporate brand, 2 = ad creativity, 3 = product class involvement, 4 = product class knowledge, 5 = age, 6 = sex, 7 = education, 8 = income; ^{a} p <.01, ^{b} p <.05, Note that for Differentiation the adjusted means equal the observed means as none of the covariates was significant		

Looking at the adjusted means in Table 17, it can be seen that, consistent with our expectations, feature positioning is the least effective strategy, whereas direct benefit positioning is, overall, most effective across all three effectiveness dimensions. To explore the observed differences in more detail, pairwise comparisons between all four positioning strategies were conducted; the significant effects are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18: Pairwise Comparisons of Positioning Strategies (Study 1)

	Feature	*Direct Benefit*	*Indirect Benefit*	*Surrogate: User*
Feature		Low Favorability[a] Low Differentiation[b] Low Credibility[a]	Low Differentiation[b] Low Credibility[a]	Low Favorability[b] Low Differentiation[a] Low Credibility[a]
Direct Benefit	High Favorability[a] High Differentiation[b] High Credibility[a]		High Favorability[c]	
Indirect Benefit	High Differentiation[b] High Credibility[a]	Low Favorability[c]		
Surrogate: User	High Favorability[b] High Differentiation[a] High Credibility[a]			

[a] $p < .01$
[b] $p < .05$
[c] $p < .10$

Notes: entries in each cell refer to the superiority (inferiority) of each row strategy in relation to the column strategies.
Empty cells indicate no significant differences.

As predicted by H1, direct benefit positioning produces significantly higher scores on the three effectiveness dimensions than feature positioning. Indirect benefit positioning also achieves significantly higher levels of differentiation and credibility than feature positioning. Taking these findings together, we find support for H1 for both benefit positioning strategies. Similarly, and consistent with H2, surrogate (user) positioning outperforms feature positioning with respect to favorability, differentiation and credibility. Thus, feature positioning is, from a consumer point of view, the least effective positioning strategy.

Focusing on the relative effectiveness of benefit versus surrogate positioning, no differences in any effectiveness dimension could be identified between surrogate (user) positioning and either direct or indirect benefit positioning (see Table 18). This provides no support for H3 and indicates that, at least in the compact car market, benefit and surrogate positioning seem to be equally effective options.

Finally, contrasting the two sub-forms of benefit positioning, and consistent with H4, direct benefit positioning was found to create more favorable brand attitudes than indirect benefit positioning. At the same time, the two positioning strategies are not dissimilar with regard to differentiation and credibility perceptions. We therefore find support for H4, but for the favorability dimension only.

Table 18 also shows that if a brand outperforms the others on one positioning effectiveness dimension, it does not also need to be better on the other dimensions. Differently stated, a positioning strategy that, for example, yields high brand favorability ratings does not *necessarily* also lead to high differentiation and credibility perceptions. Thus, the three effectiveness dimensions capture *distinct* (but complementary) aspects of positioning success and indicate that relying on any one dimension may result in a biased picture of the overall positioning success of a brand (Dillon et al., 2001; Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann, 2003)

Study 2

Research Design

Having established that the focal positioning strategies of different brands are perceived differently on the effectiveness dimensions in a within-subjects study design, we undertook a follow-up study seeking to compare the positioning effectiveness of distinct positioning strategies employed by the *same* brand using a between-subjects design. We were particularly interested to further test the difference between direct and indirect benefit positioning strategies, as the testing of H4 in Study 1 produced results that were significant at the 10% level only. For this purpose, we sought to identify print advertisements of compact cars that use direct and indirect benefit positioning strategies (and hence also different ads) for exactly the *same* model. We were able to identify two ads that met these criteria (see lower panel of the Appendix 3).

As in Study 1, each ad was coded independently by three expert coders according to its underlying positioning strategy. There was full agreement among coders on the positioning strategy used by each brand. Subsequently, a sample of 50 consumers was drawn for each ad, resulting in a total of 100 participants. Overall, the samples were similar in terms of socio-demographic characteristics as the sample used in Study 1 (Chapter 6). Moreover, the same measures as in Study 1 were used and, as Table 19 shows, they demonstrated highly acceptable psychometric properties. Consistent with Study 1, the correlations among the effectiveness dimensions were positive and highly significant; the correlations between favorability and differentiation was .54 ($p < .01$) and between favorability and credibility .57 ($p < .01$), respectively. The correlation between differentiation and credibility came to .60 ($p < .01$).

Table 19: Construct Measurement (Study 2)

Variable	*# of items*[a]	*Stand. Loadings*[b]	*Composite Reliability*	*AVE*
Effectiveness Measures				
Favorability	4	.81-.97	.94	.79
Differentiation	4	.76-.98	.93	.78
Credibility	4	.76-.94	.92	.73
Control Variables				
Ad Creativity	5	.78 -.87	.90	.70
Attitude toward Corporate Brand	4	.80 - .93	.92	.75
Involvement (Product Class)*	3	.81 - .99	.93	.81
Knowledge (Product Class)*	3	.80 - .97	.91	.78

[a]Items for attitude toward the ad, involvement (product class) and knowledge (product class) were measured on a seven-point "strongly disagree/strongly agree" scale; all other constructs were measured on 7-point bipolar semantic differential scales.
[b]The ranges of the factor loadings are derived from CFAs
*due to only 3 items available, we set two loadings equal to each other.

Analysis and Findings

We ran a set of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) on the three effectiveness dimensions (favorability, differentiation, and credibility) with the positioning strategy (direct benefit vs. indirect benefit positioning) as the main (between-subjects) effect and the previously discussed control variables as covariates.

The comparisons between direct benefit positioning and indirect benefit positioning are fully in line with the findings of Study 1. Specifically, they reveal that direct benefit positioning outperforms indirect benefit positioning in terms of favorability ($F\ [1, 85] = 4.56$, $p < .05$), whereas the differences between the two strategies are not significant with regard to differentiation and credibility (see Table 20). We thus find support for H4 but, as was also the case in Study 1, only with respect to favorability. The partial eta square (η^2) value is .05, which translates into an effect size of $f = .23$; the latter is according to Cohen (1988) a medium large effect size. The associated power of the test (.63) can be deemed as still acceptable.

Table 20: Results of Study 2 (Between-Subjects Design)

	Mean values (Adjusted Mean Values)		
Positioning Strategies	Favorability	Differentiation	Credibility
Direct Benefit Positioning	3.75 (4.31)	2.41 (2.73)	3.61 (3.88)
Indirect Benefit Positioning	4.36 (3.76)	3.50 (3.16)	4.17 (3.89)
F-Value (1 d.f.)	4.56	1.95	.00
p-value	<.05	n.s.	n.s.
Partial Eta Squared (η^2)	.05	-	-
R^2-value*	.55	.32	.22
Significant Covariates	$1^a, 2^a$	$1^c, 2^b$	$1^c, 3^c$
Covariates	1 = corporate brand attitude, 2 = ad creativity, 3 = product class involvement 4 = product class knowledge, 5 = age, 6 = sex, 7 = education, 8 = income; $^a p < .01$, $^b p < .05$, $^c p < .10$ *based on the total model with positioning strategy and covariates		

As can be seen from Table 20, corporate brand attitude have a significant impact on all effectiveness dimensions (favorability (F [1, 85] = 36.98, $p < .01$; differentiation, F [1, 85] = 2.82, $p < .10$; credibility F [1, 85] = 3.65, $p < .10$). Furthermore, the perceived creativity of the ad has a highly significant impact on favorability (F [1, 85] = 23.43, $p < .01$) and differentiation (F [1, 85] = 6.30, $p < .05$). With regard to the product class variables, involvement produces a marginally significant effect (F [1, 85] = 3.42, $p < .10$) on credibility. The remaining covariates (including all socio-demographic variables) did not yield significant results.

Summary

This chapter describes two studies, one using a within-subjects design and one using a between-subjects design, in which the effectiveness of alternative positioning strategies were compared. Congruent with our hypotheses, we find support that direct benefit positioning as well as user (surrogate) positioning is superior to feature positioning in terms of positioning effectiveness. We also confirm that direct benefit positioning leads to better positioned brands than indirect benefit positioning in the automobile category. However, we could not detect significant differences between direct benefit positioning and surrogate/user positioning.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the research project are summarized and their implications for both academics and practitioners are outlined. The chapter is structured as follows: First, the main findings and theoretical contributions of the various complementary studies are described. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological and managerial implications.

Summary of the Key Findings

Overall, this dissertation contains three major studies, each consisting of several complementary sub-studies, that together shed light on one of the most complex concepts in marketing, namely brand positioning.

In Chapter 1, an open sort task was employed to explore the influence of brand positioning strategies on consumers' categorization of brands and thus, indirectly, also throw light on the validity of existing positioning typologies. The study contributes to the limited diagnostic insights into underlying factors that influence categorizations of brands (Viswanathan and Childers 1999) by providing strong evidence that brands' respective positioning strategies constitute such a factor. By applying a set of complementary analyses based on similarity (co-occurrence) matrices derived from the open sort task, strong support is found that consumers classify brands according to the positioning bases that are actually used in advertisements. More specifically, the results suggest that consumers tend to form categories based on positioning bases that are common between brands as reflected in a close correspondence between expert judges' classifications based on the former and consumers' classifications. The results are stable across three distinct product categories, which enhances the generalizability of our findings. In this context, it needs to be highlighted that the empirical results of Study 1 provide evidence that the selection of positioning strategies drives consumers' similarity/dissimilarity perceptions in relation to competitor brands *despite* the influence of numerous additional factors on the categorization behavior of consumers, such as the physical appearance, expertise, brand familiarity, price perceptions, and/or perceptions towards the brand name. In this regard, Day, Shocker, and Srivastava (1979, p. 328), note that "[respondents could differ in […] the criterion for grouping. Some, for example, might emphasize physical similarity while others might elect appropriateness-in-use or similarity of prices as the criterion]." Thus, the study presented in Chapter 1 ascertains a high level of external validity.

The development and validation of a positioning effectiveness measure can be regarded as the cornerstone of this research (see Chapter 5). To the very best of our knowledge, this is the first study that developed a valid and reliable consumer-derived measure of brand positioning effectiveness. In contrast to alternative measures that have been applied as proxies to measure positioning effectiveness, the proposed measure covers the full domain of the construct as outlined in the literature. By conceptualizing and operationalizing positioning effectiveness from a consumer perspective, the study extends the current theory on brand positioning and adds to the brand management knowledge, in general. Through an extensive scale development process comprising nine complementary studies the scale's reliability as well as its content, convergent and discriminant, nomological, predictive and comparative validity were tested. The results of these studies collectively provide evidence that the measure is a sound tool for assessing brand positioning effectiveness.

Having developed a sound measurement instrument of positioning effectiveness (see Chapter 5) and established that consumers perceive conceptually identical positioning bases (that form positioning strategies) as being internally homogenous and externally heterogeneous (see Chapter 3), the aim of the subsequent studies presented in Chapter 6 was to make inferences about the relative effectiveness of prototypical brand positioning strategies, measured from a consumer perspective. Based on two separate studies (adopting within- and between-subjects designs, respectively), support is found for the notion that the type of positioning strategy does indeed affect the positioning success of real-world brands. In this context, the dimensions of positioning effectiveness are perceived significantly distinct from each other, depending on the specific brand positioning strategy selected.

More specifically, consistent with the hypotheses H1 and H2, the results of the study demonstrate that benefit and user (surrogate) positioning strategies outperform feature positioning strategies across all effectiveness dimensions (i.e., favorability, differentiation and credibility). These findings imply that marketers should avoid using feature positioning as a dominant positioning strategy in their advertising initiatives, at least in the compact car market.

The remaining positioning strategies (i.e., benefit and surrogate positioning) all produce acceptable results in terms of positioning effectiveness. However, benefit (direct and indirect) and surrogate (user) positioning strategies are *not* distinct in terms of positioning effectiveness – the results of Study 1 (H3) reveal that they produce similar scores on the three positioning effectiveness dimensions. We therefore can conclude that surrogate positioning may constitute a sound alternative to benefit positioning.

Based on the findings of Study 2 (H4), empirical support is found for the conceptual distinction between direct and indirect benefit positioning, because they are perceived differently in terms of positioning effectiveness – direct benefit positioning is associated with significantly higher levels of favorability than indirect benefit positioning. A possible reason for this finding is probably the fact that the product category investigated in our study (i.e., compact cars) is utilitarian in nature (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000, see also study 2 in Chapter 5). In this case, direct (functional) benefit positioning is likely to be more effective than indirect (i.e., experiential/symbolic) benefit positioning (Johar and Sirgy 1991).

Theoretical Implications

The results of this research contribute to marketing theory in several ways.

First, the results of Chapter 3 extend the theoretical knowledge on categorization behavior by providing evidence that consumers form categories at the level of the communicated positioning *base*, irrespective of the latter's *specific* content. For example, brands can share any kind of concrete attribute (i.e., feature) in order to be grouped together – they do not need to share exactly the *same* concrete attribute. A more detailed analysis of the inconsistencies between the theoretical and empirical categorizations also revealed that wrong classifications can be primarily attributed to the fact that consumers tend to group brands together with positioning bases at the next higher or lower level abstraction. For example, consumers tend to group abstract attributes and benefits, or benefits and usage positioning, together.

Consistent with the bottom-up and bottom-down views of categorization, the study presented in Chapter 1 reveals that consumers are likely to use a large variety of different associations (which are created through the communication of the focal positioning bases) such as attributes (i.e., concrete and abstract attributes) benefits, and/or usage situations when forming similarity-based categories. Further inspection of the individual brand groupings also reveal that consumers assign brands which employ a *combination* of different positioning bases (i.e., a hybrid positioning strategy) together with brands that use either one of these constituent bases. For instance, brands that use a combination of concrete attributes and benefits were grouped together with either brands being positioned on concrete attributes or with brand being positioned on benefits.

A further important theoretical contribution of this research is the conceptualization and operationalization of the positioning effectiveness construct from a consumer perspective (see Chapter 5). In contrast to measures used in previous research, the measurement instrument incorporates the main dimensions of positioning success as described in the literature and thus enabling researchers to capture the core components of the construct.

Chapter 5 (i.e., scale development and validation) also adds to theory by putting forth conceptual arguments as well as providing empirical evidence that dissimilarity and uniqueness are distinct dimensions describing the extent to which a focal brand is differentiated from other brands in the minds of consumers. The dissimilarity dimension solves the issue that, in some instances, brands do not necessarily need to be dissimilar in relation to competitor brands in order to be successfully positioned (Crawford, Urban, and Buzas 1983). Specifically, for several types of brands, such as copycats (me-too offerings), follower brands, re-engineered brands, or newly launched brands, positioning effectiveness is likely to be grounded in creating similarity perceptions (and thus having low scores on the dissimilarity dimensions) as opposed to dissimilarity perceptions.[46] Essentially, positioning a brand as similar to competing brands, with the underlying intention to (a) get the brand associated with the strengths of established brands in the product category (e.g., Kalra and Goodstein 1998; Keller 2003; Ries and Trout 1986; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991; Punj and Moon 2002; Wilkes 1977) and/or (b) enter into the consideration sets of consumers (e.g., Urban, Hulland, and Weinberg 1993), may constitute a strategic aim of a company (Dröge and Darmon 1987; Dubè and Schmitt 1999; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991; Carpenter and Nakamoto 1989). Low dissimilarity scores indicate that points of association with competing brands (e.g., market leaders) and/or the product category are established (see Keller 2003; Keller, Sternthal and Tybout 2002; Krishnan 1996; Punj and Moon 2002). Moreover, if a brand is perceived as similar to competitor brands it tends to be perceived as a substitute in use (Ratneshwar and Shocker 1991). If, for example, a minor brand is viewed as being similar to major competitor brands, the minor brand has shifted its positioning to a higher tier in the marketplace and may benefit from association with the premium brand due to the improved associations (Kalra and Goodstein 1998).

Thus, whereas in the case of favorability, uniqueness and credibility, positioning success is reflected in high scores, for the dissimilarity dimension either low scores (indicating high perceived brand similarity with competitor brands) *or* high scores (indicating high perceived dissimilarity with competitor brands) may be indicative of positioning success depending on the type of brand under consideration.

Uniqueness, the second differentiation dimensions, enables to assess to what extent a brand stands out of the mass, or in other words, fills a hole in the perceptual space of the consumer, which is a major requirement for a well-positioned brand (Ries and Trout 1986). Creating high levels of uniqueness is of particular importance as it may help marketers in getting their brands through the "clutter" and thus noticed by prospects (Myers 1996). The empirical results confirm the notion that uniqueness can be a proprietary asset in creating a competitive advantage (Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto 1994). However, as pointed out by Keller (2003), it does not

[46] In this regard, Crawford, Urban, and Buzas (1983, p. 4) highlight that "there is good reason for emphasizing the role of both differences and similarities in positioning, as opposed to differences alone."

matter how unique a brand is unless customers evaluate it as favorable (see also Barwise and Meehan 2004 for a discussion).

In this regard, one of the major pitfalls in positioning is that companies are frequently seeking to be different from their competitor by any means without paying sufficient attention to what customers really want (Myers 1996; see also Carpenter and Nakamoto 1989). Consequently, the respective brand may be well differentiated from competitors, however, it may not provide sufficient value to consumers and hence not be positively perceived by consumers. This underlines that favorability is a *necessary* condition for positioning effectiveness. Thus, the remaining dimensions can only deploy their full strengths in conjunction with favorability. As noted by Day (1990), positioning needs to create differentiation that is also evaluated as favorable by consumers. Finally, credibility ascertains that the brand`s value proposition is also compelling. Particularly, it fulfills the effectiveness criterion that the brand needs to stand for something that consumers believe (i.e., the differences need to be believable [Aaker 1991]) and add value at the same time). Besides the conceptual importance of this dimension, the empirical findings of our study demonstrate that credibility is strongly related to relevant outcomes of positioning effectiveness.

Methodological Implications

The present dissertation also contains several methodological contributions.

Within the scope of the first study, we furthered the methodology in qualitative research by introducing a structured analysis procedure comprising a series of complementary tests (including hierarchical cluster analysis) to statistically analyze open sort data.[47] In this regard, our main objective was to test the underlying research question with a more thorough and stringent test than the mere application of hierarchical cluster analysis. Hence, in addition to cluster analysis, which is considered as the state of the art technique to analyze co-occurence

[47] Essentially, cluster analysis is the primary tool to develop taxonomies, as its objective is to form homogenous groups (i.e., positioning bases) that are as distinct as possible from one another (Hair et al. 2006)

matrices, we implemented four complementary tests (i.e., category breadth, χ^2, *psa, crsa*) that allow a more comprehensive statistical analysis of this kind of data. This analysis procedure may also contribute to the proliferation of open sort task as a promising tool for branding and consumer behavior studies that are based on categorization theory.

With specific emphasis on the measurement of positioning effectiveness, we filled a gap in the literature by developing a scale that measures the positioning effectiveness construct. Although the primary objective of a scale lies in the identification of relationships between constructs, which implies a focus on relative scores as opposed to absolute scores, an assessment of the absolute scores also enables researchers to determine to what extent consumers perceive a brand to be effectively positioned. In practice, this means that the measure can be applied for academic and managerial purposes alike.

Instead of category-specific attribute dimensions, we introduced generic effectiveness dimensions (which are also referred as "subjective" attributes the literature [Holbrook and Huber 1979]) to assess positioning effectiveness. This is associated with the advantage that the measure attains a high level of generalizability and is thus applicable in various distinct industries. In addition, the framing of the questions (i.e., relative to competition) enables consumers *themselves* to determine the frame of reference and thus overcomes the issue that companies need to pre-specify specific competitors (i.e., one or more specific competitor brands), which has been subjected to criticism in extant literature (Schmitt 1999; see also Chapter 1). The specific advantage of the framing is that brands that are not directly falling into the same product category can be taken into account in consumers' judgments of positioning success (see Jewell and Barone 2007).[48] Thus, we are likely to overcome the issue that boundaries of competitive product markets are rarely clear cut – as pointed out by Day, Shocker, and Srivastava (1979, p. 9) "ultimately, all boundaries are arbitrary."

From a practical point of view, the proposed positioning effectiveness measure enables the consumer-based evaluation of brand positioning success without having to carry out time-

[48] Alternatively, the frame of reference can also be previously specified by the researcher. Of course, the measure can also be applied with regard to a certain brand – thus instead of compare to competitors, it can be stated, compared to a specific competitor brand.

consuming, complex, and potentially expensive perceptual mapping studies (e.g., Bijmolt et al. 1998; Johnson, Lehmann, and Horne 1990). The measure is relatively compact, easy to administer, and puts little burden on respondents; furthermore, the application of the proposed measure does not require high-level brand knowledge, which is implicitly assumed with many product positioning techniques (Punj and Moon 2002; Urban and Hauser 1993). These characteristics are likely to lead to an increase in response quality as well as cost savings.

Chapter 6 presents an alternative measurement approach for evaluating the direct impact of brand positioning strategies on brand positioning effectiveness. Conceptually, the measurement approach involves linking the actual positioning with the consumer-derived positioning effectiveness measure (see Chapter 4). Similarly to the sole application of the positioning effectiveness measure, the suggested approach can be applied for both, theoretical and practical marketing research and its benefits are versatile. Methodologically, the proposed measurement approach overcomes several limitations of the alternative approaches discussed in Chapter 4 (e.g., the need to get hold of brand managers who are responsible for the positioning decision, etc., see Crawford 1985, Easingwood and Mahajan 1989).

With particular emphasis on the study designs of Study 1 (within-subjects design) and 2 (between subjects-study design; outlined in Chapter 6), we demonstrate that the use of print advertisements of real-world stimuli in combination with the positioning effectiveness measure, while controlling for a wide array of potential confounding factors, is a sound measurement approach for assessing the currently employed positioning strategies. With respect to confounding factors, we showed that particularly in a between-subjects design (see Study 2), in which consumers are not exposed to multiple stimuli at a time, the use of covariates is of paramount importance – failing to integrate covariates may lead to severe misinterpretations about the effectiveness of positioning strategies. The study reveals that the brand-specific covariates, that is corporate brand attitude and ad creativity have a significant impact on the positioning success of brands. In contrast to conventional wisdom (Friedman and Lessig 1987), however, consumers' socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, income and education levels) were not found to have significant impact on the way consumers perceive brands in terms of positioning effectiveness.

We also need to point out that in a within-subjects design, where consumers are asked to explicitly compare multiple brands in terms of their positioning effectiveness, the integration of brand-specific covariates (i.e., corporate brand attitude and ad creativity) tends to play a subordinate role, as the latter do not have a significant impact on favorability, differentiation and credibility, respectively. However, product class-specific and socio-demographic control variables still need to be accounted for.

Overall, the advocated measurement procedure has the specific advantage to provide a high degree of external validity. In this context, this approach can also contribute to competitive intelligence, since its application also allows an assessment of positioning strategies employed by competitors.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial point of view, the findings of the qualitative study (Chapter 3) highlight the importance of the decision regarding which positioning bases to use, since the latter affect consumers' brand similarity and dissimilarity perceptions. This is important since brand managers can create points of association with competitor brands by selecting the same positioning bases as competitors and/or create points of disassociation with competing brands by using distinct ones. In this context, selecting the same positioning bases as competitors may constitute an alternative to the use of (direct) comparative advertising (e.g., Dröge and Darmon 1987; Grewal et al. 1997, Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991;). Although comparative advertising is widely accepted as a major tool for associating a brand with a competitor brand (e.g., Dröge and Darmon 1987; Pechman and Ratneshwar 1991), it is associated with several drawbacks and thus has been subjected to criticism (see Grewal et al. 1997, for an overview of the relevant literature).

As already noted in the previous section, the positioning effectiveness scale is likely to constitute a less expensive and less complicated alternative to conventional measurement methods, which is particularly important in today's times where marketing is subject to massive budget constraints. Specifically, companies can use the proposed scale to evaluate the positioning effectiveness of their brands with and without exposing stimuli (e.g., ads) to consumers (and/or without carrying out content analysis of the communication tools). Note, however, that a mere application of the positioning effectiveness measure (without the identification of the actual positioning), does only allow managers to make limited inferences about the effectiveness of the currently applied actual positioning strategy. As discussed in the previous section, the actual/or intended positioning needs to be combined with the perceived positioning for this purpose (see also Chapter 6).

Overall, the proposed measure constitutes a valuable tool for evaluating and monitoring the perceived positioning effectiveness of brands[49]; for instance, if the effectiveness ratings of a brand decrease, it would be a potential indicator to counteract (e.g., by implementing marketing mix modifications) and if necessary completely reposition the brand. In this regard, the risk involved with repositioning a brand is likely to be potentially reduced, because an a-priori evaluation of the effectiveness of positioning strategies, for example, by using sample advertisements, is possible.

The recognition of the importance of different dimensions of positioning effectiveness may enable marketers to (a) receive better insights into the soundness of a brand's position in the marketplace and (b) support marketers in creating more sophisticated brand positioning strategies and branding initiatives, as a whole. More specifically, the measure enables brand managers to detect strengths and weaknesses on the key effectiveness dimensions – based on these and/or the strategic aim as, for example, manifested in the positioning statement[50] of the company marketers may focus on enhancing either favorability, dissimilarity, uniqueness or credibility perceptions of their brands, or may decide to develop positioning strategies that aim at improving the brand position on two or more dimensions. For example, strengths and weaknesses can be identified by linking the set of interrelated dimensions to outcome measures

[49] Thus, both the effectiveness of the actual *positioning strategy* and the existing perceptions can be measured, depending on if consumers are exposed to an ad of the referent brand or not.

[50] A positioning statement is a blueprint that is anchored in marketing plans and sets the strategic direction of a company (for a detail description see Myers 1996; Rigger 1995).

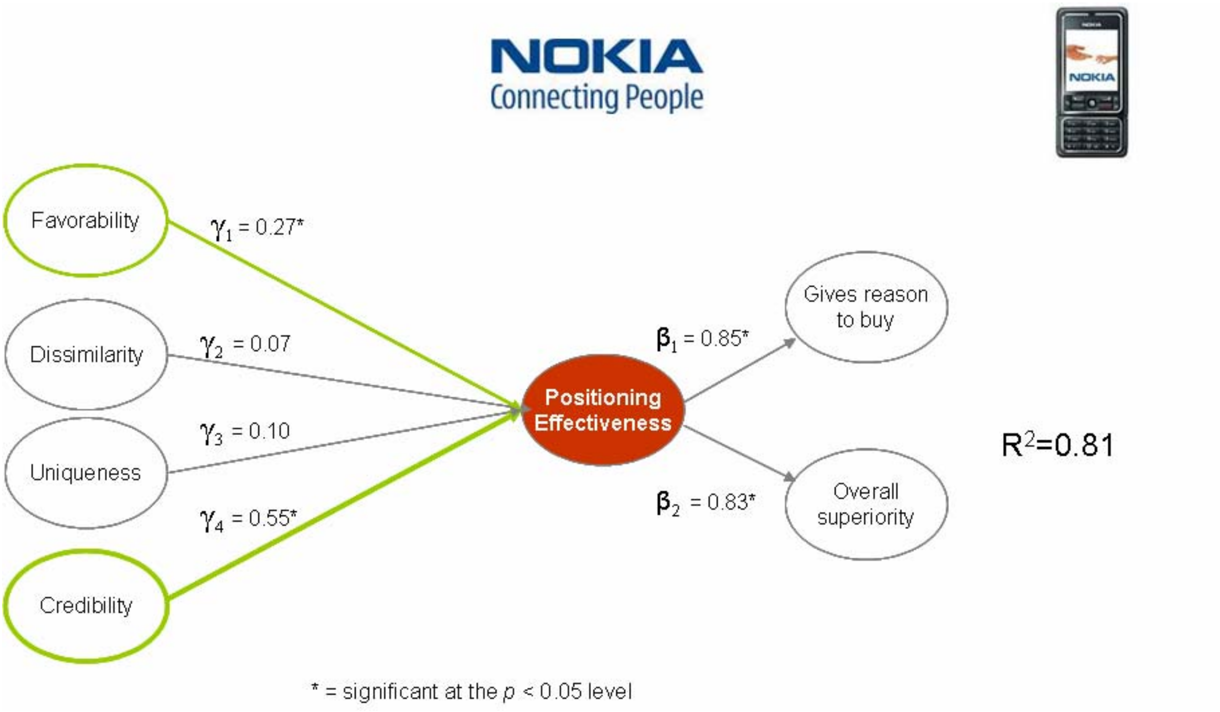
of positioning effectiveness such as purchase intentions and/or overall superiority perceptions (see Wind 1982). This allows marketers to receive information on the relative influence of each of the positioning dimensions on the latter, which subsequently may support managers with the decision whether to stick with the current positioning strategies or change them accordingly (i.e., reposition the brands).

Figures 9 and 10 provide illustrative examples of this application possibility using data on four mobile phone brands (i.e., Nokia, Motorola, Sony-Ericsson, and Samsung; the data are taken from Study 8 in Chapter 5).[51] For each brand, a structural equation model was estimated in which positioning effectiveness was modeled as a higher-order construct formed by the four (first-order) dimensions and linked to two "global" items, namely *reason to buy* and *overall superiority* (see Chapter 5, establishment of convergent validity). The magnitudes of the paths between the focal effectiveness dimensions and the latent variable reveal how strong each dimension contributes in explaining positioning effectiveness. A comparison of the various models shows that there are substantial differences in terms of importance of each focal dimension. For example, whereas credibility is a dominant driver of the higher-order construct for Nokia and Sony-Ericsson, uniqueness has the strongest impact on the latter for Motorola and Samsung.

In this regard, an exploration of which dimensions drive positioning effectiveness should not *solely* be conducted at the individual brand level, but also at the product category level (Kalra and Goodstein 1998). For this purpose, the data of the individual brands constituting the product category can be aggregated.

[51] For a detailed description of the study design and the sample characteristics see the relevant section in Chapter 5.

Figure 9: Application of the Measure



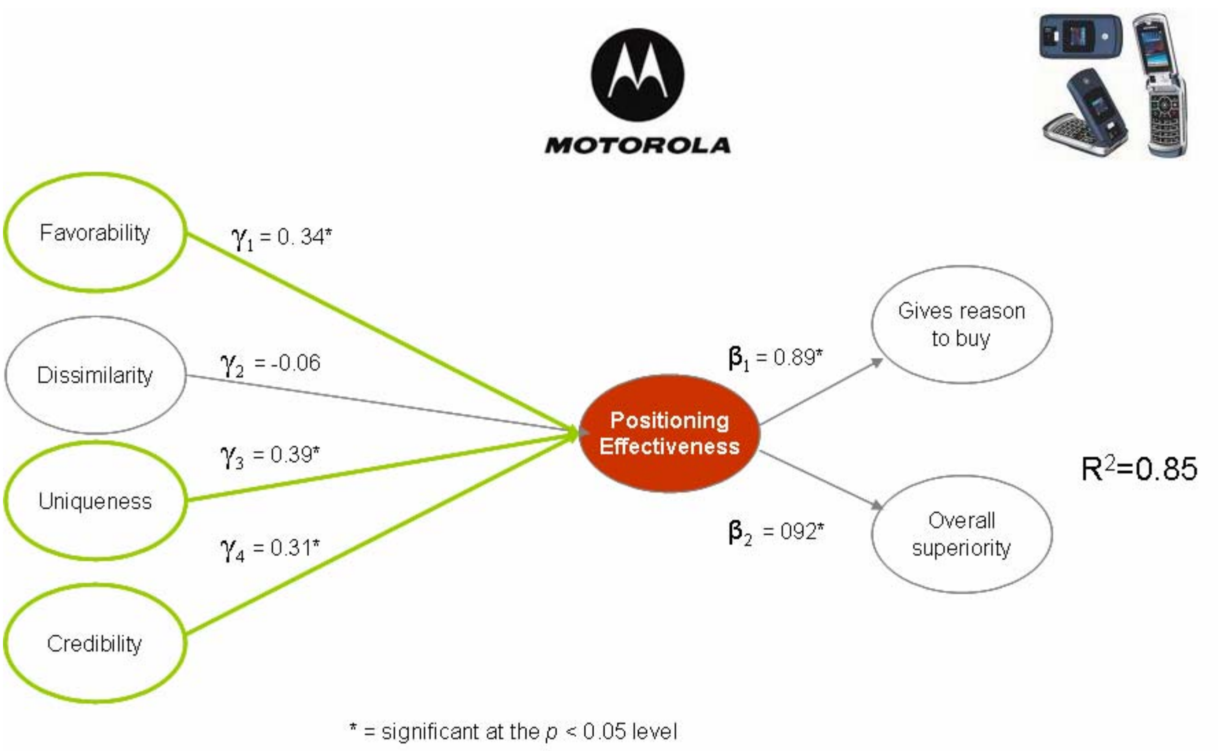
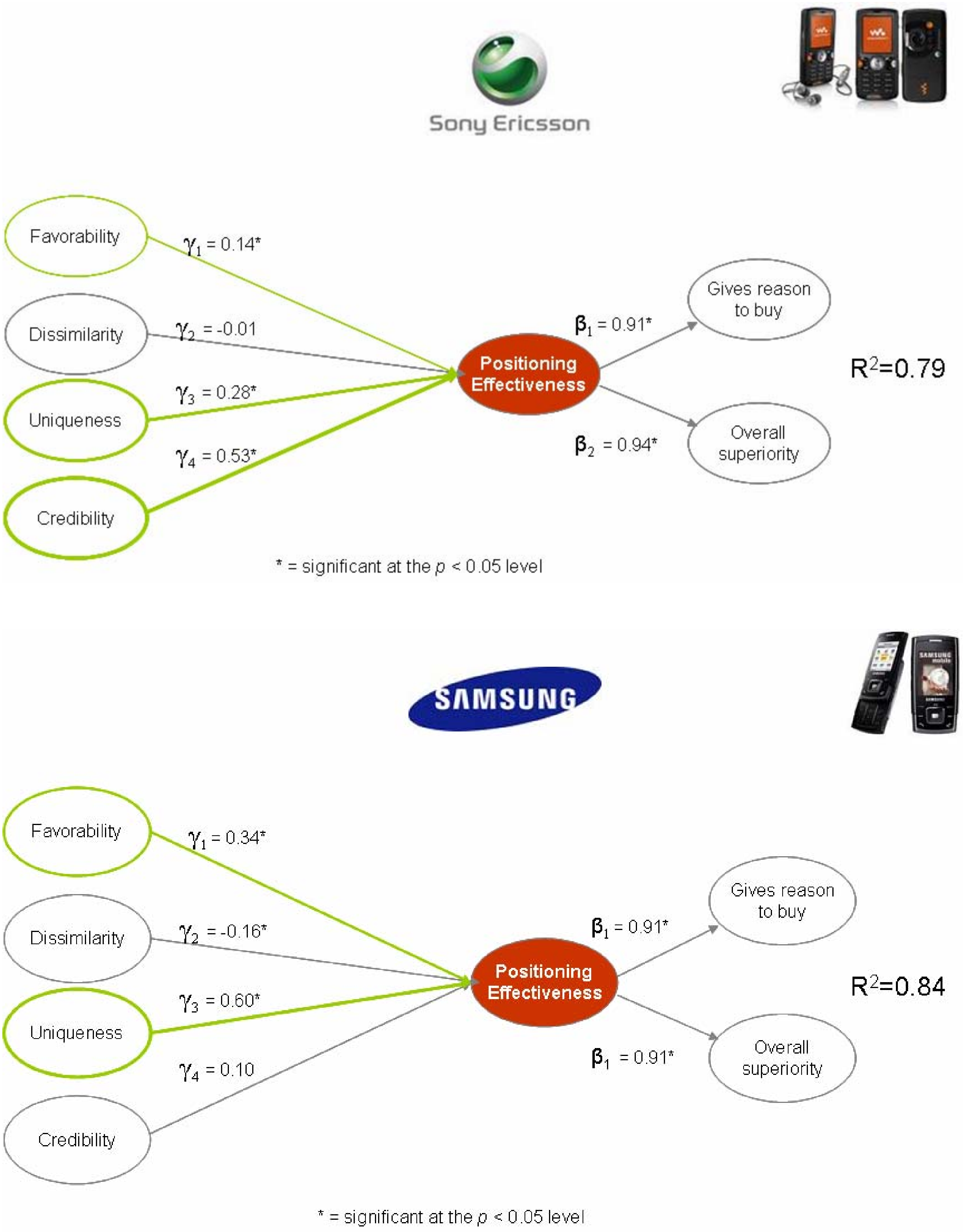
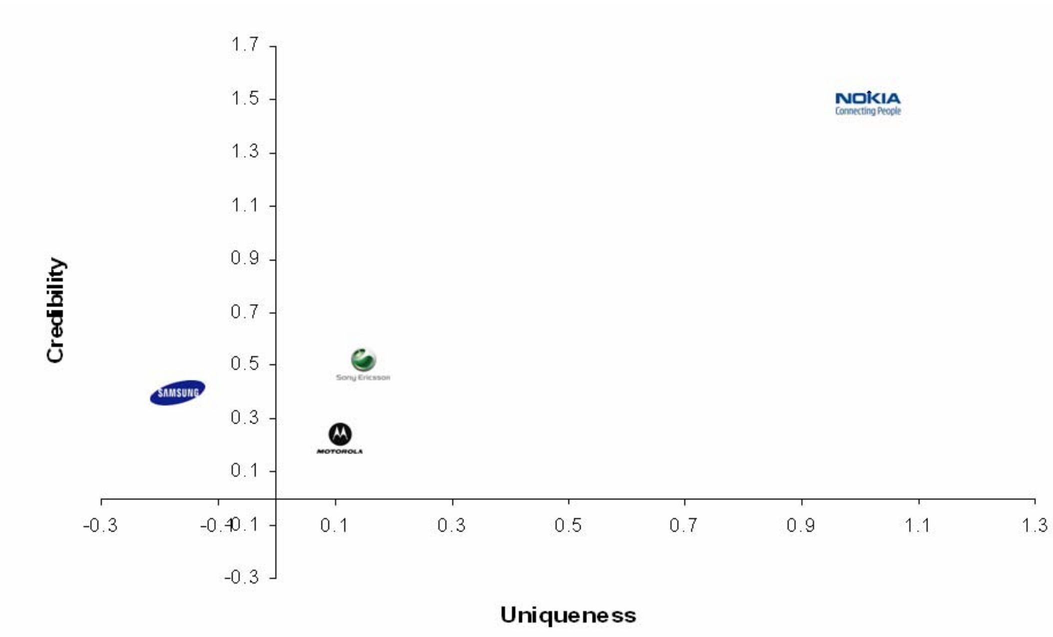


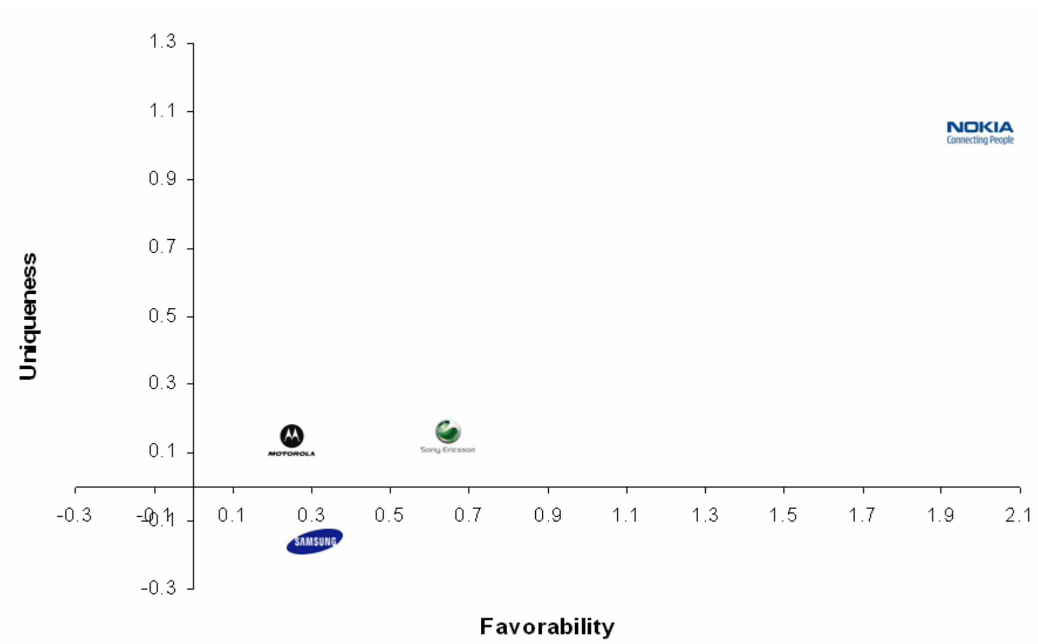
Figure 10: Application of the Measure (2)



A further area of application involves the comparison of the brand vis-à-vis other brands in the product category on the effectiveness dimensions, which requires the collection of data for both the focal brand and the respective competitor brands. The positions of the focal brand relative to competing brands can be graphically illustrated by creating positioning maps with each of the two axes representing a different positioning dimension – based on the factor (i.e., average) scores on the focal dimensions, brands are plotted into the perceptual space. Figures 11 shows maps that depict the positions of Nokia, Motorola, Sony-Ericsson and Samsung in terms of credibility and uniqueness as well as uniqueness and favorability, respectively (these maps were also created with the data on mobile phones [Study 8; Chapter 5]). The maps reveal that Nokia (cell phones) is superiorly positioned versus its competitors. Sony-Ericsson is runner up with sound favorability and credibility ratings. Samsung, in contrast, is perceived as not unique and Motorola has an issue with regard to favorability and credibility. Overall, we contend that through such a graphical representation of the data derived from the application of the positioning measure, the generated results may become more meaningful and easier to interpret to managers (DeSarbo, Young, and Rangaswamy 1997).

Figure 11: Perceptual Maps based on Scores on Positioning Effectiveness Dimensions





Apart from these potential areas of application, the measure's seems to be particularly useful in longitudinal studies aimed at tracking changes of the dimensions scores over time due to its ease of administration and parsimony. In this context, acceptable values for variation along each dimension can be established. In case a brand falls below these threshold values, brand managers would be alerted to take action against these (negative) developments. In addition, most firms' manage multiple brands (Rust et al. 2004) – brand managers who are responsible for managing a portfolio of brands can directly compare the positioning health of their brands, which is more difficult to do with other consumer-derived measurement approaches (e.g., brand-specific attribute based perceptual mapping techniques) due to absence of a comparable metric. Moreover, in some markets, such as markets with high technological turbulences (Jaworski and Kohli 1993), consumers' wants and needs (and thus also the corresponding attributes) may be subject to rapid changes, which, in turn, may negatively affect the application of attribute-based measurement approaches, specifically in longitudinal studies.

Furthermore, the proposed measure may be particularly appropriate in a cross-national context, where managers seek to compare the positioning effectiveness of a specific brand across countries. In this context, the application of the measure potentially reduces the need to establish equivalence of the salient product attributes across cultures or countries. Thus, the measure is not subject to the issue of an attribute pre-specification bias (Malhotra and Bartels 2002), often resulting from the issue that various attributes may not be equally relevant to consumers from different countries (see Johanson and Thorelli 1985). Firms that operate in several countries face the general problem that (a) the competitive market structures are likely to be (highly) different from the home market and (b) that different cultures are likely to use different frames of reference (i.e., different set of competitors). Determining the scope of competition, which is necessary when using traditional measurement approaches, may constitute a real challenge to firms. Unless the company is highly familiar with the foreign markets, separate explorative marketing research studies are needed to overcome these issues. Besides the pre-specification and the self-reference issue, the data collection procedure itself (attribute/similarity data for all competitors in each country) is deemed to be a major effort.

Another potential area of application would be the comparison of the scores of various (target) segments on a brand's positioning effectiveness dimensions, providing potentially valuable insights into how well the brand is positioned across various (target) segments. Specifically, differences among various segments (both target and non target segments) could provide valuable information whether the company's target market selection has been successfully conducted. In this regard, Day, Shocker, and Srivastava (1979, p. 17) note that a "useful test of the effectiveness of a company's positioning efforts is the extent of variability of customer perceptions of the appropriateness of a specific brand for a distinct usage submarket."[52] Following this suggestion, target segments could be compared with non-target segments – in the ideal case, the brand is better positioned in consumers' minds that belong to the target segment as opposed to other (non-target) segments.

Finally, the results of the studies and in Chapter 3 and 6 collectively indicate that brand managers should pay careful attention when selecting the type of positioning strategy for their brands. While the choice of positioning strategy is driven "by a number of idiosyncratic characteristics of the firm, product, market and environmental setting" (Wind, 1982, p. 81), decision makers should bear in mind that consumers respond differently to different positioning strategies in terms of favorability, differentiation and/or credibility perceptions. Hence, the expected consumer response should also be considered along with such factors as the brand's existing market position, the brand's (positioning) life cycle stage, the positioning used by competitors, and the desire for a "new" versus "me-too" image (see Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Blankson and Kalafatis 2007; Wind 1982) when deciding which positioning strategy to employ.

[52] Day, Shocker, and Srivastava (1979; p.17) further remark that "the analysis can also help assess the possibility of cannibalization. If two or more products or brands of a single manufacturer are seen as appropriate for the same usage submarket, then efforts to promote one may be at the expense of a loss in sales of the other."

CHAPTER 8: LIMITATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The studies presented in the present dissertation are also subject to several limitations, which are discussed in this final chapter. Based on these limitations as well as the key findings and implications presented in the previous chapter, the dissertation concludes with a discussion of general areas for future research.

Limitations and Specific Avenues for Future Research Needs

Concerning the limitations of Study 1 (Chapter 3), it needs to be highlighted that the output of the open sort task, i.e., similarity matrices implicitly assume that brands being grouped together are also "equally similar"; thus, the sorting task does not really reveal the *strength* of the similarity (or dissimilarity) between brands.[53] In addition, despite the numerous advantages of open sort tasks, the latter do not generate direct insights into the concrete reasons *why* consumers group the focal objects together. To overcome this limitation, future studies should engage in qualitative research aimed at exploring the underlying reasons for the observed categorizations. In this context, qualitative research should be conducted to assess which specific associations consumers had when conducting the sorting task. Furthermore, Schweidel, Bradlow, and Williams (2006) using hierarchical Bayesian modelling, found that advertisements which share executional elements are also perceived as being similar by consumers. Such an approach appears promising to replicate their findings in a positioning context.

Despite the numerous application possibilities of the positioning effectiveness measure (Chapter 5), it needs to be highlighted that the latter should be viewed as a *complementary* tool for assessing and monitoring positioning effectiveness rather than a substitute for positioning analysis, conducted with the help of perceptual mapping techniques (see Koppelman and Hauser 1979; Katahira 1990). Thus, the main purpose of the scale is to provide an assessment of how

[53] Note, however, that as already the number of groups formed by subjects can be regarded as a measure of *conceptual differentiation* (Block et al. 1981; Gardner and Schoen 1962).

effectively a brand/product/object is positioned in the mind of consumers, however, it is not appropriate in analyzing whether the company identified and targeted the “right” segments, which is according the classical STP process, a function that needs to be conducted prior to positioning (Crawford, Urban, and Buzas 1983). In this context, state-of-the-art positioning MDS models, for instance, combine segmentation and positioning analyses (e.g. DeSarbo, Grewal, and Scott 2008, Natter et al. 2008), which can solve this issue. Moreover, in contrast to attribute-based preference mapping techniques, for example, the scale is not capable of identifying concrete dimensions upon which marketers should develop their positioning strategies. Hence, its application does not support management in new product development decisions or in decisions concerning which (concrete) dimensions to emphasize. In addition, and as with all non-attribute-based methods, it also fails to reveal which attributes are associated with the focal brand or competitor brands, and/or how well the brand performs on these product category-specific attributes. In order to overcome this specific limitation and improve particularly the analytical capabilities of the measurement instrument, future research should combine attribute-based positioning analyses with the developed measure which would bundle the strengths of both approaches and overcome weaknesses of each other. A mere inclusion of relevant attributes alone (as for example done in Study 9), would, for example, reveal which attributes actually drive the ratings on the positioning success dimensions, which is potentially of great value to marketers.

Similarly to the qualitative study presented in Chapter 3, several limitations of the two studies aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of alternative brand positioning strategies (see Chapter 6) need to be acknowledged. Foremost, both Study 1 and Study 2 are limited in terms of the number of positioning strategies considered as well as in scope (i.e., single product category). Future studies are needed to asses whether the results are generalizable to other product categories (e.g., hedonic goods, services) and/or remain stable under various conditions (e.g., high involvement vs. low involvement situations). Moreover, despite the incorporation of a comprehensive subset of control variables, there may be specific segments for which certain positioning strategies work better than others. For example, a value-oriented segment may respond differently to a specific positioning strategy as compared to a luxury segment. The employed study design did not address such possibilities, which therefore are open for future research.

Future research on positioning strategies that have not been studied in the scope of the study would furnish additional insights on their relative effectiveness. Specifically, surrogate positioning offers numerous alternative positioning bases which deserve further exploration (Crawford, 1985). It would also be particularly interesting to reveal which specific type of associations surrogate positioning evoke.

In addition, marketing managers should not ignore the possibility to employ a hybrid positioning strategy in which elements from more than one positioning base are used (e.g., features combined with benefits; see Ozcan and Sheinin 2008; Chernev 2007; Wind 1982; see Chapter 2). Accordingly, future studies should, for example, further explore under what conditions brands using a “depth” positioning strategy (in which a single positioning base is used) outperform brands using “hybrid” positioning strategies (in which multiple positioning bases are emphasized) or vice versa (see Roth 1992). Moreover, a similar study design as used in Chapter 6 could be applied to test whether hybrid strategies lead to better positioned brands than single positioning strategies in a wide range of product categories.[54]

It should also be noted that not only the type of positioning strategy employed (e.g., feature, direct benefit, etc.), but also its specific content is likely to have an influence on positioning effectiveness. In other words, the selection of the focal benefit (e.g., either comfort, safety, durability, etc.) when using benefit positioning or the certain user information (e.g., either for rebels, for superwomen, for smart people, etc.) when employing user positioning, may also affect the brand’s positioning effectiveness. In this regard, in Chapter 6 we have investigated brands positioned on features, benefits and surrogates that are common (i.e., typical) in the particular product category (i.e., compact car class) – we have not studied brands that are, for example, positioned on radically novel, unique, trivial or branded features and/or benefits (e.g., Aaker, 2003; Broniarczyk and Gershoff, 2003; Desai and Rathneshwar 2003; Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto 1994).

[54] As already noted before, within the scope of this research, only the dominant positioning was evaluated. We thus can not make any assumption about supporting positioning elements.

Another fruitful line of future research would be to investigate under which *specific* conditions different positioning strategies are likely to be more/less effective. The significant results of product category-related covariates in both Study 1 and Study 2 (Chapter 6) seem to suggest that the nature of the product category is likely to be such a condition. Hence, prospective studies should focus on how product category characteristics (e.g., high-tech vs. low-tech markets, consumer vs. business markets, self-expressive vs. functional goods) moderate the effectiveness of particular positioning strategies (see Johar and Sirgy 1991; Laskey, Fox, and Crask 1995).

It also needs to be stressed that the study presented in Chapter 6 is *not* a pure experiment – instead, it is a study of prototypical positioning strategies incorporated in *real* advertisements of real brands. This means that the findings correspond to a "real life" scenario and are thus highly relevant in terms of practical application. However, as with most alike studies, external validity might have been gained at the cost of internal validity (Winer 1999). The current study could thus be complemented by a fully-crossed factorial design of fictional scenarios in which the stimuli varied only by the actual positioning strategy (hence enhancing internal validity).

Moreover, future research should explore which positioning strategies are most suitable to communicate a functional, experiential or symbolic brand image (Bhat and Reddy 1998; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Sweeney and Soutar 2001). A concrete research question would be whether, for example, indirect benefit positioning is more appropriate to create associations of social approval or self-expression than various types of surrogate positioning.

In general, the use of advertisements as stimuli for evaluating effectiveness the soundness of the *positioning strategies* may be subject to the issue that the mere exposure of stimuli (e.g., advertisements) may artificially create brand familiarity. It can be assumed that if consumers had not been exposed to ads, they would have had fewer associations with the focal brands, which may also be interpreted as a sign of weak positioning (Keller 2003). However, imagine a start-up brand; the brand may have a very good positioning strategy (i.e., emphasizing the right dimensions, etc.), but due to low cash flow and budget constraints, the management has not the financial resources to spend sufficient amounts of money on advertising, public relations, sales promotions, etc., which is essential for the effective transfer of the actual positioning into the mindset of consumers and, in general, for creating strong and favorable brand associations. In this specific case, the question arises whether one can say that the brand is not well positioned? Just because the actual positioning was not received by consumers? Just because the consumers have few associations with the focal brand? Thus, the positioning as perceived by consumers is not only a function of which dimensions (i.e, positioning bases) companies emphasize, but also a function of investing money in promoting this position. By using advertising as a stimuli, the role of the second function (i.e., amount of money invested) is likely to be reduced, and the focus of consumer judgment is likely to be shifted to whether the choice of the positioning strategy is sound or not.

Further Avenues for Future Research

In addition to the avenues for future research emerging from the cumulative findings of the studies, further studies in the field of positioning are warranted.

First, to obtain a better understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of brand positioning effectiveness. Particular attention should be paid to the question "what affects the positioning effectiveness of a brand?" In this context, future studies are needed to explore the (relative) influence of different marketing mix decisions (e.g., pricing and distribution channel decisions) on brand positioning effectiveness. There is also limited research on how different brand positioning strategies affect positioning success. Therefore, additional studies should also investigate under which conditions specific types of brand image (i.e., functional, symbolic, experiential; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Roth 1992; 1995) strategies and/or consumer culture positioning strategies (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999) lead to superiorly positioned brands.

With regard to the positioning effectiveness measure, further research should also examine more complex models in which positioning effectiveness is incorporated along with other related constructs such as utilitarian or hedonic dimensions of brand attitude (Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann 2003) or symbolic brand value dimensions (Sweeney and Soutar 2001). Finally, an examination of the relationships between the proposed positioning effectiveness measure and consumer-based (e.g. Yoo and Donthu 2001) as well as financial-based brand equity measures (e.g., Simon and Sullivan 1993; see also Interbrand Rating) would help executives to obtain a better understanding of the relevance of branding activities, and the acknowledgment that well-positioned brands are highly important and valuable assets for a company. Preliminary results of a study that is not reported in this research, provide evidence of a positive and significant relationship between the positioning effectiveness dimensions and dimensions of consumer-based brand equity (as measured with the dimensions of Yoo and Donthu [2001]).

A fertile line of future research involves additional validity testing of extant positioning typologies. Chapter 3 confirms that the application of major positioning bases incorporated in positioning typologies (e.g., Aaker and Shansby 1982, Wind 1982) is valid in several distinct product categories. Apart from validity considerations, establishing sound results in terms of reliability should also be established in future research. In particular, even though we found that the extended version of Crawford`s typology is a sound tool to identify positioning strategies, which is also reflected in the high intercoder reliabilities (see Chapter 3; 5, and 6), we need to highlight that Crawford (1985) did not report inter-coder reliabilities. Furthermore, it must be remarked that while Crawford`s typology is, to the very best of our knowledge, the most comprehensive and theoretically founded typology (see Friedman and Lessig 1987), Crawford himself noted that "it is far from being complete" – completeness, as such, is a major condition for a sound typology (see Bailey 1994; Laskey, Fox, and Crask 1995). This argument becomes eminently evident, if one takes the rapid advancements in the branding area in the last decades into account. The existing typologies may not fully correspond to the state-of-the art practice in today's positioning, since they were established, on average, more than 20 years ago. Recently suggested positioning bases such as global, local, and foreign consumer culture positioning (Alden, Steenkamp and Batra 1999) that can also be considered as tools to differentiate brands in the mindset of consumers may also "deserve a place" in the typology. Thus, a main research line would be the establishment of a modified positioning typology that is generalizable in various product categories.

Closely related to the validation of extant positioning typologies, additional research should assess positioning practices (i.e., the positioning strategies that are actually used) in different product categories. In line with Crawford (1985), content analysis could be conducted in high tech vs. low tech industries, functional vs. experiential product categories, high involvement vs. low involvement product categories to reveal differences in positioning practices in these distinct markets. This would enable practitioners and researchers to derive Do`s and Don`ts in the respective industries. Moreover, most studies that employed content analysis to identify the positioning of brands (Laskey, Fox, and Crask 1995, Frazer 1983; Crawford 1985) only coded a single (i.e., dominant) positioning base. However, frequently hybrid strategies, consisting of mixed positioning elements, are applied. Thus, there is absence of empirical knowledge answering the question which positioning bases are regularly combined and/or or which positioning bases are used to support the dominant positioning, respectively.

In this regard, future studies should test which combination of positioning bases are most appropriate in which positioning strategies. For this purpose, the coding of positioning practices into dominant, supporting, and single and mixed positioning bases could reveal insights into practices in various industries. Based on these findings, prototypical positioning strategies consisting of (a combination) frequently applied positioning could be contrasted in terms of positioning effectiveness or in terms of other consumer-derived outcome variables.

A complementary research approach to content analysis of advertisements (or other communication vehicles such as public relations, sales promotion or packaging) would be the conduction of qualitative in-depth interviews with managers, which would reveal insights into the nature of the intended positioning. In this regard, an interesting research question would be an empirical investigation on how managers derive their positioning strategies (see Rigger 1995). Moreover, it would be valuable to the marketing community to gain insights into which factors have the strongest influence on the formation of the intended positioning. For example, do brand managers pay more attention to the positions of competitors than to their own ideal positions as reflected in consumer perceptual/preference scores, when deciding on the positioning objectives? Alternatively, do companies use similar positioning strategies for different segments, or are the employed positioning strategies completely distinct for each target segment?

A further possibility in assessing the success of positioning strategies would, of course, be the collection of data with brand managers or advertising agencies. Qualitative research such as in-depth interviews would shed light on the reasons why they use a specific type of positioning strategy. Such a research design would also allow an exploration whether brand managers consciously or subconsciously use strategies as coded in positioning taxonomies. For instance, referring to the global, local, or consumer culture positioning, it would be interesting to reveal whether managers consciously use these strategies, i.e., with the intention to relate a brand with a global, or local consumer culture, or if these positioning alternatives are subconsciously made and thus are mere outcomes of advertising creatives.

An alternative method to measure the effectiveness of positioning strategies would be identifying brands that have been repositioned (for example, in the car industry from feature positioning to benefit positioning) and then assess the changes in sales associated with the repositioning.

Finally, as already pointed out by Crawford, Urban, and Buzas already in 1983, additional research should explore the relationship between positioning and the marketing mix elements that are designed to operationalize it. For example, an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of various marketing mix elements on brand positioning effectiveness would offer the chance to make a significant contribution to the marketing field. Moreover, in order to obtain a "bigger" picture, future studies should assess how the selection of positioning strategies contribute to the success of a brand relative to operational changes on the marketing mix levels.

In conclusion, positioning is an important, rich but also thorny area for future research. Marketers have developed an impressive variety of highly valuable research techniques and models in positioning research. However, on the conceptual and empirical front, research on positioning is scarce and lagging behind. This research was an initial attempt to bridge this gap and bring some new conceptual and empirical insights into this under-researched field in marketing – however, more research is needed to obtain a better general understanding of the positioning concept.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Similarity Matrices

Similarity Matrix for Cars

		Brand *i*									
		1	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***	***9***	***10***
	1		8	4	19	9	5	10	15	17	20
	2	8		12	6	24	12	24	11	6	7
	3	4	12		13	16	22	14	3	9	3
	4	19	6	13		10	9	11	10	17	14
Brand *j*	***5***	9	24	16	10		18	18	6	6	5
	6	5	12	22	9	18		10	3	10	2
	7	10	24	14	11	18	10		10	14	4
	8	15	11	3	10	6	3	10		10	22
	9	17	6	9	17	6	10	14	10		12
	10	20	7	3	14	5	2	4	22	12	
	Total	107	110	96	109	112	91	115	90	101	89

Similarity Matrix for Cell Phones

		Brand *i*									
		1	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***	***9***	***10***
	1		11	7	24	24	11	16	11	14	12
	2	11		12	5	9	7	6	31	17	8
	3	7	12		8	13	27	20	12	15	16
	4	24	5	8		19	15	14	12	13	14
Brand *j*	***5***	24	9	13	19		17	21	10	15	14
	6	10	7	27	15	17		26	7	9	20
	7	16	6	20	14	21	26		8	11	21
	8	11	31	12	12	10	7	8		24	8
	9	14	17	15	13	15	9	11	24		12
	10	12	8	16	14	14	20	21	8	12	
	Total	129	106	130	124	142	139	143	123	130	125

Appendix 2: Attributes used in Study 9 (Chapter 5)

1. quality of food
2. cleanliness/hygiene
3. child-friendliness
4. number of convenient locations
5. value for money
6. taste of food
7. friendliness of employees
8. healthiness of food
9. ingredients of the food
10. opening hours
11. waiting times
12. freshness of food
13. coziness
14. boring (r)
15. visit is an experience
16. special deals
17. wide variety of choices
18. interior design
19. atmosphere
20. quality of the service

Notes:
r = reversed-scored item
Attributes were measured on 7-point scales with the anchors “does not describe very well” and “describes perfectly well”.
Example of question framing: “The quality of the food is high”.

Appendix 3: Description of the Stimuli (Chapter 6)

Brand	**Ad Description**	**Positioning Strategy**[a]
	Ads in Study 1	
Mitsubishi Colt	The ad highlights following features: "*MIVEC motors, ABS, EBD, power steering, 4 airbags, power windows, largest passenger compartment of its class"* as well as price information.	Feature
VW Polo	The ad displays the Volkswagen Polo, in which the safety of the ad is claimed by stating "*The new Polo, reassuringly safe"*.	Direct Benefit
Pegeut 107	The ad positions the Peugeot 107 as a car that highlights the (driving) fun associated with the car; specifically, the ad states *"Little Rescal"*.	Indirect Benefit
Seat Altea	The ad shows the Seat Altea with the words *"keep the rebel alive"* and uses "bad boy" John McEnroe with his broken tennis racket as an endorser.	Surrogate: User
	Study 2	
Toyota Corolla	The ad displays the car with the words: *"5 years guarantee*" and "*the most reliable of its class*" pointing to the benefits of the car.	Direct Benefit
Toyota Corolla	The ad shows the Toyota Corolla in the form of a red hot chili and states *"The hottest special edition of the year*" and "*Now with HOT extras inclusive!*" drawing to the experiential value of the car.	Indirect Benefit

[a]based on Table 2 (Chapter 2).

Appendix 4: Sample Questionnaire for Study 8 (Chapter 5)

Q18a. Im Vergleich zu konkurrierenden (anderen) Handymarken ist diese Marke

Sony Ericsson			Samsung		
ident	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	komplett verschieden	ident	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	komplett verschieden
ähnlich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	sehr unterschiedlich	ähnlich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	sehr unterschiedlich
hebt sich nicht ab	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	hebt sich ab	hebt sich nicht ab	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	hebt sich ab
gleich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	anders	gleich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	anders

Q18b. Wie ist ihre Einstellung/Meinung bezüglich dieser Handymarken:

Sony Ericsson			Samsung		
schlecht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	Gut	schlecht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	gut
mag sie nicht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	mag sie	mag sie nicht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	mag sie
negativ	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	positiv	negativ	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	positiv
gefällt mir nicht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	gefällt mir	gefällt mir nicht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	gefällt mir

Q18c. Im Vergleich zu konkurrierenden (anderen) Handymarken ist diese Marke

Sony Ericsson			Samsung		
nicht einzigartig	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	einzigartig	nicht einzigartig	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	einzigartig
gewöhnlich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	außergewöhnlich	gewöhnlich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	außergewöhnlich
typisch	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	atypisch	typisch	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	atypisch
ganz normal	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	Etwas Besonderes	ganz normal	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	etwas Besonderes
kein unter-schiedlicher Produkttyp	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	ein unterschied-licher Produkttyp	kein unter-schiedlicher Produkttyp	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	ein unterschied-licher Produkttyp
stellt keine eigene Produkt-kategorie dar	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	stellt eine eigene Produktkategorie dar	stellt keine eigene Produkt-kategorie dar	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	stellt eine eigene Produktkategorie dar

Q18d. Der Unterschied zwischen dieser Handymarke und Handymarken der Konkurrenz ist

Sony Ericsson			Samsung		
nicht glaubhaft	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	glaubhaft	nicht glaubhaft	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	glaubhaft
nicht plausibel	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	plausibel	nicht plausibel	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	plausibel
nicht überzeugend	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	überzeugend	nicht überzeugend	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	überzeugend
nicht vertrauens-würdig	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	vertrauens-würdig	nicht vertrauens-würdig	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	vertrauens-würdig
unrealistisch	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	realistisch	unrealistisch	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	realistisch

Q18e. Diese Handymarke ist

Sony Ericsson			Samsung		
Konkurrenzmarken klar unterlegen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	Konkurrenzmarken klar überlegen	Konkurrenzmarken klar unterlegen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	Konkurrenzmarken klar überlegen
ist von niedrigerer Qualität als Konkurrenzmarken	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	von höherer Qualität als Konkurrenzmarken	ist von niedrigerer Qualität als Konkurrenzmarken	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	von höherer Qualität als Konkurrenzmarken
gibt Kunden keinen Grund sie zu kaufen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	gibt Kunden einen Grund sie zu kaufen	gibt Kunden keinen Grund sie zu kaufen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	gibt Kunden einen Grund sie zu kaufen
keine Qualitätsmarke	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	eine Qualitätsmarke	keine Qualitätsmarke	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	eine Qualitätsmarke

Q18f. Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass Sie gegebenenfalls ein Handy dieser Marke kaufen?

Sony Ericsson			Samsung		
sehr unwahrscheinlich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	sehr wahrscheinlich	sehr unwahrscheinlich	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	sehr wahrscheinlich
voraussichtlich nicht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	voraussichtlich	voraussichtlich nicht	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	voraussichtlich
würde niemals kaufen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	würde ganz sicherlich kaufen	würde niemals kaufen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	würde ganz sicherlich kaufen
würde Kauf sicher nicht in Betracht ziehen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	würde Kauf ernsthaft in Betracht ziehen	würde Kauf sicher nicht in Betracht ziehen	③---②---①---⓪---①---②---③	würde Kauf ernsthaft in Betracht ziehen

Appendix 5: Sample Questionnaire for Study 9 (Chapter 5)

Forschungsstudie zur Positionierung von Fastfoodmarken

1. Haben Sie in den Letzten drei Monaten Essen bei einem Fast Food Restaurant gekauft?

O Ja O Nein ------(**Interviewer:** wenn Nein Abbruch)

2. Waren Sie schon einmal in einem dieser Restaurants? (McDonald’s, Burger King, Nordsee?)

O Ja O Nein ------ (**Interviewer**: wenn Nein Abbruch)

3. Sind Sie mit diesen Fastfoodanbietern gut vertraut?

(Marke)	(Marke)	(Marke)

O Ja O Nein ------ (**Interviewer**: wenn Nein Abbruch)

A. Was ist Ihre Meinung zu den folgenden Fastfood (Schnellimbiss) Anbietern

	McDonald`s	**Burger King**	**Nordsee**
	Trifft nicht zu – **Trifft voll zu**	**Trifft nicht zu** – **Trifft voll zu**	**Trifft nicht zu** – **Trifft voll zu**
Hohe Qualität des Essens	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Sauberkeit und Hygiene der Lokale ist hoch	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Kinderfreundlich	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Leicht erreichbare Standorte	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Gutes Preis/Leistungs-Verhältnis	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Schmeckt sehr gut	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Freundliche Mitarbeiter	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Gesund	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Beste Zutaten	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Lange Öffnungszeiten	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Kurze Wartezeiten	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Frisches Essen	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Gemütlich	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Langweilig	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Besuch ist ein Erlebnis	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Gute Sonderangebote	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Umfangreiche Auswahl an Speisen	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7

Lokale sind stilvoll eingerichtet	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Ein Ort zum Wohlfühlen	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7
Bestes Service	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	1–2–3–4–5–6–7

B. Im Vergleich zu konkurrierenden (anderen) Fastfoodanbietern ist……… *(**Interviewer**: kann sich auf alle Fastfoodanbieter beziehen einschließlich denen die hier genannt sind; die jeweilige Marke sagen)*

	McDonald`s			**Burger King**			**Nordsee**	
ident	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	verschieden	ident	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	verschieden	ident	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	verschieden
ähnlich	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	unterschiedlich	ähnlich	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	unterschiedlich	ähnlich	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	unterschiedlich
hebt sich nicht ab	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	hebt sich ab	hebt sich nicht ab	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	hebt sich ab	hebt sich nicht ab	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	hebt sich ab
gleich	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	ganz anders	gleich	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	ganz anders	gleich	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	ganz anders

C.Wie ist ihre Meinung bezüglich diesen Fastfoodanbietern:

	McDonald`s			**Burger King**			**Nordsee**	
schlecht	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	gut	schlecht	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	gut	schlecht	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	gut
negativ	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	positiv	negativ	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	positiv	negativ	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	positiv
mag nicht	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	mag	mag nicht	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	mag	mag nicht	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	mag

gefällt mir nicht	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	gefällt mir	gefällt mir nicht	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	gefällt mir	gefällt mir nicht	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	gefällt mir
nicht wünschens-wert	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	wünschens-wert	nicht wünschens-wert	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	wünschens-wert	nicht wünschens-wert	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	wünschens-wert

D. Im <u>Vergleich</u> zu konkurrierenden (anderen) Fastfoodanbietern ist……… (**Interviewer:** Marke vom Anbieter sagen)

	McDonald`s			**Burger King**			**Nordsee**	
nicht einzigartig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	einzigartig	nicht einzigartig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	einzigartig	nicht einzigartig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	einzigartig
gewöhnlich	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	außergewöhnlich	Gewöhnlich	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	außergewöhnlich	gewöhnlich	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	außergewöhnlich
typisch	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	atypisch	Typisch	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	atypisch	typisch	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	atypisch
ganz normal	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	etwas Besonderes	ganz normal	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	etwas Besonderes	ganz normal	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	etwas Besonderes
kein unter-schiedlicher Fastfoodtyp	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	ein unterschiedlicher Fastfoodtyp	kein unter-schiedlicher Fastfoodtyp	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	ein unterschiedlicher Fastfoodtyp	kein unter-schiedlicher Fastfoodtyp	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	ein unterschiedlicher Fastfoodtyp
stellt keine eigene Fastfood-kategorie dar	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	stellt eine eigene Fastfoodkategori e dar	stellt keine eigene Fastfood-kategorie dar	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	stellt eine eigene Fastfoodkategorie dar	stellt keine eigene Fastfood-kategorie dar	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	stellt eine eigene Fastfoodkategorie dar

E. Die <u>Unterschiede</u> zwischen diesem und konkurrierenden (anderen) Fastfoodanbietern sind…….

	McDonald`s			**Burger King**			**Nordsee**	
nicht glaubhaft	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	glaubhaft	nicht glaubhaft	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	glaubhaft	nicht glaubhaft	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	glaubhaft
nicht plausibel	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	plausibel	nicht plausibel	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	plausibel	nicht plausibel	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	plausibel
nicht überzeugend	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	überzeugend	nicht überzeugend	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	überzeugend	nicht überzeugend	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	überzeugend
nicht ver-trauenswürdig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	vertrauens-würdig	nicht ver-trauenswürdig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	vertrauens-würdig	nicht ver-trauenswürdig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	vertrauens-würdig
unrealistisch	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	realistisch	unrealistisch	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	realistisch	unrealistisch	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	realistisch
unglaubwürdig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	glaubwürdig	unglaubwürdig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	glaubwürdig	unglaubwürdig	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	glaubwürdig

F. Dieser Fastfoodanbieter ist

	McDonald`s			**Burger King**			**Nordsee**	
anderen Fastfood-anbietern klar unterlegen	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	anderen Fastfood-anbietern klar überlegen	anderen Fastfood-anbietern klar unterlegen	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	anderen Fastfood-anbietern klar überlegen	anderen Fastfood-anbietern klar unterlegen	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	anderen Fastfood-anbietern klar überlegen
von niedrigerer Qualität als andere Fastfood-anbieter	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	Von höherer Qualität als andere Fastfoodanbieter	von niedrigerer Qualität als andere Fastfood-anbieter	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	von höherer Qualität als andere Fastfoodanbieter	von niedrigerer Qualität als andere Fastfood-anbieter	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3	von höherer Qualität als andere Fastfoodanbieter

geben Kunden keine Besuchs(Kauf)-gründe	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	geben Kunden triftige (starke) Besuchs(Kauf)-gründe	geben Kunden keine Besuchs(Kauf)-gründe	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	geben Kunden triftige (starke) Besuchs(Kauf)-gründe	geben Kunden keine Besuchs(Kau f)-gründe	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	geben Kunden triftige (starke) Besuchs(Kauf)-gründe
keine Qualitätsmarke	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	eine Qualitätsmarke	keine Qualitätsmarke	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	eine Qualitätsmarke	keine Qualitätsmar ke	-3- -2- -1- -0- +1- +2- +3	eine Qualitätsmarke

G. Soziodemographische Fragen

Alter: .... Jahre **Geschlecht**: ☐ weiblich ☐ männlich **Beruf**: ① Student/Schüler ② erwerbstätig ③ in Pension ④ anderes (zB Hausfrau)

Höchste abgeschlossene Ausbildung: ① Lehrabschluss ② Matura ④ Universität/Hochschule

Optional: Wie hoch ist Ihr **verfügbares Einkommen pro Monat** (der Betrag, der dir nach Deckung aller Fixkosten wie Miete, Versicherung etc. zum "Verprassen" zur Verfügung steht): O——O——O——O——O——O

< €200 €200-€400 €401-€600 €601-€800 801-€1.000 >€1.000

Appendix 6: Sample Questionnaire Chapter 6

Markenname: ___________________

Model: ___________________

universität wien

Fragen zum Produkt (in der Werbung) I

Denken Sie das Produkt in der Werbung ist

zweckerfüllend	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht zweckerfüllend
effektiv	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht effektiv
hilfreich	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht hilfreich
nützlich	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nutzlos
problemlösend	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht problemlösend
praktisch	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	unpraktisch

Das Produkt in der Werbung (ist)

macht keine Freude	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	macht Freude
langweilig	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	aufregend
nicht spannend	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	spannend
macht nicht Spass	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	macht Spass
bereitet kein Vergnügen	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	bereitet Vergnügen
nicht cool	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	cool

Denken/Glauben Sie, das Produkt in der Werbung

würde Leuten helfen sich in der Gesellschaft akzeptiert zu fühlen.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	würde Leuten nicht helfen sich in der Gesellschaft akzeptiert zu fühlen.

würde das Erscheinungsbild der Leute verbessern.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	würde das Erscheinungsbild der Leute nicht verbessern.
würde einen guten Eindruck auf andere Leute machen.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	würde keinen guten Eindruck auf andere Leute machen.
würde Leuten gesellschaftliche Anerkennung verschaffen.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	würde Leuten keine gesellschaft-liche Anerkennung verschaffen.
würde das Selbstbewusstsein der Leute verbessern.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	würde das Selbstbewusstsein der Leute nicht verbessern.
spiegelt die Persönlichkeit der Leute wider.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	spiegelt die Persönlichkeit der Leute nicht wider.
würde Leuten helfen sich zu verwirklichen	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	… nicht helfen sich zu verwirklichen

Fragen zum Produkt (in der Werbung) IÍ

Im Vergleich zu konkurrierenden Produkten ist dieses Produkt

ident	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	komplett verschieden
ähnlich	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	sehr unterschiedlich
hebt sich nicht ab	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	hebt sich ab
gleich	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	anders

Zwischen diesem und konkurrierenden Produkten

fallen mir viele Unterschiede ein	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	fallen mir keine Unterschiede ein
gibt es große Unterschiede	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	gibt es kleine Unterschiede

Wie ist ihre Meinung bezüglich dem Produkt (in der Werbung):

gut	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	schlecht

mag es	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	mag es nicht
positiv	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	negativ
gefällt mir	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	gefällt mir nicht
wünschenswert	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht wünschenswert

In Vergleich zu konkurrierenden Produkten ist dieses Produkt

einzigartig	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht einzigartig
außergewöhnlich	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	gewöhnlich
atypisch	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	typisch
etwas besonderes	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	ganz normal
ein unterschiedlicher _________ (Produkt)-Typ	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	kein unterschiedlicher _________ (Produkt)-Typ.

Dieses Produkt

stellt eine eigene Produktkategorie (-klasse) dar.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	stellt keine eigene Produktkategorie (-klasse) dar.
ist alleine in seiner Produktkategorie (-klasse).	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	ist nicht alleine in seiner Produktkategorie (-klasse).

Die Unterschiede zwischen dem Produkt in der Werbung und Konkurrenzprodukten sind

glaubhaft	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht glaubhaft
glaubwürdig	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	unglaubwürdig
plausibel	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht plausibel
überzeugend	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht überzeugend
vertrauenswürdig	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	nicht vertrauenswürdig
realistisch	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	unrealistisch

Dieses Produkt

ist Produkten der Konkurrenz klar überlegen.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	ist Produkten der Konkurrenz klar unterlegen.
von höherer Qualität als Konkurrenzprodukte.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	ist von niedrigerer Qualität als Konkurrenzprodukte.
gibt Kunden einen Grund es zu kaufen.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	gibt Kunden keinen Grund es zu kaufen.

würde ich kaufen.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	würde ich nicht kaufen.

Fragen zur Marke (es geht nur um die Marke)

Die Marke des Produktes

mag ich	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	mag ich nicht
ist besser als andere Marken	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	ist schlechter als andere Marken
genießt hohes Ansehen	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	hat ein schlechtes Ansehen
ist sehr gut	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	ist sehr schlecht

Produktspezifische Fragen

	Verglichen mit anderen Produkten,	**stimme überhaupt nicht zu** ... **stimme stark zu**
P4	wäre der Kauf dieses Produktes riskant.	①----②----③----④----⑤----⑥----⑦
P5	würde mir der Kauf dieses Produktes Sorgen bereiten	①----②----③----④----⑤----⑥----⑦

P6	würde mich der Erwerb dieses Produktes beunruhigen	①----②----③----④----⑤----⑥----⑦
P8	wäre der Erwerb dieses Produktes gewagt	①----②----③----④----⑤----⑥----⑦

Mit dem Produkt in der Werbung sind Sie

nicht vertraut	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	vertraut
unerfahren	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	erfahren
kenntnislos	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	kenntnisreich

Bezüglich des Produktes:

Es ist ein globales Produkt.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	Es ist ein lokales (regionales) Produkt.
Ich glaube nicht, dass es außerhalb Europas erhältlich ist	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	Ich glaube, dass das Produkt außerhalb Europas erhältlich ist.
Dieses Produkt wird nur in Österreich verkauf	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦	Dieses Produkt wird weltweit verkauft

Fragen zur Werbung

Die Werbung betreffend: ***(bezieht sich nur auf die Kreativität/Design der Werbı***		**stimme überhaupt nicht zu** ... **stimme stark zu**
W1	Die Anzeige (Werbung) ist sehr kreativ gemacht.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
W2	Mir gefällt das Design der Anzeige	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
W3	Die Anzeige ist raffiniert und intelligent.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
W4	Ich glaube die Anzeige ist unterhaltsam.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
W5	Die Werbung ist mitreißend und begeistert mich.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
W6	Die Werbung ist amüsant	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦

Fragen zur Produktkategorie

		sehr wenig … sehr viel
K1	Wie viel glauben Sie über ___________ (Produktklasse) zu wissen?	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
K2	Verglichen mit Ihren Freunden und Bekannten, wie viel glauben Sie über________ zu wissen?	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
K3	Verglichen mit einem ___________ Experten, wie viel glauben Sie über ___________ zu wissen?	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦

		stimme überhaupt nicht zu … stimme stark zu
K4	Im Allgemeinen habe ich ein starkes Interesse an dieser Produktkategorie.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
K5	Diese Produktkategorie ist mir sehr wichtig.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦
K6	Diese Produktkategorie bedeutet mir viel.	①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤-----⑥-----⑦

Fragen zur Person

F1 Alter: .... Jahre Geschlecht: ☐ weiblich ☐ männlich

F2 Beruf: ① Student/Schüler ② erwerbstätig ③ in Pension ④ anderes (zB Hausfrau)

F3 Höchste abgeschlossene Ausbildung: ① Lehrabschluss ② Matura ④ Universität/Hochschule

F4 Wie hoch ist dein **verfügbares Einkommen pro Monat** (der Betrag, der dir nach Deckung aller Fixkosten wie Miete, Versicherung etc. zum "Verprassen" zur Verfügung steht):

O———O———O———O———O———O

< €100 €200 €300 €400 €500 > €500

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung!

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Positionierung zählt zu den Kerngebieten im modernen Marketing. Trotz der Wichtigkeit des Positionierungskonzeptes gibt es jedoch nur eine geringe Anzahl an empirischen Forschungsstudien, die den Einfluss von Produktpositionierungsstrategien auf die Kundenwahrnehmung untersuchen. Weiters stellt die Frage nach der Messung des Positionierungserfolgs eines Produktes ein unzureichend geklärtes Problem in der Marketingforschung dar. Diese Dissertation präsentiert drei komplementäre Studien, die Einblicke in diese Forschungslücken geben sollten. Die erste Studie untersucht den Einfluss von verschiedenen Typen von Positionierungsstrategien auf das Kategorisierungsverhalten von Konsumenten. Die Resultate der qualitativen Studie belegen, dass Konsumenten Produkte basierend auf deren Positionierungsstrategien klassifizieren. Anders formuliert, Konsumenten gruppieren Produkte, die konzeptionell ähnliche Positionierungselemente verwenden, in die gleiche Kategorie. Die zweite Hauptstudie der vorliegenden Dissertation beschäftigt sich mit der Entwicklung und Validierung einer umfassenden Skala zur Messung von Positionierungserfolg aus Konsumentensicht. Positionierungseffektivität wird als multidimensionales Konstrukt, bestehend aus konzeptionell-relevanten Dimensionen (nämlich „favorability“, „dissimilarity“, „uniqueness“, und „credibility“) modelliert. Insgesamt werden neun komplementäre Teilstudien präsentiert, die auf die Testung Dimensionalität, Reliabilität und Validität der Skala abzielen. Um die Generalisierbarkeit und Stabilität des Messinstruments zu gewährleisten, werden Daten von verschieden Produktkategorien für den Skalenentwicklungsprozess verwendet. Das Augenmerk der dritten Studie in dieser Dissertation richtet sich auf die Frage ob die Anwendung von verschiedenen Positionierungsstrategien (z. B., Positionierung basierend auf Attributen) zu besser positionierten Produkten führt als die Anwendung von Alternativstrategien (z. B., Positionierung basierend auf Personenmerkmale). Zu diesem Zweck werden zwei komplementäre Teilstudien (within- and between-subjects design) durchgeführt, die den direkten Einfluss von vier verschiedenen Produktpositionierungsstrategien auf den Positionierungserfolg, gemessen aus Konsumentensicht, untersuchen. Dabei wird der Einfluss von produktspezifischen, produktkategorie-spezifischen und soziodemographischen Variablen kontrolliert. Konsistent mit den Hypothesen, die aus einer umfangreichen Literaturrecherche abgeleitet werden, können signifikante Unterschiede zwischen den einzelnen Strategien nachgewiesen werden. Die

Dissertation endet mit einer Diskussion der theoretischen, methodischen und praktischen Implikationen der Arbeit. Weiters wird auf die Limitationen der einzelnen Studien, und die sich daraus ergebenden Möglichkeiten für zukünftige Forschung, eingegangen.

CURRICULUM VITAE

08/2004– Current	Research and Teaching Assistant at the Department of Business Studies (Chair of International Marketing), University of Vienna.
03/1998 – 05/2003	Studies in Business Administration at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration and the University of Texas at Austin
Membership in Academic Organizations	American Marketing Association Academy of Marketing Science European Marketing Academy

Publications: Working Papers and Papers Currently Under Review

1. Fuchs, Christoph and Martin Schreier, "How Consumers React to Firms that Foster Customer Empowerment in New Product Development: An Empirical Exploration," *Journal of Product Innovation Management,* 1st round (invitation to revise and resubmit)

2. Fuchs, Christoph and Adamantios Diamantopoulos, "Using Single-Item Measures for Construct Measurement in Management Research: Conceptual Issues and Application Guidelines," currently under review at *Die Betriebswirtschaft,* 1st round (decision pending).

3. Schreier, Martin and Christoph Fuchs (2008), "Company Designers Versus Users through the Customer Lens: Who Holds More Creative Potential?", *Proceedings of the AMA Winter Educators' Conference,* (Feb. 15-18, 2008, Austin, Texas, USA) .

4. Schreier, Martin and Christoph Fuchs, "Common Design by Users Through the Lens of Consumers," *Working Paper*.