



# improve

Applied Insights from the FH Kufstein Tirol

## SYSTEMATIC BRAND POSITIONING

Prof. Dr. Bert Neumeister

ISSUE #57 | MAY 2025



# SYSTEMATIC BRAND POSITIONING

## BUILDING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES THROUGH BRAND MANAGEMENT

The "Obstgarten" product is hardly any different from the other products on the overcrowded refrigerated shelf. And yet, the brand occupies a unique position. Customers take it for granted that the milk is regional, the flavors are natural, and the taste is incomparable. That was precisely the challenge when Obstgarten was launched on the market. Success only came when brand management recognized the power of positioning and embarked on a journey to a new position. Obstgarten, a dessert like many others, became Obstgarten, the light alternative for lunch breaks.

By Prof. Dr. Bert Neumeister

### I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRAND

The real breakthrough and market success of Obstgarten was not due to the product itself, but to something else entirely. The commercials at the time used an exaggerated comparison. Colleague A collapses to the floor after a hearty meal, while colleague B feels ready for the rest of the workday thanks to Obstgarten. Sales increased, not because the product itself had changed, but solely because of what had taken place in the minds of customers.

An important step in developing a marketing strategy is positioning. First, potential markets are identified, as in when the size and potential of market segments are determined and specific target groups are selected. Positioning is the process of managing a brand in such a way that it is perceived by customers as clear, distinctive, and attractive compared to competing solutions.

***A brand does not originate in the product or service,  
but exclusively in the minds of customers.***

A brand's position is a combination of perceptions, impressions, and feelings in the minds of customers. People will automatically develop associations with a brand, regardless of whether or not the company tries to influence this. The brand quickly ends up in a mental category and is labeled with various tags that indicate its position<sup>1</sup>. The labels may then include terms such as safe, innovative, or even expensive. But even a

---

<sup>1</sup> Appelbaum, U., The Brand Positioning Workbook, Minneapolis 2022, p. 10.



high price can be perceived positively with the right positioning. The international beer brand Stella Artois, for example, successfully advertises with the attribute "reassuringly expensive." Obstgarten was bold enough not to differentiate itself solely through new labels, but to elevate the brand to a completely new mental category without direct competitors.

The positioning concept is not only reserved for consumer-oriented offerings or the business-to-business market. Companies also position themselves relative to each other, mainly on the basis of their identity. Due to the high physical and functional similarity of products, the position of the company is often the only means of differentiation – especially in saturated markets. It follows that it is equally important to position companies as brands in the minds of current and potential customers. Henkel, the manufacturer of Persil, is attempting to do this with the slogan "A brand like a friend." If the detergent comes from Henkel, then both brands should also be perceived as good friends and problem solvers in consumers' everyday lives.

## 2. BRAND POSITIONING

The term "positioning" originally comes from nautical terminology. Just like on a ship, position is determined in relation to other vessels and the location in the geographical environment. How close or far away is a brand from its competitors? In which waters or category is this brand or company currently sailing? Which position would be attractive, for example, with low frequency and favorable weather conditions? Professional positioning defines the image in the market, the customer benefit, the distance from the competition, and clearly states what the company and its services stand for.

### *A strong brand is the basis of competitive advantage.*

In summary, the characteristics of a brand can be summed up as "clarity, consistency, and unique and therefore differentiating associations among consumers"<sup>2</sup>. The effects are credibility, competitive advantages, and real added value for customers and the company. A clear positioning statement can be formulated in five statements (see Fig. 1). The most important elements are summarized here.

---

<sup>2</sup> Kallweit, B., Holistic Brand Positioning – Successful Brand Management through Correct Positioning in the Marketing Mix, Wiesbaden 2020, p. 5.



**Fig. 1: A clear positioning statement**

1.	<b>For .....</b>	<b>&gt;&gt; Target Group</b>
2.	<b>is .....</b>	<b>&gt;&gt; Brand Name</b>
3.	<b><u>the</u> brand in the .....</b>	<b>&gt;&gt; Industry/Branche</b>
4.	<b>and offers .....</b>	<b>&gt;&gt; Unique Benefits</b>
5.	<b>because .....</b>	<b>&gt;&gt; Credibility</b>

IKEA, for example, formulates its positioning statement as follows: For price-conscious and design-savvy people (target group), IKEA (brand name) is the brand in the furniture industry (industry) and offers modern, Scandinavian design at low cost (unique benefit) because IKEA has been successfully furnishing millions of homes worldwide for over 80 years (credibility). According to Fill and Turnbull, there are generally two main ways of positioning a brand<sup>3</sup> - functional and expressive. Functionally positioned brands emphasize features and benefits, while expressive brands highlight the ego, social, and hedonistic needs that a brand can address. In the context of laundry detergents, for example, both approaches make a promise. The functional approach promises clean and bright laundry. The emotional approach refers to well cared for clothing that we wear with confidence for an important occasion.

### ***Brand management is about function and emotion.***

Brands are not static, but dynamic. For example, EasyJet's positioning was almost exclusively focused on low prices and thus functional. However, when this was challenged and overtaken by even cheaper providers such as Ryanair, the company's communications began to convey a closer connection to premium airlines, without losing its image as a low-cost provider. The messages changed and now focused on promoting special destinations in Europe and the associated high-quality experiences. This created a new brand perception. "Europe by EasyJet," which enabled the brand to create emotional closeness and shift its position more toward high quality.

## **3. POSSIBLE POSITIONING STRATEGIES**

There are basically several approaches to developing brand positioning. These can be used individually or in hybrid combinations. Of course, it is also possible that the respective strategy may change over time. The more competitors in a market pursue

<sup>3</sup> Fill, C. / Turnbull, S., Marketing Communications – Touchpoints, Sharing and Disruption, Harlow 2019, p. 255ff.



the same strategy, the tougher the competition becomes. Conversely, every company must constantly examine how the brand can be made unique and distinctive.

**Positioning through superior quality:** This involves product or service features that, from the customer's point of view, offer a clear quality advantage. This is the simplest concept and is most commonly used in consumer goods markets. The brand stands out from the competition through its characteristics, advantages, or problem-solving capabilities. Red Bull not only gives you energy, it also gives you wings, and Persil not only washes clean, it washes pure.

**Positioning with a compelling price-performance ratio:** This strategy is particularly effective because the price itself can be a strong indicator of quality. In the perception of many people, a high price is a sign of quality, while a low price can have a negative effect on the brand image. The price-performance aspect is illustrated in Aldi's slogan "Take home more, pay less," and in a classic advertisement for household cleaners, the butler smugly said, "We can't afford anything cheaper."

*A successful brand does not come about by chance,  
but must be professionally developed and managed.*

**Positioning through a clear application context:** This approach is about informing customers when and how a product should be used. This can also create a clear positioning in the minds of the target group. After Eight clearly states at what time the chocolate should be enjoyed, and Wash & Go shampoo positions itself as a quick and easy-to-use product for people with a hectic lifestyle.

**Positioning with a consistent target group focus:** A sensible positioning strategy can also involve formulating it around a clearly defined target group. The focus here is on the clearly identifiable requirements and needs of a segment. For example, some hotels position themselves as destinations for weekend trips for couples, gourmets, or yoga enthusiasts.

**Positioning through a superior value proposition:** The focus here is on a convincing customer benefit, which can even go so far as to associate a product with a specific application. For example, Aspirin works very quickly against headaches, and Pril is particularly good at washing dishes. The effect of such a strategy is lasting and positive. However, implementation takes a long time, partly because customers often have entrenched attitudes.

## 4. IMPLEMENTING BRAND POSITIONING

Brand positioning is developed in five steps (see Fig. 2). The first step is to analyze the situation and understand the target group. Above all, it is important to identify the attitudes, perceptions, and characteristics that customers associate with a brand. This



can be done, for example, through focus groups or targeted interviews. Second, the brand core and values are defined. The focus is on clear statements about the identity, vision, and attributes of the brand in comparison to the competition. This is done by developing a unique brand personality in the sense of a Unique Advertising Proposition (UAP).

In the third step, various brand positioning strategies are evaluated as options for action and action plans and resources are defined. Fourth, the brand is developed consistently in terms of message and tone. This also includes the business conclusions for products, services, quality, and price positioning. The fifth step is to start implementation with concrete measures or projects. Ongoing implementation monitoring and continuous observation of the brand's effectiveness on customers, sales, market share, profitability, image, etc. are essential.

**Fig. 2: Developing brand positioning in 5 steps**

<b>1. Analysis of the initial situation and target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of markets, competitors, and trends</li> <li>• Clarity about customer attitudes, perceptions, and characteristics regarding the brand</li> </ul>
<b>2. Definition of brand essence and values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear statements about the identity, vision, and attributes of the brand compared to the competition</li> <li>• Development of a unique brand personality in the sense of a Unique Advertising Proposition (UAP)</li> </ul>
<b>3. Formulation of a positioning strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of various brand positioning strategies as options for action</li> <li>• Determination of action plans and resources</li> </ul>
<b>4. Design of brand communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a consistent message and tone aligned with the positioning goal</li> <li>• Business conclusions for products, services, quality, and price positioning</li> </ul>
<b>5. Implementation and review of the brand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start of implementation with concrete measures or projects</li> <li>• Ongoing implementation monitoring and continuous observation of brand effectiveness</li> </ul>



## 5. CONCLUSION

In summary, the position taken is a statement about what the brand is, what it stands for, and what values and beliefs customers associate with a particular brand. A popular children's game involves inserting different shapes into the openings provided. The same applies to positioning - the perfect fit must be found and implemented in the market of possibilities. Trying to fit a square through a round opening is a waste of marketing resources and will not be recognized by the informed target group. However, those who are clear about their current brand position and recognize this as the starting point for a journey to the perfect fit in the minds of customers will be successful and anchor themselves in their memory. This requires not only creative skills, but also the appropriate implementation expertise (see Fig. 3). Brand positioning ultimately focuses on one of the most central business questions: Where are we different and where are we better?

### Summary: Application and Benefits

1. Clarity about your own brand position in relation to competitors
2. Combination of rational and emotional elements of the brand
3. Wide range of applications for many marketing tasks
4. Opportunities to identify a profitable market niche



More [improve issues & free subscription](#)

## AUTHOR PROFILE

**Prof. Dr. Bert Neumeister**

>> Professor of Media and Communication Management

Contact: [bert.neumeister@fh-kufstein.ac.at](mailto:bert.neumeister@fh-kufstein.ac.at)



**Fig. 3: Development of brand positioning – tool and example (insurance)**

An insurance company reviews and develops its brand positioning in times of increasingly fierce competition. The executive board assumes responsibility for the process and manages all phases. Implementation is then anchored in the target agreements of the first management levels.

Step	Measure	Deadline	Responsible
<b>1. Analysis of the initial situation and target groups</b>	1.1. Update market analyses for the "Life" and "Property & Business Insurances" business areas with corresponding conclusions	Apr. 30	S. Larcher
	1.2. Survey of customer benefit characteristics for all customer segments (including inclusion of the new "affluent" segment)	May 31	A. Oswald
	1.3.		
<b>2. Definition of brand essence and values</b>	2.1. Holding of Top Management Workshop I "Brand Positioning" (goal: initial brand concept)	July 31	T. Wehner
	2.2. Testing of the concept with selected focus groups and review by the Executive Board	Sep. 30	A. Oswald
	2.3.		
<b>3. Formulation of a positioning strategy</b>	3.1. Conducting top management workshop II for final brand definition	Oct. 31	T. Wehner
	3.2. Development of a rough implementation plan, including budgeting	Nov. 30	C. Helmer
	3.3.		
<b>4. Design of brand communication</b>	4.1. Approval of the brand concept, including detailed positioning and implementation plans for all insurance services and digital business models.	...	...
	4.2.		
<b>5. Implementation and review of the brand</b>	5.1.		