

Positioning and Position Mapping

Positioning is undoubtedly one of the simplest and most useful tools to marketers. After segmenting a market and then targeting a consumer, the product is positioned within that market. Products or services are 'mapped' together on a Positioning map. This allows them to be compared and contrasted in relation to each other. Marketers decide upon a competitive position which enables them to distinguish their own products from the offerings of their competition.

The marketer would draw out the map and decide upon a label for each axis. They could be political cost (variable 1) and ease of implementation (variable 2). The individual products are then mapped out next to each other. Any gaps could be regarded as possible areas for new products.

Trout and Ries suggest a six-step question framework for successful positioning:

1. What position do you currently own?
2. What position do you want to own?
3. Whom you have to defeat to own the position you want.
4. Do you have the resources to do it?
5. Can you persist until you get there?
6. Are your tactics supporting the positioning objective you set?

Benefit and Competition

The three core elements of positioning – how a think tank issue is positioned in relation to the other competing position and messages – are Target, Benefit and Competition. The target is the part of the audience who will be interested, the benefit is why they will be interested, and the competition refers to the why this benefit-target combination is unique compared to competing messages. For this reason,

'it's a useful discipline to compose just one sentence which welds together the three elements that position your own offer, even if you are unlikely use it verbatim in actual advertisement [or message].' (Lattimer, p93)

For instance, a research project in Malawi might summarise its position as: 'Reducing subsidies on fertiliser is now the only way (competition) in which the agricultural ministry (target) can release much needed fund for investment in irrigation (benefit).'

