Positioning – a literature review

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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
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 Keronen, 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 Lorial, 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 firm’s 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
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.
Table 1. Journal-wise distribution of articles

| Journal                              | Articles |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| British Food Journal                 | 1        |
| Business Horizons                    | 3        |
| Business Horizons                    | 1        |
| Business Strategy Review             | 1        |
| European Business Review             | 1        |
| Industrial Marketing Management      | 3        |
| International Journal of Service Industry Management | 1 |
| International Journal of Bank Marketing | 1 |
| International Journal of Business Excellence | 1 |
| International Journal of Research in Marketing | 1 |
| Journal of Advertising               | 1        |
| Journal of Advertising Research      | 1        |
| Journal of Financial Services Marketing | 1 |
| Journal of International Business Studies | 1 |
| Journal of Irish Business and Administrative Research | 1 |
| Journal of Knowledge Management, Economics and Information Technology | 1 |
| Journal of Marketing                | 2        |
| Journal of Marketing Communications  | 2        |
| Journal of Marketing Management      | 3        |
| Journal of Marketing Research        | 2        |
| Journal of Marketing theory and Practice, | 2 |
| Journal of Product and Brand Management | 2 |
| Journal of Product and Innovation Management | 3 |
| Journal of Services Marketing        | 1        |
| Journal of Strategic Marketing       | 1        |
| Journal of Vacation Marketing        | 1        |
| Marketing Intelligence and Planning  | 2        |
| Marketing Letters                    | 1        |
| Marketing Research                   | 1        |
| Marketing Science                    | 1        |
| Planning Review                      | 1        |
| The Journal of Brand Management      | 1        |
| The Journal of Business Strategy     | 1        |

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.

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## 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)
| 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 for 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. |

Table A1. (continued)
| 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 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)
| S. no. | Author/year | Definitions |
|-------|-------------|-------------|
| 59.   | Berkowitz et al. (1992) | Product positioning refers to the place an offering occupies in consumers' minds 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 compete 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 firm's 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) | 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. |
| 69.   | Muhlbacher et al. (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. |
| 70.   | Palmer (1994) | 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. |
| 71.   | Belch and Belch (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. |
| 72.   | Jobber (1995) | Positioning is the problem of "selecting product attribute levels to maximize a firm's objectives. |
| 73.   | Kaul and Rao (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. |
| 74.   | Keegan (1995) | Positioning is the perception targeted consumers have of firms' offerings relative to that of competitors. |
| 75.   | Kinnear et al. (1995) | Positioning is the process of building and maintaining a distinctive image relative to other competing brands. |
| 76.   | Javalgi et al. (1995) | Positioning concerns the perceptions and preferences consumers have in regard to 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)
| 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.
| 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 to 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)
| 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)
| 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. Positioning – a literature review

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