Positioning – a literature review

Natasha Saqib

Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to review state-of-the-art literature on product/brand positioning to re-examine the positioning concept and developing a more comprehensive definition from a theoretical viewpoint.

Design/methodology/approach – A systematic review of positioning was conducted. The review conformed to a rigorous set of core principles: it was systematic (organized according to a method designed to address the review questions), transparent (explicitly stated), reproducible and updatable and synthesized (summarized the evidence relating to the review question).

Findings – The literature review reveals that there is lack of coherent definition for positioning, and there is no mutual agreement among marketing scholars and practitioners about the exact meaning of the concept. Therefore, comprehensive definition of positioning encompassing the five underlying positioning perspectives (competition; empty slot/mind; consumers' perception, differentiation and competitive advantage) is suggested.

Research limitations/implications – This paper will be useful for academicians to analyze the current nature of academic research in this area and will provide an added advantage to managers to design and implement positioning strategies for their product/brands that will allow their organizations to gain competitive advantage. This study acknowledges limitations with respect to its exclusive search criteria, which might affect its generalizability.

Social implications – Position and positioning is of relevance in society in broad terms, e.g. in sports, politics and culture. Positioning strategy is discussed and implemented in different industries (business-to-business and consumer), for all kinds of brands (including, for instance, corporate brands) and for "brands" in the very widest sense (such as places or people).

Originality/value – This is the first systematic review of positioning that provides a detailed understanding of the current state of positioning research on a single platform and also draws a comprehensive positioning conceptualization.

Keywords Brand, Literature review, Product and positioning

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

Positioning has received much attention over the past decade and has emerged as a highly influential marketing management paradigm. It is generally accepted that theoretically, practically and strategically positioning has become one of the key components in modern marketing management, both from the academic point of view (Aaker and Shansby, 1982; Arnott, 1992, 1994; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2004; Boatswain, 2015; Crawford *et al.*, 1983; Day *et al.*,1990; Diwan and Bodla, 2011; Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2012; Hooley *et al.*, 2012; Kapferer, 2012; Kotler, 2003; Porter, 1996; Sengupta, 2005; Soundararaj and Rengamani, 2002; Urde and Koch, 2014; Wind, 1982) and from the practical or business point

PSU Research Review
Vol. 5 No. 2, 2021
pp. 141-169
Emerald Publishing Limited
2399-1747
DOI 10.1108/PRR-06-2019-0016

of view (Oglivy, 1983; Ries and Trout, 1981; Trout and Rivkin, 1996). The importance of positioning is emphasized by various authors (Aaker and Shansby, 1982; Arnott, 1992; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2004; Boatswain, 2015; Diwan and Bodla, 2011; Sengupta, 2005) who note that positioning decisions determine the direction of a firm's overall marketing strategy and that an effective marketing mix can only be developed once a company has crafted a distinct positioning strategy. By making the wrong positioning decision, a company could develop a misguided marketing mix and thus go down an undesirable path.

Moreover, because of its inevitable effect on profitability and long-term success of the firm it has been applied to consumer products (Boatswain, 2015; Crawford, 1985; Diwan and Bodla, 2011; Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010), industrial products (Simkin et al., 1985; Iyer et al., 2018; Jalkala and Keranen, 2014; Pandaa et al., 2018), financial services (Burton and Easingwood, 2006; Easingwood and Mahajan, 1989; Kim and Mauborgne, 2000; Shostack, 1987), retail services (Abril et al., 2009; Auken and Lonial,1991; Corstjens and Doyle, 1989; Holmes, 1974) and tourism services (Botha et al., 1999; Gartner, 1989; Javalgi et al., 1995; Pike and Page, 2014). Thus, the wide use of the positioning concept underlines its importance, usefulness and applicability.

The literature is full of statements emphasizing the importance of positioning. Aaker and Shansby (1982) claim that product positioning is so central and critical that it should be considered at the level of a mission statement. Dovel (1990) considers positioning as the essence of a business and backbone of a business plan. While Johansson and Thorelli (1985), Keller (2009), Perreault and McCarthy (1996), Wilson and Fenwick (1978) and Wind (1980) believe that product positioning is the foundation of the firms marketing strategy. More specifically, Maggard (1976) points out that positioning can make a real contribution as a conceptual vehicle through which various marketing concepts (market segmentation, product differentiation, consumer preference, target market and the like) might be synchronized more effectively. Crawford (1985) believes that positioning is meant to drive the entire marketing programme of the organization and sees positioning as an ingredient of total strategy, not just an advertising ploy, product, brand, price, promotion and distribution must all be consistent with the positioning statement. Richarme (2007) argues that marketers should adopt positioning as their fifth "P" and use it in conjunction with the other four "Ps". To a large degree, it is a higher-order "P" that rides on the base of the other four "Ps" and at the same time serves as a bridge to corporate strategy.

Ries and Trout (1986) acknowledge positioning to be the tool of competitive warfare. It helps customers to know the real differences among competing products (DiMingo, 1988) and helps in creating a distinctive image of the brand in consumers' minds (Wells and Prensky, 1996) or brand value by shaping of customers perceptions (Park et al., 1986; Devlin et al., 1995). Schouten and McAlexander (1989) contend that a key benefit of a successful positioning strategy is the partial insulation it gives from the competitive pressures of other firm. Therefore, positioning is an important source of competitive advantage (Cronshaw et al., 1990; Gwin and Gwin, 2003; Sengupta, 2005).

In today's over-communicated and product-saturated consumer world, effective positioning is critical to brand success (Marsden, 2002). There is a positive relationship between the positioning related decision and the brand success that is the success of brand moves around the pivot of positioning decision (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010; Pham and Muthukrishnan, 2002; Punj and Moon, 2002). This not true for only a new brand, it is also of relevance for existing brands when enlarging one's own market potential or when differentiating a brand from its competitors by repositioning (Trommsdorf, 2002). Therefore, branding and positioning are interrelated and positioning is also the cornerstone of brand management (Blankson and Kalafatis, 2007; de Chernatony, 2009; Esch, 2010).

Several authors (Brooksbank, 1994; Day *et al.*, 1990; Fisher, 1991; Mazanec, 1995; Porter, 1996; Urban and Hauser, 1993) are of the view that long-term success of companies and their products depend on how well they are positioned in the marketplace. Positioning has an impact on important consumer-based outcome variables such as higher consumer loyalty, higher brand equity and value (Hartmann *et al.*, 2005; Kalra and Goodstein, 1998; Knox, 2004), less customer vulnerability (Romaniuk, 2001), positively shaped preferences and beliefs about brand value, greater willingness to search for the brand (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007; Trommsdorf and Paulssen, 2005; DiMingo, 1988), perceived price sensitivity (Kalra and Goodstein, 1998), brand affect (Jewell, 2007) and brand salience and recall (Alba and Chattopadhyay, 1986).

In addition to non-financial customer-centred indicators, literature has examined positioning effectiveness in terms of financial performance indicators. Cravens and Piercy (2009) claim that effective positioning of the firm's products is essential in gaining and sustaining superior performance. More specifically, several authors (Blankson *et al.*, 2008; Blankson and Crawford, 2012; Brooksbank, 1994; Clement and Werner-Grotemeyer, 1990; Day *et al.*, 1990; Devlin *et al.*, 1995; Ennew and Mirza, 1995; Fisher, 1991; Kalafatis *et al.*, 2000; Kalra and Goodstein, 1998; Lee and Liao, 2009; Suzuki, 2000) claim that positioning has an impact on the financial performance of a company. Hence, the most important decision firm will ever make about its product is how it should position its product.

This article presents an exhaustive examination of research on positioning, particularly research that addresses the problem of conceptualizing and defining positioning. The basis of the article is a literature review of positioning research published in academic journals between 1969 and 2017. These articles range across such disciplines as marketing, strategic marketing and management. The study uses network analysis and text mining to identify how research defines positioning and discusses how the definitions of positioning have been developed on different perspectives.

2. Concept of positioning
The concept of positioning can be traced back to the 1960s when positioning was popularized in consumer product marketing by pioneers such as Alpert and Gatty (1969) they identified positioning as the differentiation of brands according to consumer perceptions they studied differences in consumers perceptions of the organizations products brands when these were positioned differently using technology as the differentiating dimension over similar products in the market place. However, contemporary writers on the subject of positioning (Hooley *et al.*, 1998; Kotler, 2003; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2004) sustain Ries and Trout were among the first to define positioning and its origins lie in their article "Positioning is a game people play in today's me-too market place" published in the *Industrial Marketing* journal in 1969. In their seminal article, they defined positioning as "as a strategy for 'staking out turf' or 'filling a slot' in the mind of target customers". They then made the concept popular by publishing a series of articles in *Advertising Age* in 1972. "The Positioning Era Cometh", a three-part article series published in *Advertising Age* magazine. The groundbreaking series illustrated perceptual positioning related to the concept of positioning and triggered a profound paradigm shift in how people viewed advertising and marketing and how firms advertised their products. Back in 1982, Ries and Trout published their book, Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind, which placed an entirely different spin on the concept. Ries and Trout (1986), however, consider "Positioning within the context of perceiving the product, merchandise, a service, a company, an institution, or even a person". They noted that positioning is not what is done to the product/service, but rather what is done to the mind of the customer/consumer. According to the authors, the key issue is to

position the offering in the mind of the consumer/customer such that positioning shifts the importance of marketing from the product to the battle for your mind. They further stated that the basic approach of positioning is not to create something new and different, but to manipulate what's already up there in the mind, to retie the connections that already exist.

2.1 Issues in positioning research

Although there is a vast amount of literature on positioning, and this inquisitive verb is in great favour among marketing experts, it is one of the most convoluted concept and is still subject to incomprehension. The concept of positioning is subject to considerable differences in interpretation (Maggard, 1976). It 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. It is, however, important to note that the lack of coherent definitions (Arnott, 1992; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2004; Crosier, 1981; DiMingo, 1988; Holmes, 1973; Maggard, 1976 and Smith and Lusch, 1976) and the difficulties involved in the implementation of the positioning process by practitioners (de Chernatony, 1994) has invariably given rise to comments about the lack of appreciation of the positioning concept (Pollay, 1985). Such dilemma was first expressed in the writings of Aaker and Shansby (1982) who stated that: "positioning means different things to different people". To some, it means the segmentation decision. To others it is an image question. To still others it means selecting which product features to emphasize, and it still holds true today. The foregoing is summarized by Bainsfair (1990) who states that positioning is one of those words which everybody uses but few people understand. According to Rigger (1995), the absence of a rigorous definition is inhibiting both practitioner and academic scholars in developing appropriate means of measuring the operationalization of positioning. Blankson and Kalafatis (2004) highlighted that 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. This state of affairs has given rise to several varying terms associated with the concept, i.e. positioning, position, product positioning, market positioning, etc., but as stated by Arnott (1994), the various terminologies are simply "several sides of the same coin" and complement each other. Further according to Smith and Lusch (1976), product position and brand position are different in scope; product position refers to the objective attributes in relation to other products and brand position refers to subjective attributes in relation to competing brands and this perceived image of the brand does not belong to the product but is the property of consumers perceptions of a brand. However, in broader terms, the terms product positioning and brand positioning usually mean the same thing (Kazmi, 2007).

Urde and Koch (2014) in their review of positioning also claim that there is surprising vagueness of the concept, the lack of the holistic view and the dominance of the market oriented approach. According to Fuchs (2008), positioning is an important, rich and a difficult 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. Chew (2005) also claims that there are little theoretical/conceptual frameworks to guide positioning research and also, the extant positioning literature is largely normative and the issues discussed tend to be subjective. Nevertheless, more research is needed to obtain a better general understanding of the positioning concept. In the following section, the present

review and analysis of definitions of positioning used in articles from 1969 to 2017 are presented.

3. Research method

This study used a systematic literature review to identify articles that define or conceptualize the concept of positioning. Systematic review has its origins in the medical field and has been developed through the Cochrane Collaboration. Some of the features of this approach have been adopted in the social sciences. More recently, the approach has been closely scrutinized to determine its appropriateness in the management field and conclusions indicate that "for practitioners/managers, systematic review helps develop a reliable knowledge base by accumulating knowledge from a range of studies (Brown and Oplatka, 2006).

A systematic literature review is neither a formal full-length literature review nor a meta-analysis, as it conforms to a rigorous set of core principles. It has to be systematic (organized according to a method designed to address the review questions), transparent (explicitly stated), reproducible and updatable and synthesized (summarizes the evidence relating to the review question) (Briner and Denyer, 2012). In other words, it is an essential tool for an evidence-based practice (Briner and Denyer, 2012) that differs from traditional narrative reviews by adopting a replicable, scientific and transparent process (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). In line with MacInnis's (2011) framework for conceptual contributions in marketing, our analysis involves identifying how entities (definitions) are different by revealing the underlying key perspectives in various positioning definitions. The present study examines not only how these definitions are different but also what they have in common.

3.1 Search strategy

The review identified relevant articles, which enabled a transparent, documented research process with criteria for including and excluding articles. The systematic review involved the following steps: State research questions develop guidelines for collecting literature, decide on inclusion and exclusion criteria, develop a comprehensive search plan for finding literature, develop a codebook for classifying and describing literature, code the literature and synthesize the literature (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003; Witell *et al.*, 2016). The present study explores the various ways in which positioning has been defined in the literature to determine whether these definitions are different and also what they have in common.

The main search strategy identified research articles that defined the concept of positioning. To capture this, inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed. The initial inclusion criteria were broad to ensure that all relevant articles were identified, were peer-reviewed empirical or conceptual articles, were published in English and had the definition of positioning. To achieve the mentioned objective, five dominant academic databases including Scopus, Emerald, EBSCOS, Wiley Online Library and Science Direct were explored to identify articles on positioning. This paper reviews literature spanning from 1969 to 2017. Articles were identified in the "article title, abstract, and keywords" section of the said databases using keywords as "positioning"; "product positioning"; and "brand positioning". To keep the search process specific to the objectives of this study, above keywords were used with the subject limits of "Business, management and accounting"; "Social Sciences"; and "Psychology".

3.2 Sample selection

The initial search yielded 1,557 empirical or conceptual articles, 1,502 of which were in English. Figure 1 provides an overview of the selection process
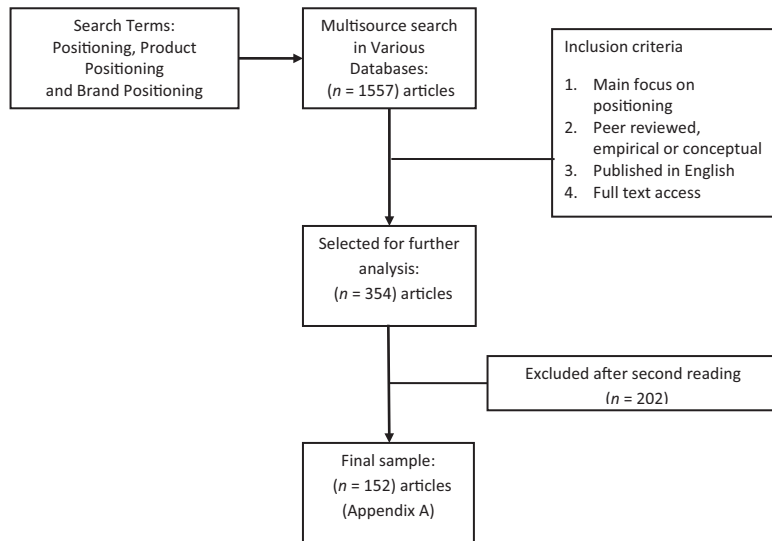
Figure 1.
Flow diagram of
article selection
process

All articles were scanned for relevance, which revealed two clear trends. First, although many of the articles used the term "positioning" in the abstract, few actually defined, conceptualized, or emphasized the term. Second, many of those articles that did specifically focus on positioning did not provide a specific definition of the concept. This lack of a definition provides further merit to our claim that a clear understanding of positioning is missing in the literature. In total, 354 articles that had a clear focus on positioning were selected for further analysis.

Two authors independently read the selected 354 articles to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria and to identify those that defined or conceptualized positioning. Those authors compared and discussed the results; in cases of disagreement, a third author was consulted. The final sample included 152 articles that provided at least one of the following: a clear definition, a conceptualization or an explicit referral to a specific definition or conceptualization of positioning.

3.3 Data analysis
To analyze the sample of articles, a combination of qualitative content analysis and quantitative analysis was used, which is a method for systematically and objectively evaluating texts (Lombard *et al.*, 2002). The analysis was conducted in three steps – classification, coding and text analysis – using qualitative text mining (Feldman and Sanger, 2007). Researchers often face the question of how to summarize text and determine what words and concepts are more significant than others. To go further than merely summarize, quantitative text analysis was used so that our review would be more than just descriptive statistics and qualitatively comparing and present definitions. Textmining, also known as text data mining or knowledge discovery from textual databases, refers to the process of extracting interesting and non-trivial patterns or knowledge from text documents (Feldman and Sanger, 2007; Witell *et al.*, 2016). The rationale for this process builds on social network theory, which describes linkages among social entities or nodes in a network and

the implications of these linkages and can be used on text to determine which words are significant (Xie, 2005; Witell *et al.*, 2016).

All selected articles were downloaded and definitions were captured in digital plain-text format. Each article was then coded according to several predetermined variables, such as context, definitions, approach and type of study (for example, empirical, conceptual) to describe the characteristics of the sample. The study analyzed the specific definition of positioning offered in each article; by "cleaning" the definitions from "positioning is defined as [. . .]" and focusing only on the words included in the actual definition of the concept. In addition, all common words such as "and" or "of" were removed. All text were stemmed, a procedure that involves reducing all words with the same stem to a common form (Lovins, 1968; Witell *et al.*, 2016). By using this method, the five key perspectives were identified in the pool of positioning definitions.

4. Analysis and results

This section begins by describing the year-wise and journal-wise distribution of the 47 identified journal articles. The section then describes the conceptualizations of positioning proposed by previous studies.

4.1 Journal-wise distribution of articles

This classification was done to observe where positioning research is being published. Articles related to positioning were found to be published in 33 reputed peer-reviewed journals in different time periods (Table 1). This number is encouraging for academicians concerned about identifying and selecting a channel for their positioning manuscripts. Among these reputed journals, the dominant outlet of positioning research have been the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Product and Innovation Management* and *Business Horizon.*

4.2 Year-wise distribution of articles

Articles were classified based on their year of publication from 1969 to 2019 to identify the longitudinal pattern of academic research. Figure 2 shows that the emergence of publications on positioning started in 1969, followed by steady growth up until 1989. From 1990 onwards, it is clear from the figure that there is exponential growth till 2009. However, the trend line also indicates a decreasing pattern after 2010, which implies that the literature on positioning is decreasing. After 2010, only six papers were published, which is the lowest number of papers as compared to previous years. This concludes that there is a need for increasing concerns and interests on the positioning topic.

4.3 Conceptualization of positioning in the marketing discipline

To overcome ambiguity and disagreement resulting from insufficient theoretical development of the positioning concept, a systematic review of the literature was discussed. An extensive review of 152 studies published over a period of 48 years reflected in Appendix present a collection of positioning definitions from several well-known authors. The review indicates the following:

- Most of the authors have based their definitions on Ries and Trouts (1969) original description of positioning, i.e. they have made minor adjustments, but constructed their basic reasoning upon the words of Ries and Trout.
- There are many diverse interpretations of positioning as each author has preferred his/her own definition and has viewed positioning through different perspectives.

1		*British Food Journal*	1
2		*Business Horizons*	3
3		*Business Horizons*	1
4		*Business Strategy Review*	1
5		*European Business Review*	1
6		*Industrial Marketing Management*	3
7		*International journal of Service Industry Management*	1
8		*International Journal of Bank Marketing*	1
9		*International Journal of Business Excellence*	1
10		*International Journal of Research in Marketing*	1
11		*Journal of Advertising*	1
12		*Journal of Advertising Research*	1
13		*Journal of Financial Services Marketing*	1
14		*Journal of International Business Studies*	1
15		*Journal of Irish Business and Administrative Research,*	1
16		*Journal of Knowledge Management, Economics and Information Technology*	1
17		*Journal of Marketing*	2
18		*Journal of Marketing Communications*	2
19		*Journal of Marketing Management*	3
20		*Journal of Marketing Research*	2
21		*Journal of Marketing theory and Practice,*	2
22		*Journal of Product and Brand Management*	2
23		*Journal of Product and Innovation Management*	3
24		*Journal of Services Marketing*	1
25		*Journal of Strategic Marketing*	1
26		*Journal of Vacation Marketing*	1
27		*Marketing Intelligence and Planning*	2
28		*Marketing Letters*	1
29		*Marketing Research*	1
30		*Marketing Science*	1
31		*Planning Review*	1
32		*The Journal of Brand Management*	1
33		*The Journal of Business Strategy*	1

Table 1.
Journal-wise
distribution of
articles

Figure 2.
Number of
positioning
(definition) related
articles (1969–2017)
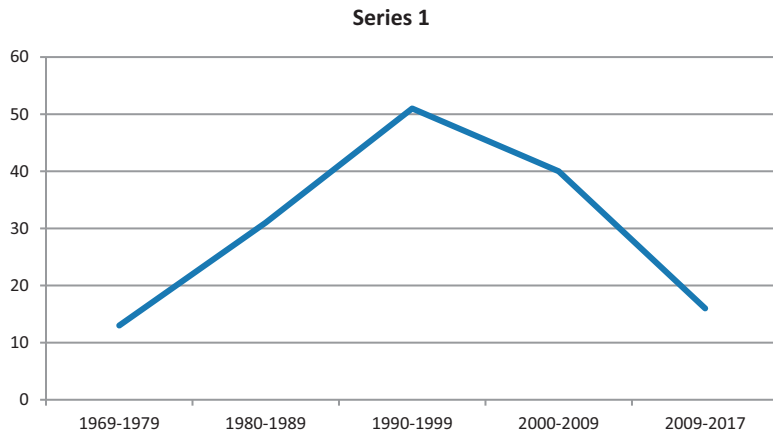
The various perspectives from which positioning are viewed by most of the authors are listed in Table 2. It provides a description of each perspective, and denotes how many times each perspective is found in the pool of positioning definitions.

• Although these core perspectives all represent fundamental elements of the concept that delineates positioning, they were not all captured by every definition. Each perspective is discussed in turn.

4.3.1 P1 – Competition. The "Competition" (P1) perspective as already mentioned is found in 56 of the 152 (39%) definitions listed in Appendix. This perspective underlies the idea that positioning helps in creating an image for the product in relative to separate or apart from competitors. The perspective (P1) is clearly articulated in several of the definitions, and in particular, that offered by Kapferer (2004), "Positioning means emphasizing the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors and appealing to the public". Similarly, Kotler (2003) defined "Positioning as an act of designing a company's offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive position in the target market's minds". Many others (including Aaker and Shansby, 1982; Belch and Belch, 1995; Kotler and Anderson, 1996; Lovelock *et al.*, 2014; McIntyre, 1975) also included this perspective in their definitions.

4.3.2 P2 – Empty slot/mind. The perspective "Empty slot/Mind" (P2) captures the idea that the act of positioning seeks to find and fill an empty slot/window in the minds of the prospective buyers. P2 is evident in several definitions as listed in Appendix. This perspective is also dominant as it was identified in 55 of the 152 (36%) positioning definitions. The "Empty slot/Mind" perspective is rooted in Ries and Trout's (1969) seminal work on positioning and in particular, the popularity of the phrase "filling a slot in the minds of the target customers". P2 is clearly asserted in several definitions, for instance, in Crawford *et al.* (1983) "Product positioning is the act of creating and altering product perceptions in customers' minds". Similarly, P2 is asserted in Wright's (1997) definition stating "Positioning involves and owning a territory in the mind of the consumer it's not just occupying the position, but owning it", and in Boone and Kurtz's (2009) definition stating "Positioning is placing at a certain point or location within a market in the minds of prospective buyers".

S.no	Core perspective	Meaning	Frequency of occurrence
1	Competition	Creating an image for the product in relative to separate or apart from competitors	56
2	Empty slot/mind	Finding and filling an empty slot/window in the minds of the prospective buyers	55
3	Consumers perception	Establishing or evoking changes in consumers' minds regarding offering	34
4	Differentiation	Creating a position which can be differentiated from the competitor	19
5	Competitive advantage	Gaining a competitive advantage by implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors	5

Table 2.
Core perspectives of positioning

4.3.3 P3 – consumers' perception. The perspective "Consumers' perception" (P3) captures the idea that the act of positioning seeks to purposefully establish or evoke changes in consumers' minds regarding offering. P3 is evident in several definitions as listed in Appendix. This perspective was identified in 34 of the 152 (22 %) positioning definitions. P3 is clearly expressed in several of the definitions, and in particular, that offered by Sengupta (1990) "Positioning is the concept of perceptual space and consumers mind is regarded as a geometric perceptual space with product categories and brands occupying different points in that space". Similarly, P3 is expressed in Arnott (1994) "Positioning is the deliberate, proactive, iterative process of defining, modifying and monitoring consumer perceptions of a marketable object".

4.3.4 P4 – Differentiation. The "Differentiation" (P4) perspective is evidenced in 19 of the 152 (13%) positioning definitions as listed in Appendix. This perspective captures the notion that creating meaningful differentiation in an offering represents a key aspect of the concept of positioning. P4 is clearly captured in Myers (1996) definition "Positioning refers to the problem of differentiating one's own product/service from other competing entries in the market place". Likewise, Zikmund and D'Amico (1989) define "Positioning as a process to identify salient product characteristics that differentiate the brand from competitive brands". P4 is consistent with the widely accepted view that differentiating an offering is a cornerstone to the positioning of a product, and therein, the success of the brand in the marketplace (Wind, 1982; Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Hooley *et al.*, 1998).

4.3.5 P5 – Competitive advantage. The "Competitive advantage" perspective, is evident only in 5 of the 152 (3%) of the definitions. This perspective underlies the idea that positioning helps in gaining a competitive advantage by implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors. P5 is clearly articulated in several of the definitions as listed in Appendix, and in particular, that offered by Palmer (1994) "Positioning is an attempt by the organization to distinguish its offerings from those of its competitors in order to give it a competitive advantage within the market". Hooley *et al.* (1998) also articulated the same in their definition, "Positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive advantage". P6 is consistent with the widely accepted view that a well-positioned brand enhances the overall competitiveness of the brand and generates a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm Aaker and McLoughlin (2007), Blankson *et al.* (2013), Ghodeshwar (2008), Hooley *et al.* (2012), Kotler (2003), Porter (1996). Accepting the view that competitive advantage represents the cornerstone of the positioning concept, the researcher found it surprising that only five definitions from the pool captured this perspective.

Based on (1) the core perspectives as discussed in the foregoing Section (2) the recognized need for an universally-accepted definition of positioning (3) the inconsistencies of the core meaning of the positioning construct and the researcher's conviction that marketing research begins with a clear underlying meaning of the phenomenon in question, following definition of positioning encompassing the five underlying positioning perspectives is suggested:

Positioning is a strategy of finding the desired consumer perception of product/brand and filling an empty slot/window in the minds of the target customers by creating and communicating an image which differentiates its unique position from competitor to gain a competitive advantage in the market.

5. Research implications

On the theoretical front, this review makes multiple contributions. First, the study presents a comprehensive systematic review of 152 identified articles in the marketing discipline to reveal how researchers have explored this concept so far and presents a route for future research. Second, this review makes a contribution to understanding what positioning is. Specifically, this research contributes by identifying the key perspectives in definitions of positioning. Gaining insights from existing conceptualizations of the construct and supporting that by the theoretical foundations, a concise definition, broad in scope and perspective, has been derived, the suggested definition will provide clearer comprehension of the concept of positioning and a base on which to advance empirical research on positioning. Third, by providing the distribution schema of customer engagement articles based on different criteria, this study is believed to serve as a valuable tool for researchers to understand the current scenario of positioning research in the marketing discipline and aid in moving the field forward. On the practical front, this study exhibits the favorable outcomes organizations can derive by having a proper definition of positioning. Developing and implementing an organization's positioning is seen as a crucial element of an organization's strategic orientation to markets. The more an organization knows about positioning, the better adept it will be to enact so. Therefore, understanding positioning is imperative in that regard; this review will help organizations comprehend that better. Further, understanding how various perspectives are connected with positioning will help managers to design and implement positioning strategies for their products/brands and allow organizations to gain competitive advantage.

6. Conclusion and limitations

The goal of this systematic review was to review state-of-the-art literature on product/brand positioning to re-examine the positioning concept and developing a more comprehensive definition from a theoretical viewpoint. Positioning has been defined in several nuanced ways. This fragmentation can be misleading, and a systematic review can provide a useful analysis to highlight the fragmentation and propose boundaries to better define positioning. However, a systematic review also has its own methodological limitations, including the level of precision. To tackle this limitation, we started broadly and then focused on specific databases and research terms. Although some dimensions might have been missed, we believe our conclusions obtained a reasonable level of redundancy in the databases that we used for this study. We also wanted to contribute to the literature and hope that further research on this important strategic concept will refine and clarify our results. This systematic review presented the results of an analysis and synthesis of the broader positioning literature. A review of 152 published positioning studies from the literatures identified the various perspectives from which positioning are viewed by most of the authors. The five most frequently identified perspectives were competition, empty slot/mind, consumers' perception, differentiation and competitive advantage. Importantly, the findings of this review confirm that despite the relatively established body of literature, there is there is lack of coherent definition for positioning, and there is no mutual agreement among marketing scholars and practitioners about the exact meaning of the concept.

References

Aaker, D.A. and McLoughlin, D. (2007), *Strategic Market Management*, European Edition, John Wiley & Sons, West Sussex.

Aaker, D.A. and Shansby, J. (1982), "Positioning your product", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 56-62.

Abril, C., Gavilan, D.Y. and Avello, M. (2009), "Influence of the perception of different types of store brands on consumer typologies and satisfaction levels", *Innovative Marketing*, Vol. 5, pp. 475-482.

Adcock, D., Bradfield, R., Halborg, A. and Ross, C. (1993), *Marketing-Principles and Practice*, Pitman Publishing, London.

Alba, J.W. and Chattopadhyay, A. (1986), "Salience effects in brand recall", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 363-369.

Alpert, L. and Gatty, R. (1969), "Product positioning by behavioral life-styles", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 65-69.

Antonides, G. and Van Raaij, F.W. (1998), *Consumer Behaviour: A European Perspective*, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester.

Apostolidis, P., Kioulafas, K.K., Sohoritis, Y. and Viachakis, N. (1989), "The ABC's of positioning", *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, Vol. 15, pp. 1063-1077.

Armstrong, G. and Kotler, P. (2012), *Marketing: An Introduction*, 11th ed., Pearson Education, London.

Arnott, D.C. (1992), "Bases of financial services positioning in the personal pension, life assurance and personal equity plan sectors", PhD thesis, Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, Manchester.

Arnott, D.C. (1994), "Positioning: on defining the concept", *Marketing Educators' Group (MEG) Conference Proceedings*, *University of Ulster, Coleraine*.

Auken, S. and Lonial, S.C. (1991), "Multidimensional scaling and retail positioning: an appraisal", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 11-18.

Bainsfair, P. (1990), "Create your own context and find a place in a public mind", *Campaign*, Vol. 16, (November), p. 18.

Baker, M.J. (1992), *Marketing Strategy and Management*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, London.

Baker, M.J. and Hart, S.J. (2007), *Product Strategy and Management*, 2nd ed., Pearson Education, Harlow.

Batra, S.K. and Kazmi, S. (2008), *Consumer Behaviour*, 2nd ed., Excel Books, New Delhi.

Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A. (1995), *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective*, Richard D. Irwin, Chicago, IL.

Berkowitz, N.E., Kerin, A.R. and Rudelius, W. (1989), *Marketing*, 2nd ed., Irwin, London.

Berkowitz, E.N., Kerin, R.A., Hartley, S.W. and Rudelius, W. (1992), *Marketing*, 3rd ed., Irwin, London.

Berry, L.L. (1982), "Retail positioning strategies for the 1980's", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 25 No. 6, pp. 45-50.

Bhat, S. and Reddy, S.K. (1998), "Symbolic and functional positioning of brands", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 32-43.

Blankson, C. and Crawford, J.C. (2012), "Impact of positioning strategies on service firm performance", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 65, pp. 311-316.

Blankson, C. and Kalafatis, S.P. (2004), "The development and validation of a scale measuring consumer/customer-derived generic typology of positioning strategies", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 20 Nos 1/2, pp. 5-43.

Blankson, C. and Kalafatis, S.P. (2007), "Positioning strategies of international and multicultural-oriented service brands", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 6, pp. 435-450.

Blankson, C., Kalafatis, S.P., Cheng, J.M.S. and Hadjicharalambous, C. (2008), "Impact of positioning strategies on corporate performance", *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 106-122.

Blankson, C., Cowan, K., Crawford, J., Kalafatis, S., Singh, J. and Coffie, S. (2013), "A review of the relationships and impact of market orientation and market positioning on organisational performance", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 6, pp. 499-512.

Blythe, J. (2005), *Marketing Strategy*, McGraw-Hill Education, Berkshire.

Blythe, J. (2008), *Essentials of Marketing*, *Pearson* Education, London.

Boatswain, M.L. (2015), "Decoy effects in brand positioning", Unpublished PhD thesis, Kingston University, West Yorkshire.

Boone, L.E. and Kurtz, D.L. (2009), *Contemporary Business 2010 Update*, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester.

Botha, C., Crompton, J. and Kim, S. (1999), "Developing a revised competitive position for sun/lost city, South Africa", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 341-352.

Bradley, M.F. and Mealey, J.A. (1984), "Brand positioning in a consumer products market", *Journal of Irish Business and Administrative Research*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 12-20.

Briner, D. and Denyer, D. (2012), "Systematic review and evidence synthesis as a practice and scholarship tool", in Rousseau, D.M. (Ed.), *Handbook of Evidence-Based Management: Companies, Classrooms and Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 112-129.

Brooksbank, R. (1994), "The anatomy of marketing positioning strategy", *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 10-15.

Brown, J.H. and Oplatka, I. (2006), "Universities in a competitive global marketplace: a systematic review of the literature on higher education marketing", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 316-338.

Brown, H.E. and Sims, J.T. (1976), "Market segmentation, product differentiation and market positioning as alternative marketing strategies", in Bernhardt, K.L. (Ed.), *Marketing: 1776-1976 and beyond, Educators Conference Proceedings Series No. 39*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL, pp. 483-487.

Burton, J. and Easingwood, C.J. (2006), "A positioning typology of consumers' perceptions of the benefits offered by successful service brands", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 301-316.

Buzzel, R.N., Mathews, J. and Levitt, T. (1972), *Marketing: A Contemporary Analysis*, Mc Graw Hill, New York, NY.

Chandrasekar, K.S. (2010), *Marketing Management Text and Cases*, Tata McGraw-Hill Publication, New Delhi.

Cherunilam, F. (2010), *Business Policy and Strategic Management*, Himalaya punishing Houses, New Delhi.

Chew, C. (2005), "Strategic marketing planning and positioning in voluntary nonprofit organizations: empirical findings and implications for British charitable organizations", Aston Business School Research Paper, Aston University, Birmingham, Vol. RP0506 No. May.

Clement, M. and Werner-Grotemeyer, H. (1990), "The iterative positioning process: an internal approach from the pharmaceutical industry", *Marketing and Research Today*, Vol. 18, pp. 85-96.

Clow, K.E. and Baack, D. (2009), *Marketing Management: A Customer-Oriented Approach*, Sage Publications, London.

Corstjens, M. and Doyle, P. (1989), "Evaluating alternative retail repositioning strategies", *Marketing Science*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 170-180.

Cravens, D.W. and Piercy, N.F. (2009), *Strategic Marketing*, 9th ed., McGraw Hill Irwin, Boston.

Crawford, C.M. (1985), "A new positioning topology", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 243-253.

Crawford, C.M., Urban, D.J. and Buzas, T.E. (1983), "A conceptual review and taxonomy of alternatives", working paper No 354, University of Michigan.

Cronshaw, M., Cubbin, J. and Davis, E. (1990), "The importance of product positioning: successful entry in the national newspaper market", *Business Strategy Review*, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 53-73.

Crosier, K. (1981), "Ladders in the mind Occasional Reports Series, No. 2", University of Strathclyde: Department of Marketing, Glasgow.

Czinkota, M.R. and Ronkainen, L.A. (2004), *International Marketing*, 4th ed., SouthWestern, Mason.

Dahlen, M., Lange, F. and Smith, T. (2010), *Marketing Communications: A Brand Narrative Approach*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY.

Darling, J.R. (2001), "Successful competitive positioning: the key for entry into the European consumer market", *European Business Review*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 209-221.

Day, G.S. (1984a), *Strategic Market Planning*, West Publishing Company, St. Paul, MN.

Day, G.S. (1984b), *Strategic Market Planning*, West Publishing, New York, NY.

Day, G., Weitz, B. and Wensley, R. (1990), *The Interface of Marketing Strategy*, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, pp. 387-412.

de Chernatony, L. (1994), "Developing a more effective brand positioning", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 1 No. 6, pp. 373-379.

de Chernatony, L. (2009), "Brand extension effects on brand equity: a cross-national study", *Journal of Euromarketing*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 71-88.

Delozier, W.M. and Woodside, A.G. (1978), *Marketing Management*, Merril Publishing Company, Columbus, OH.

DeSarbo, W.S., Park, J. and Rao, V.R. (2011), "Deriving joint space positioning maps from consumer preference ratings", *Marketing Letters*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 1-14.

Devlin, J., Ennew, C. and Mirza, M. (1995), "Organizational positioning in retail financial services", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 11 Nos 1/3, pp. 119-132.

Dibb, S. and Simkin, L. (1993), "The strength of branding and positioning in services", *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 25-35.

Dillon, W.R., Domzal, T. and Madden, T.J. (1986), "Evaluating alternative product positioning strategies", *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 29-35.

DiMingo, E. (1988), "The fine art of positioning", *Journal of Business Strategy*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 34-39.

Diwan, S.P. and Bodla, B. (2011), "Development of empirically based customer-derive positioning typology in the automobile industry", *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp. 531-550.

Dovel, G.P. (1990), "Stake it out; positioning success, step by step", *Business Marketing*, Vol. 5, pp. 43-51.

Droge, C. and Darmon, R.Y. (1987), "Associative positioning strategies through comparative advertising: attribute versus overall similarity approaches", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 377-388.

Easingwood, C.J. and Mahajan, V. (1989), "Positioning of financial services for competitive advantage", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 207-219.

Engel, J.F., Blackwell, R.D. and Miniard, P.W. (1993), *Consumer Behavior*, 7th ed., The Dryden Press, Orlando, FL.

Ennew, C.T. (1993), *The Marketing Blueprint*, Blackwell Business, Oxford.

Ennew, J.C. and Mirza, M. (1995), "Organisational positioning in retail financial services".

Esch, F.R. (2010), *Strategy and Technique of Brand Management*, Vahlen, Munich.

Ensor, J. and Drummond, G. (1999), *Strategic Marketing: Planning and Control*, Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford.

Esch, F.R. (2005), "Brand positioning as the basis of brand management", in Esch, F.-R. (Ed.), *Modern Brand Management – Basics. Innovative Approaches, Practical Implementations*, 4th ed., Business publishing house, Wiesbaden, pp. 131-163.

Evans, E. (2003), "Market segmentation", in Baker, M.J. (Ed.) *The Marketing Book*, 5th ed., Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford.

Evans, J.R. and Barman, B. (1988), *Principles of Marketing*, 2nd ed., Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, NY, pp. 167-169.

Feldman, R. and Sanger, J. (2007), *The Textmining Handbook: Advanced Approaches in Analyzing Unstructured Data*, Cambridge University Press.

Ferrel, P. (1997), *Marketing*, 10th ed., Harvard Business School Publications, Boston, MA.

Fill, C. (1999), *Marketing Communications: Contexts, Contents and Strategies*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, Hemel Hempstead.

Fill, C. (2006), *Marketing Communications – Engagement, Strategies and Practice*, 4th ed., Prentice Hall, Edinburgh.

Fisher, R.J. (1991), "Durable differentiation strategies for services", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 19-28.

Font, X. (1997), "Managing the tourist destination image", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 123-131.

Friedmann, R. and Lessig, P.V. (1987), "Psychological meaning of products and product positioning", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 265-273.

Fuchs, C. (2008), "Brand positioning through the consumers' lens", Unpublished PhD thesis, Universitat Wien, Betreuerin.

Fuchs, C. and Diamantopoulos, A. (2010), "Evaluating the effectiveness of brand-positioning strategies from a consumer perspective", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 44 Nos 11/12, pp. 173-1786.

Fuchs, C. and Diamantopoulos, A. (2012), "Customer perceived positioning effectiveness: conceptualization, operationalization, and implications for new product managers", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 229-244.

Gartner, W. (1989), "Tourism image: attribute measurement of state tourism products using multidimensional scaling techniques", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 16-20.

Ghodeshwar, B.M. (2008), "Building brand identity in competitive markets: a conceptual model", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 4-12.

Gwin, C.F. and Gwin, C.R. (2003), "Product attributes model: a tool for evaluating brand positioning", *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 30-42.

Hankinson, G. and Cowking, P. (1997), "Branding in practice: the profile and role of brand managers in the UK", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 239-264.

Hartmann, P., Ibanez, V. and Sainz, F. (2005), "Green branding effects on attitude: functional versus emotional positioning strategies", *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 9-29.

Hollensen, S. (2010), *Marketing Management: A Relationship Approaches*, 2nd ed., Pearson Education, New York, NY.

Holmes, J.H. (1973), "Profitable product positioning", *MSU Business Topics*, Vol. 21, pp. 27-32.

Holmes, J.H. (1974), "Profitable positioning for retailers", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 332-339.

Hooley, G.J., Saunders, J.A. and Piercy, N.F. (1998), *Marketing Strategy and Competitive Positioning*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, London.

Hooley, G., Nigel, F.P. and Nicoulaud, B. (2012), *Marketing Strategy and Competitive Positioning*, Prentice Hall/Financial Times, London.

Houston, F.S. and Hanieski, J.F. (1976), "Pooled marketing and positioning", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 38-39.

Husted, S.W. and Varble, D.L. (1999), *Principles of Modern Marketing*, Alyyn and Bacon Publishing, Boston.

Iyer, P., Davarib, A., Zolfagharianc, M. and Paswand, A. (2018), "Market orientation, positioning strategy and brand performance", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 81 No. 1, pp. 16-29.

Jain, S.C. (1990), *Marketing Planning and Strategy*, 3rd ed., South Western Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.

Jalkala, A.M. and Keranen, J. (2014), "Brand positioning strategies for industrial firms providing customer solutions", *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 253-264.

Javalgi, R.G., Benoy, J.W. and Gombeski, W.R. (1995), "Positioning your service to target key buying influences: the case of referring physicians and hospitals", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 9 No. 5, pp. 42-52.

Jewell, R.D. (2007), "Establishing effective repositioning communications in a competitive marketplace", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 231-241.

Jobber, D. (1995), *Principles and Practice of Marketing*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, London.

Johansson, J.K. and Thorelli, H.B. (1985), "International product positioning", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 57-75.

Kalafatis, S.P., Tsogas, M. and Blankson, C. (2000), "Positioning strategies in business markets", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 15 No. 6, pp. 416-437.

Kalra, A. and Goodstein, R.C. (1998), "The impact of advertising positioning strategies on consumer price sensitivity", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 210-224.

Kapferer, J. (2012), *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*, 5th ed., Kogan Page, London.

Kapferer, J.-N. (2004), *The New Strategic Brand Management*, 3rd ed., Kogan Page, London.

Kardon, B.E. (1992), "Consumer schizophrenia: extremism in the marketplace", *Planning Review*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 18-22.

Kaul, A. and Rao, V.R. (1995), "Research for product positioning and design decisions: an integrative review", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 293-320.

Kazmi, A. (2007), "Knowledge management for strategic management: nothing more, nothing less", *Pranjana: The Journal of Management Awareness*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 31-40.

Keegan, W.J. (1995), *Global Marketing Management*, 5th ed., Prentice-Hall International, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Keller, K.L. (2003), *Strategic Brand Management*, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Keller, K.L. (2009), "Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 15 Nos 2/3, pp. 139-155.

Kerin, R., Hartley, S. and Rudelius, W. (2010), *Marketing*, McGraw Hill, New York, NY.

Kim, C. and Mauborgne, R. (2000), "Knowing a winning business idea when you see one", *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 129-138.

Kinnear, T.C., Bernhardt, K.L. and Krentler, K.A. (1995), *Principles of Marketing*, 4th ed., Harper Collins College Publishers, New York, NY.

Knox, S. (2004), "Positioning and branding your organization", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 105-115.

Kohli, C.S. and Leuthesser, L. (1993), "Product positioning: a comparison of perceptual mapping techniques", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 10-19.

Kotler, P. (2003), *Marketing Management*, 11th ed., Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (1996), *Marketing: An Introduction*, 4th ed., Prentice-Hall International, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Kotler, P., Keller, K.L. and Bliemel, F. (2005), *Marketing Management*, Pearson Stadium, Munchen.

Kotler, P. and Anderson, A.R. (1996), *Strategic Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations*, 5th ed., Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Kroeber-Riel, W. and Esch, F.R. (2000), *Strategy and Technology of Advertising*, Kohlhammer, Stutgart, Berlin, Koln.

Lakshmi, K., Santhana, K., Jasim, K., Prabhakar. and Jahira, P. (2017), "Brand positioning of ayurvedic medicine in Indian milieu", *International Journal of Business Excellence*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 16-37.

Lamb, C.W. and Cravens, D.W. (1990), "Services marketing: reaching the customer and creating satisfaction", *Business*, pp. 13-19.

Lamb, C.W., Hair, J.F. and McDaniel, C. (2004), *Principles of Marketing*, South-Western Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.

Lamb, C., McDaniel, C., Shearer, J., Kapoor, H., Hair, J., Boivin, M. and Appleby, R. (2010), *Marketing Management*, 10th ed., South-Western CENGAGE Learning, Mason, OH, pp. 45-46.

Lautman, M.R. (1993), "The ABCs of positioning", *Marketing Research*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 12-18.

Lee, C.-W. and Liao, C.-S. (2009), "The effects of consumer preferences and perceptions of Chinese tea beverages on brand positioning strategies", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 111 No. 1, pp. 80-96.

Lendrevie, J., Lévy, J. and Lindon, D. (2003), *Mercator: Theory and Practice of the Marketing*, Dalloz, Paris.

Lilien, G.L. and Rangaswamy, A. (2003), *Marketing Engineering: Computer-Assisted Marketing Analysis and Planning*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Lodish, L.M. (1986), *The Advertising and Promotion Challenge: Vaguely Right or Precisely Wrong?*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J. and Bracken, C.C. (2004), "A call for standardization in content analysis reliability", *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 30, pp. 434-437.

Loudon, D.L. and Della, A.J. B. (1993), *Consumer Behavior: Concepts and Applications*, 4th ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

Lovelock, C.H. (1984), *Services Marketing*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Lovelock, E., Patterson, P.G. and Wirtz, J. (2014), *Services Marketing*, 6th ed., Pearson, London.

MacInnis, D.J. (2011), "A framework for conceptual contributions in marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 75 No. 4, pp. 136-154.

Maggard, J.P. (1976), "Positioning revisited", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 63-66.

Margulies, W.P. (1977), "Make the most of your corporate identity", *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 66-74.

Marsden, P. (2002), "Brand positioning: meme's the word", *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 20 No. 5, pp. 307-312.

Masterson, R. and Pickton, D. (2004), *Marketing: An Introduction*, McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Mazanec, J.A. (1995), "Positioning analysis with self-organizing maps: an exploratory study on luxury hotels", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 36 No. 6, pp. 80-95.

McIntyre, D.R. (1975), "Multinational positioning strategy", *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 106-110.

Muhlbacher, H., Dreher, A. and Ritter, G.A. (1994), "MIPS – managing industrial positioning strategies", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 287-297.

Myers, J.H. (1996), *Segmentation and Positioning for Strategic Marketing Decisions*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL.

Nash, E.L. (1982), *Direct Marketing. Strategy, Planning, Execution*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, NY.

Oglivy, D. (1983), *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, Ballantine Books, New York, NY.

Oliver, G. (1995), *Marketing Today*, 4th ed., Prentice-Hall, Hemel Hempstead.

O'Shaughnessy, J. (1995), *Competitive Marketing: A Strategic Approach*, 3rd ed., Routledge, London.

Palmer, A. (1994), *Principles of Services Marketing*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Maidenhead.

Pandaa, S., Paswana, K. and Mishrab, S. (2018), "Impact of positioning strategies on franchise fee structure", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 81 No. 1, pp. 30-39.

Park, C.W. and Zaitman, G. (1987), *Marketing Management*, Dryden Press, Chicago IL.

Park, C.W., Jaworski, B.J. and MacInnis, D.J. (1986), "Strategic brand concept image management", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50 No. 4, pp. 135-145.

Percy, L. and Elliot, R. (2007), *Strategic Brand Management*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

Perreault, D.W., Jr and McCarthy, E.J. (1996), *Essentials of Marketing: A Global Managerial Approach*, 10th ed., McGraw- Hill Irwin, Boston, pp. 72-75.

Pham, M.T. and Muthukrishnan, A.V. (2002), "Search and alignment in judgment revision: implications for brand positioning", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 18-30.

Pike, S. and Page, S. (2014), "Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing: a narrative analysis of the literature", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 41, pp. 1-26.

Patti, C.H. and Frazer, C.F. (1988), *Advertising: A Decision Making Approach*, Dryden Press, Chicago.

Pollay, R.W. (1985), "The subsidizing sizzle: a descriptive history of print advertising, 1900-1980", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50, pp. 135-145.

Porter, M.E. (1996), "What is strategy?", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 74 No. 6, pp. 61-78.

Punj, G. and Moon, J. (2002), "Positioning options for achieving Brand association: a psychological categorization framework", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 55 No. 4, pp. 275-283.

Quelch, J.A. (1991), "Product policy", in Dolan, R.J. (Ed.), *Strategic Marketing Management*, Harvard Business School Publications, Boston, MA.

Ramaswamy, V.S. and Namakumari (2002), *Marketing Management*, 3rd ed., Macmillan, New Delhi.

Rao, V.R. and Steckel, J.H. (1998), *Analysis for Strategic Marketing*, Addison- Wesley, Reading, MA.

Reidenbach, R.E. and Pitts, R.E. (1986), "Not all CEOs are created equal as advertising spokespersons: evaluating the effective CEO spokesperson", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 30-46.

Richarme, M. (2007), "Positioning–marketing's fifth 'P'", Decision Analyst, available at: www. Decisionanalyst.com/media/downloads/MarketingFifthP.pdf

Ries, A. and Trout, J. (1969), "Positioning is a game people play in today's me-too market place", *Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 54 No. 6, pp. 51-55.

Ries, A. and Trout, J. (1972), *The Positioning Era Cometh", Reprint of a Three-Part Series in Advertising Age*, Crain Publications, Chicago.

Ries, A. and Trout, J. (1981), *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, McGraw Hill, New York, NY.

Ries, A. and Trout, J. (1986), *Marketing Warfare*, Plume Books, New York, NY.

Riezebos, R. and van der Grinten, J. (2012), *Positioning the Brand: An inside-out Approach*, Routledge.

Rigger, W. (1995), "Positioning in theory and practice, towards a research agenda", *24th EMAC Conference Proceedings, 1 (May), ESSEC France*, pp. 991-1009.

Romaniuk, J. (2001), "Brand positioning in financial services: a longitudinal test to find the best Brand position", *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 111-121.

Roscoe, A.D. and Lee, J.K. (1991), "Positioning PCN", *Cellular Business*, February, pp. 42-46.

Rossiter, J.R. and Bellman, S. (2005), *Marketing Communications: Theory and Applications*, Pearson Prentice Hall, Frenchs Forest.

Rothschild, M.L. (1987), *Advertising – from Fundamentals to Strategies*, Heath and Company, Lexington, MA, Toronto.

Runyon, K.E. (1982), *The Practice of Marketing*, Merril Publishing Company, Columbus, OH.

Sarel, D. (1980), "Product positioning – a reassessment", in Lam, C. and Dunne, P. (Eds), *Theoretical Developments in Marketing*, American Marketing Association, Chicago.

Schiffman, G.L. and Kanuk, L.L. (2007), *Consumer Behavior*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Schouten, J.W. and McAlexander, J.H. (1989), "Positioning services for competitive advantage: the case of duds 'n suds source", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 2.

Sengupta, S. (1990), *Brand Positioning: Strategies for Competitive Advantage*, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing, New Delhi.

Sengupta, S. (2005), *Brand Positioning*, McGraw Hill, New Delhi.

Shimp, A.T. (2010), *Integrated Marketing Communication in Advertising and Promotion*, 8th ed., Cengage Learning, South Western.

Shostack, G.L. (1987), "Service positioning through structural change", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 34-43.

Simkin, L.P., Doyle, P. and Saunders, J. (1985), "How retailers put site location techniques into operation: an assessment of major multiples' practice", *Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 21-26.

Smith, R.E. and Lusch, R.F. (1976), "How advertising can position a brand", *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 16, pp. 37-43.

Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askeegard, S. and Hogg, M. K. (2006), *Consumer Behaviour a European Perspective*, 3rd ed., Pearson Education, London.

Soundararaj, J.J. and Rengamani, J. (2002), "The inevitability of 'positioning' in the present marketing scenario", *Indian Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 32, pp. 3-5.

Stanton, W.J. (1974), *Fundamentals of Marketing*, McGraw-Hill, Tokyo, Kogakusha.

Sujan, M. and Bettman, J.R. (1989), "The effects of brand positioning strategies on consumers' brand and category perceptions: some insights from schema research", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 26, pp. 454-467.

Suzuki, Y. (2000), "The effect of airline positioning on profit", *Transportation Journal*, Vol. 39 No. 3, pp. 44-54.

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D. and Smart, P. (2003), "Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review", *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 207-222.

Trommsdorf, V. and Paulssen, M. (2005), "Measurement and design of Brand positioning", *Modern Brand Management*, Vol. 43, pp. 1363-1379.

Trommsdorf, V. (2002), *Consumer Behavior*, 4th ed., Stuttgart.

Trout, J. and Rivkin (1996), *The New Positioning, the Latest on the World's 1 Business Strategy*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

Tudor and Negricea (2012), "Brand positioning – a marketing resource and an effective tool for small and medium enterprises", *Journal of Knowledge Management, Economics and Information Technology*, Vol. 8, pp. 1-9.

Tybout, A.M. and Sternthal, B. (2010), "Developing a compelling brand positioning", in Management, T.M., Tybout, A.M. and Calder, B.J. (Eds), *Kellogg on Marketing*, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, NJ, pp. 73-91.

Uggla, H. (2006), *Positioning: Theory, Trend and Startup*, Liber AB, Malmo.

Urban, G.L. and Hauser, J.R. (1993), *Design and Marketing of New Products*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, NJ.

Urde, M. and Koch, C. (2014), "Market and brand-oriented schools of positioning", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 23 No. 7, pp. 478-490.

Walker, O.C., Boyd, H.W. and Larreche, J.C. (1996), *Marketing Strategy: Planning and Implementation*, Irwin, Chicago, IL.

Wells, W.D. and Prensky, D. (1996), *Consumer Behavior*, John Wiley, New York, NY.

Wilson, L. and Fenwick, C.I. (1978), "A product positioning model: problems and possibilities", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 42 No. 2, pp. 13-18.

Wilson, R. and Giligan, C. (2005), *Strategic Marketing Management: Planning, Implementation and Control*, 3rd ed., Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, Amsterdam.

Wind, Y. (1980), "Going to market: new twist for some old tricks", The Wharton Magazine, Vol. 4, pp. 34-39.

Wind, Y. (1982), *Product Policy, Concepts, Methods and Strategy*, Addison-Wesley Publishing, Reading, MA.

Witell, L., Snyder, H., Gustafsson, A., Fombelle, P. and Kristensson, P. (2016), "Defining service innovation: a review and synthesis", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 8, pp. 2863-2872.

Wright, M. (1997), "When strength means death", *Brand Strategy*, Vol. 107, pp. 3-5.

Xie, Z. (2005), "Centrality measures in textmining: prediction of noun phrases that appear in abstracts", *Proceedings of the ACL student research workshop, Association for Computational Linguistics, Stroudsburg, PA*, pp. 103-108.

Yip, G.S. (1997), "Patterns and determinants of global marketing", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 13 Nos 1/3, pp. 153-164.

Zikmund, W. and D'Amico, M. (1989), *Marketing*, 3rd ed., John Wiley, New York, NY.

Zineldin, M. (1996), "Bank strategic positioning and some determinants of bank selection", *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 12-22.

Further reading

Crompton, J., Fakeye, P. and Lue, C.C. (1992), "Positioning: the example of the lower Rio Grande valley in the winter long stay destination market", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 20-26.

Dillman, D.A. (2011), *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method–2007 Update with New Internet, visuaL, and Mixed-Mode Guide*, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, NJ.

Etzel, M., Walker, B. and Stanton, W. (2007), *Marketing*, McGrawHill, New York, NY.

Jain, S.C. (2000), *Market Planning and Strategy*, 6th ed., South-Western College Publishing, Cincinnati.

Palmer, A. (2004), *Introduction to Marketing: theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Winer, R.S. (2007), *Marketing Management*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Witell, L., Gustafsson, A. and Johnson, M.D. (2014), "The effect of customer information during new product development on profits from goods and services", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 48 Nos 9/10, pp. 1709-1730.

Appendix

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
1.	Alpert and Gatty (1969)	Product positioning is the differentiation of brands by studying the ways in which their consumers differ as well as how consumer perceptions of various brands differ
2.	Ries and Trout (1969)	Positioning is a strategy for "staking out turf" or "filling a slot" in the mind of target customers
3.	Buzzel *et al.* (1972)	Positioning refers to the manner in which a product is aimed at a particular customer segment
4.	Ries and Trout (1972)	Positioning is a concept that is cumulative of something and that takes advantage of advertising long-range nature
5.	Holmes (1973)	Product positioning considers the images a given consumer has for the several brands which comprise his or her product class
6.	Stanton (1974)	Positioning refers to the image the product projects in relation to images projected by competitive products
7.	McIntyre (1975)	Positioning an outward approach of looking at customers' perceptions of the products which takes into account not only the strengths and weakness of a firm's own brands but also that of competitors
8.	Brown and Sims (1976)	Positioning occurs when explicit recognition is given to competitors or competitive brands, users of the product, the situation in which the product is used, the problem that solves etc within established market segments
9.	Houston and Hanieski (1976)	Positioning can be most easily described as a promotional strategy which attempts to place a brand along one or a number of dimensions relative to other brands in the same generic class
10.	Maggard (1976)	Positioning as nothing more than a simple, all-purpose word such as placing or locating
11.	Ferrel (1977)	Product positioning refers to the decisions and activities intended to create and maintain a certain concept of a firm's product in the customer mind
12.	Margulies (1977)	Positioning is a process that is a result of finding a strong corporate identity
13.	Delozier and Woodside (1978)	Product positioning is the perceived image of the brand held by consumers
14.	Engel (1980)	Positioning is against strategy advertisers position their product for particular job against competition
15.	Sarel (1980)	Positioning is the process of developing and implementing specific marketing activities aimed at affecting consumers, perceptions of products positions
16.	Urban and Huaser (1980)	Positioning means understanding the consumer, the number of dimensions, the names of the dimensions and competitor's positions
17.	Wind (1980)	Positioning is the place which a product occupies in a given market as perceived by the products targeted customers
18.	Crosier (1981)	Positioning is the general strategy for winning a share of the prospects mind and successfully scaling the ladders within

(*continued*)

Table A1.
Overview of
positioning
definitions

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
19.	Ries and Trout (1981)	Positioning is what you do to the mind of a prospect that is you position the product in the mind of the prospect
20.	Berry (1982)	Positioning involves identifying then occupying an available position in the market examining competitive presence within various market segments and then advertising the question which segment is more available and open
21.	Nash (1982)	Positioning is the portrayal of a product in its proper status *vis a vis* other products
22.	Runyon (1982)	Product positioning is the process of differentiating one product from another
23.	Crawford *et al*. (1983)	Product positioning is the act of creating and altering product perceptions in customers' minds
24.	Doyle (1983)	Positioning refers to the choice of target market segment which describes the customers a business will seek to serve and the choice of differential advantage which defines how it will compete with rivals in the segment
25.	Bradley and Mealy (1984)	Positioning is the combination of the appeal and competitive considerations that can give a brand a distinctive perception or position in the customers mind
26.	Day (1984)	Product positioning refers to the customer's perceptions of the place a product or brand occupies in a given market segment
27.	Lovelock (1984)	Positioning is generally referred to as a process of finding and establishing a distinct place in the market that is determined by the customer's view of one's own offering in comparison to competing alternatives
28.	Crawford (1985)	Positioning is a marketing tool that is used to address the question "How is one product different from others
29.	Bradlow (1985)	Positioning differentiates a firm from its competition, assists in making services tangible and increases staff productivity
30.	Dillon *et al*. (1986)	Positioning is the attempt to move brands to a particular location within a perceptual product space
31.	Lodish (1986)	Positioning is the process of trying to improve the perception of your product by a market segment
32.	Reidenbach and Pitts (1986)	Positioning refers to the perceptual relationships of a firm and its products /services to its competitors
33.	Droge and Darmon (1987)	Positioning accurately refers to how close a customer or a homogeneous market segment perceives a brand to be its targeted positioning
34.	Friedmann and Lessig (1987)	Product positioning is all about creating a position or image of a firm's product in the consumer's mind
35.	Park and Zaltman (1987)	Product positioning involves distinguishing the product from the competitor's product in order to gain competitive edge
36.	Rothschild (1987)	Positioning is referred to the place that the brand holds in the consumers mind relative to perceptions and preferences
37.	Schiffman and Kanuk (1987)	Positioning is an attempt to develop a special image for a product the consumer mind
38.	DiMingo (1988)	Positioning is the process of distinguishing a company or product from competitors along real dimensions benefits or values that are important and meaningful to customers to become the preferred company or product in a market

(continued)

Table A1.

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
39.	Evans and Berman (1988)	Product positioning allows a firm to select the market niche(s) to which it wants to appeal and develop distinct attributes for its products
40.	Patti and Frazer (1988)	Positioning is the distinctive alignment of the organizations product offer within the frame of reference of the consumer occupying a mental niche in relation to identified competitors
41.	Berkowitz *et al.* (1989)	Positioning involves seeking a smaller market niche that is less competitive in which to locate a brand
42.	Easingwood and Mahajan (1989)	Positioning describes the position or image of the firm's product in the consumer's mind
43.	Sujan and Bettman (1989)	Positioning is the process of influencing perceptions by specifying the attributes, benefits or images which represent differentiation
44.	Zikmund and D'Amico (1989)	Product positioning is to identify salient product characteristics that differentiate the brand from competitive brands
45.	Apostolidis *et al.* (1989)	Positioning attempts to build or occupy a mental niche in relation to an identified competitor
46.	Corstjens and Doyle, 1990	Positioning is to bestow a differential advantage on a product
47.	Bainsfair (1990)	Positioning is an active process of getting through to the ultimate target, the customer
48.	Cronshaw *et al.*, 1990	Positioning is the act of tailoring the attributes of a product to chosen set of customers with a view to making it the first choice of those customers
49.	Day *et al.*,1990	Positioning, the place a product occupies in a given market as perceived by its target segment(s) is the product's reason for being, the reason why consumers buy it
50.	Jain (1990)	Positioning refers to placing a brand in that part of the market where it will have a favourable reception compared to competitive products
51.	Johansson and Thorelli (1990)	Product positioning is the activity by which a desirable position in the minds of the consumer is created for the product
52.	Lamb and Craven (1990)	Positioning is the customer driven process of establishing and maintaining a unique place in the market
53.	Sengupta (1990)	Positioning is the concept of perceptual space and consumers mind is regarded as a geometric perceptual space with product categories and brands occupying different points in that space
54.	Quelch (1991)	Positioning is a management concept of where a product or service should stand in the marketplace relative to competitive products and services
55.	Roscoe and Lee (1991)	Positioning is the process of attracting different demand segments and where each technology is priced appropriately based on its relative standing in the market
56.	Aaker and Shansby (1982)	Positioning is the art and science of fitting the product or service to one or more segments of the broad market in such a way as to set it meaningfully apart from competition
57.	Arnott (1992)	Positioning is the deliberate, proactive, iterative process of defining, modifying and monitoring consumer perceptions of a marketable object
58.	Baker (1992)	Product positioning defines the location of a product /service relative to others in the same market place and then promoting it in such a way as to reinforce or change its position

(*continued*)

Table A1.

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
59.	Berkowitz *et al.* (1992)	Product positioning refers to the place an offering occupies in consumers mind on important attributes relative to competitive offerings
60.	Kardon (1992)	Positioning is a strategy that sets a business and product apart from the competition
61.	Adcock *et al.* (1993)	Positioning refers to the placing of a product in that part of the market where it will be able to complete favourably with competitors products
62.	Dibb and Simkin (1993)	Positioning is the place which a product occupies in a given market as perceived by the product's targeted consumers
63.	Engel *et al.* (1993)	Positioning is defined as the perception that targeted consumers have of a firms offering relative to competitors
64.	Ennew (1993)	Product positioning describes the way in which the organization wishes consumers to perceive its products and the way in which consumers actually perceive those products
65.	Kohli and Leuthesser (1993)	Product positioning is the act of designing the image of the firm's offering so that target customers understand and appreciate what the product stands for in relation to its competitors
66.	Lautman (1993)	Positioning is defined as a strategy that enables a brand or service to occupy a preferred and unique niche in a customer's mind that is also consistent with the overall marketing strategy
67.	Loudon and Bitta (1993)	Positioning involves determining how consumers' perceive the marketer's product and also developing and implementing marketing strategies to achieve the desired position in the market
68.	(Brooksbank (1994)	Product positioning is the process of directing products and services toward the desires and needs of customers
69.	Muhlbacher *et al.* (1994)	Positioning is generally referred to as a process of finding and establishing a distinct place in the market that is determined by the customers' view of one's own offering in comparison to competing alternatives
70.	Palmer (1994)	Positioning is an attempt by the organization to distinguish its offerings from those of its competitors in order to give it a competitive advantage within the market
71.	Belch and Belch (1995)	Positioning is the art and science of fitting the product or service to one or more segments of the broad market in such a way to set it meaningfully apart from competition.
72.	Jobber (1995)	Positioning is the choice of target market and differential advantage the objective is to create and maintain a distinctive place in the market for a company and or its products
73.	Kaul and Rao (1995)	Positioning is the problem of "selecting product attribute levels to maximize a firm's objectives
74.	Keegan (1995)	Positioning is a process whereby a company establishes an image for its product in the minds of consumers relative to the image of competitor's product offerings
75.	Kinnear *et al.* (1995)	Positioning is the perception targeted consumers have of firms offerings relative to that of competitors
76.	Javalgi *et al.* (1995)	Positioning is the process of building and maintaining a distinctive image relative to other competing brands
77.	Oliver (1995)	Positioning concerns the perceptions and preferences consumers have in regard the organization and its products

Table A1.

(*continued*)

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
78.	O'shaughnessy (1995)	Positioning of a product refers to the process by which the firm decides how it should best depict the product in the market segment vis a vis competition and hopefully in the minds of the consumer
79.	Kotler and Anderson (1996)	Positioning is the act of designing the organizations image and value offer so that the organization s customers understand and appreciate what the organization stands for in relation to its competitors
80.	Myers (1996)	Positioning refers to the problem of differentiating one's own product /service from other competing entries in the market place
81.	Perrault *et al.* (1996)	Positioning shows how customers locate proposed or present bands in the market
82.	Trout and Rivkin (1996)	Positioning is simply concentrating on an idea – or even a word – that defines the company in the minds of consumers
83.	Walker *et al.* (1996)	Positioning is the perceived fit between a particular product offering and the needs of the target market
84.	Zineldin (1996)	Positioning is a process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive place and image in the market for an organization and or its individual product offerings so that the target market prospect understands and appreciates what the organization stands for in relation to its competitors
85.	Kotler and Armstrong (1997)	Positioning is the process of designing the company's product/ services and image based on consumers' perceptions relative to that of competitors
86.	Font (1997)	Positioning is detecting and developing product attributes which are expected to establish a competitive advantage
87.	Hankinson and Cowking (1997)	Positioning defines the brands point of reference with respect to the competition
88.	Wilson and Gilligan (1996)	Positioning is the process of designing an image and value so that consumers within the target segment understand what the company or brand stands for in relation to its competitors
89.	Wright (1997)	Positioning involves and owning a territory in the mind of the consumer it's not just occupying the position, but owning it
90.	Yip (1997)	Positioning is defined as the overall company package that is product service offering, the companies capability of competing that the company is prepared to be described and accepted in the market place
91.	Antonides and Raaij (1998)	Positioning refers to the consumer's perception of a brand amongst other brands
92.	Hooley *et al.* (1998)	Positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive advantage
93.	Rao and Steckel (1998)	Positioning is the relative perception of a product within a significant group of customers
94.	Ensor and Drummond (1999)	Positioning is establishing an organisation's product in the mind of a customer, in a position relative to other products in the market
95.	Fill (1999)	Positioning is the process whereby information about the organization or product is communicated in such a way that the object is perceived by the competition to occupy a particular space in the market
96.	Husted and Varble (1999)	Product positioning is the process of shaping the way that customers perceive the company's product

(*continued*)

Table A1.

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
97.	Jain and Subhash (2000)	Positioning is placing a brand in that part of the market where it will receive a favourable perception compared to competing products
98.	Kroeber-Riel and Esch (2000)	Positioning as measures leading to subjective customer perception of the offer, which is differentiated from the competition and therefore preferred
99.	Boone and Kurz (2001)	Positioning seeks to place a certain position in the minds of perspective buyers and distinguish their firm's offerings from those of competitors and to create promotions that communicate the desired positions
100.	Darling (2001)	Positioning strategy consists of 'establishing the initial market offering in the minds of consumers' and then 'differentiating the market offering from competitors in the minds of consumers
101.	Romaniuk (2001)	Positioning as a central brand activity achieved by selecting specific brand attributes and connecting them to the brand through the use of marketing communications
102.	Mardsen (2002)	Positioning refers to the brand position in the consumer mind in relation to the values which differentiate the brand's given or owned associations
103.	Ramaswamy and Namakumari (2002)	Product positioning denotes the specific product category or product class in which the given product is competing, and brand positioning denotes the positioning of the brand compared to competing brands in the chosen product category
104.	Evans (2003)	Positioning is the process of creating a product image in the minds of target customers
105.	Gwin and Gwin (2003)	Positioning refers to how customers think about present brands in a market
106.	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
107.	Keller (2003)	Positioning is act of designing a company's offering and. image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive position in the target market's minds
108.	Lendrevie *et al*. (2003)	Positioning is filling a particular market with homogeneous products according to one or more of the specified criteria by the producer
109.	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
110.	Czinkota and Ronkainen (2004)	Positioning is Customers' perception of a product, service, brand or company as a whole to evoke a positive and differentiated mental image
111.	Kapferer (2004)	Positioning means emphasizing the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors and appealing to the public
112.	Lamb *et al*. (2004)	Positioning is developing a specific marketing makes to influence potential customers overall perception of a brand, product line, or organization in general
113.	Masterson and Pickton (2004)	Positioning is which place a product is perceived to occupy in the minds of customers/consumers of the relevant target market relative to other competing brands

Table A1.

(*continued*)

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
114.	Palmer (2004)	Positioning is decisions about how the marketing mix of a company's product should be developed in comparison to the marketing mix of competing products
115.	Winer (2004)	Positioning is considering the alternative differentiation possibilities and determining what differential advantages are to be emphasized and communicated to the target customers
116.	Blythe (2005)	Positioning is the grouping of similar product types together in the consumer's perceptual map
116.	Kotler *et al.* (2005)	Positioning is a process by which a marketer discovers in the mind of the consumer/customer, client or prospect a unique niche for a product or service that will be meaningful to such a person.
117.	Esch (2005)	Positioning is the high art of marketing" and constitutes the active design of a brand's position in the minds of the consumers who constitute the target market
118.	Rossiter and Bellman (2005)	Positioning is an attempt to create and maintain a unique perception of the brand in consumers' minds and relative to competitors, a perception that is expected differentiate the brand in the marketplace, and ultimately stimulate preference for the brand's offering
119.	Tybout and Calkins (2005)	Positioning refers to the specific intended meaning for a brand in consumers' minds. More precisely a brand positioning articulates the goal that a consumer will achieve by using the brand and explains why it is superior to other means of accomplishing this goal
120.	Wilson and Giligan (2005)	Positioning is the process of designing an image and value so of target customers can understand what the institution or brand does in comparison with competitors
121.	Solomon *et al.* (2006)	Positioning is developing a marketing strategy aimed at influencing how a particular market segment perceives a good or service in comparison to competition
122.	Fill (2006)	Positioning is a natural conclusion to the sequence of activities that constitute a core part of the marketing strategy
123.	Uggla (2006)	Positioning is how a brand differentiates itself from competitors and that it communicates in a unique way to the target and segment
124.	Percy and Elliot (2007)	Positioning could be seen as a "super communication effect" that clarifies for the consumers what the brand "is, who it is for and what it stands for
125.	Baker and Hart (2007)	Positioning is an organised system for finding a window in the mind which is based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances
126.	Etzel *et al.* (2007)	Positioning is fitting the product to the segment where product performances and appeals most correspond
127.	Jewell (2007)	Positioning is a process of establishing a strong link in consumer memory between a brand-name node and an attribute-node
128.	Schiffman and Kanuk (2007)	Positioning conveys the meaning of a good or service in terms of how it fulfills needs of consumers
129.	Batra and Kazmi (2008)	Positioning is the perception of a brand or product it brings about in the mind of a target consumer and reflects the essence of that brand or product in terms of its functional and nonfunctional benefits as judged by the consumer

(*continued*)

Table A1.

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
130.	Ghodeswar (2008)	Positioning is related with creating brand perceptions in the minds of consumers and with achieving differentiated images apart from competitors' brands/offerings and meeting customer needs/expectations
131.	Keller (2009)	Positioning is identifying and establishing points of parity and points of differences; to establish the right brand identity and to create the proper brand image
132.	Blythe (2008)	Positioning is putting the product in an appropriate position in the consumer's mind
133.	Lee and Liao (2009)	Positioning refers implicitly to consumers' memory of the brand's particular information content
134.	Cravens and Piercy (2009)	Positioning is deciding the desired perception/ association of an organization/ brand by customers of the target market segment and developing the marketing program with a view to meet (or exceed) the needs and requirements of the customers of that marketplace
135.	Boone and Kurtz (2009)	Positioning is placing a product in a certain point or location within a market in the minds of perspective buyers
136.	Chandrashekhar (2010)	Positioning can be viewed perception of a brand in the mind of the target customer
137.	Shimp (2010)	Positioning is the "key feature, benefit, or image that stands for in the target audience's collective mind"
138.	Kerin *et al.* (2010)	Product positioning refers to the place an offering occupies in consumers' minds on important attributes relative to competitive offerings
139.	Cherunilam (2010)	Positioning is the image projected for the product
140.	Clow and Baack (2009)	Positioning is a process of creating a perception in the consumer's mind regarding the nature of a company and its products relative to competitors
141.	Dahlen *et al.* (2010)	Positioning describes the actual and perceived position of the brand in the mind space in terms of the customer's expectations of the unique aspects of the brand and perception of other competing brands
142.	Hollensen (2010)	Positioning is a process of creating in the mind of consumers an image, reputation, or perception of the company, or its products relative to competitors
143.	Lamb *et al.* (2010)	Positioning is a developing a specific marketing mix to influence potential customers overall perception of a brand product line or organization in general
144.	Tybout and Sternthal (2010)	Positioning is about finding a perceptual and preference foothold in the mind of the target market and claiming it with a Point of differentiation benefit and/or a feature
145.	DeSarbo *et al.* (2011)	Positioning is the process by which marketers attempt to create a distinctive image or identity in the minds of consumers in designated target market(s) for their product, brand or organization
146.	Riezebos and Grinten (2012)	Positioning is a marketing function that involves making strategic and well considered decisions regarding the attributes of a brand to emphasise to the prospect

(continued)

Table A1.

S. no.	Author/year	Definitions
147.	Armstrong and Kotler (2012)	Positioning is arranging for a market offering to occupy a and clear, distinctive, and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers
148.	Tudor and Negricea (2012)	Positioning refer to what the consumer/user understands about the respective seller or brand
149.	Lovelock *et al.* (2014)	Positioning is establishing a distinctive place in the minds of consumers relative to competing products
151.	Boatswain (2015)	Positioning refers to decisions regarding the type of attributes the firm uses to position an offering, and the manner in which it conveys information about its offering to the targeted consumers
152.	Lakshmi *et al.* (2017)	Positioning involves finding the proper location in the minds of a group of consumers or market segment so that they think about a product or service in the "right" or desired way

Table A1.

Corresponding author
Natasha Saqib can be contacted at: natashasaqib@hotmail.com