Unit 5
POSITIONING, PERCEPTUAL MAPPING AND BRANDING

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Construct a perceptual map
- Develop positioning strategies
- Recognize the power of brand images and learn how they are established

Segmentation means grouping similar types of consumers together. Targeting means choosing the segment to which you want to market. Segmentation and targeting both act like a funnel, focusing your marketing on consumers you want to attract. Positioning means choosing the image you want your product to have in the minds of your target consumers – an image of a distinctive product not found elsewhere and superior to the products of competitors.

Using Perceptual Mapping to Determine Positioning

The environment is filled with an excess of advertising and promotional images, messages, and symbols that, in the name of offering a variety of choices, tend to distract consumers in the choices they make. One goal of positioning is to win the consumer’s attention and loyalty to your tourist product (often by creating a brand image). To be successful, a product must be
remembered. It has to be distinguished from all other similar products. Research shows that
products are remembered by categories. Each category contains a ranking with a leader or
preferred product at the top, a challenger near the top, and several followers in the middle and
bottom. People will buy leading products if they can find them and afford them, and
challenger products as substitutes. Fewer people will choose to buy follower products.

Perceputual mapping is done in different ways. The perceptual map below shows how
consumers perceive two attributes of a company’s product as compared with competitors’
products, using a two-by-two matrix.

Perceputual Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Image</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Quality</td>
<td>Low Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Quality</td>
<td>High Price</td>
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<td>Low Price</td>
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Perceptional maps also can be created to probe images that tourists have of different tourist
attractions. For example, tourists can be asked to list the two most similar attractions among a
list of several attractions and the two most dissimilar attractions. Through statistical analysis,
a perceptual map can be drawn that shows several different tourist destinations and the
attributes that the interviewed tourists have in their minds of each of the destinations. For
example, one study found that the interview sample associated Bush Gardens in
Williamsburg, Virginia as an economical destination, whereas the same sample associated
Marineland of the Pacific as having the least waiting time to visit the attraction. Perception
mapping is a strong tool that probes consumer associations of tourism destinations in relation
to attributes of convenience, excitement, learning, etc.

**Positioning**

According to Al Ries and Jack Trout, “positioning is the first body of thought that comes to
groups with...our over communicated society,” (Positioning: The Battle for your Mind, NY,
Warner Books. 1993). Every advanced society is saturated with images, messages, symbols,
and signs that distract people in the name of market efficiency. Virtually every organization,
for-profit and non-profit, is in the business of reaching the minds of consumers, and reaching
them quicker and more effectively than their competitors. One way to capture consumer
attention is to communicate the high quality and value of a line of products and services. In
automotives, for example, Mercedes-Benz accomplishes this. Quantas Airline has built a
reputation as a high-service and innovative airline of quality. Four Seasons Hotels have built
a strong reputation for service and elegance. In these examples, their service quality
differentiates them from many of their competitors. A second way to attract consumer
attention is to develop distinctive products that appeal to particular niche markets. Accor’s Coralia Hotels, for example, appeal to tourists who desire exotic settings for relaxation, discovery, and adventure. A third way is to promote products and services that are only found in a single organization or place. The Louvre in Paris and the Uffizi Gallery in Florence are incomparable art tourist attractions.

The main point of positioning is to develop in the consumer’s mind a positive image and association of a given product. Thus, when a consumer wants a bar of soap, he or she immediately will think of Dove Soap and purchase that to the exclusive of other and similar soaps. When a traveler seeks a classic old hotel in the heart of a great city, successful positioning will dispose the traveler to think automatically of The Drake Hotel in Chicago, The Waldorf-Astoria in New York, and The Fairmont in San Francisco.

**Brand Image**

A branded product or service is a form of positioning. To the consumer, the brand means high and consistent quality and reliability. Brands simplify the choices that have to be made in purchases by the consumer. Brand identity is a special asset that companies have to maintain not only through quality, but also through promotion and advertising. Branded products carry with them a promise of quality and excellence that organizations have to work hard to maintain. In the tourist and hospitality industry, given its high manpower and human services, the safeguarding of brand quality becomes vitally connected to the morale of staff and the quality of the services they offer. Another example of this is the following: a family of four that purchases a travel package (airline, hotel resort, attractions) is likely to view the entire travel outing as a single experience. A mistake in one facet of this experience can tarnish the entire travel experience and each of the tourist and hospitality companies involved.

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**Suggested Activity**

1. **Begin by choosing any two attributes you think are important about your tourist product.** For example, you could choose “quality” and “price”. Or “adventure” and “cultural heritage.” Or “friendly” and “luxurious.” Map out the tradeoffs that exist among these attributes? Can all of the expectations be accommodated in a single destination?

2. **Draw a two-by-two matrix.** This is done by drawing two lines, one vertical and the other horizontal so that they cross. The lower portion of the vertical axis is labeled with one negative product attribute; the higher portion of the axis with a positive product attribute. Positive values are put on the upper portion of the vertical axis and the right portion of the horizontal. Using this matrix, focus on two attributes that are quite important to tourists and the tourist trade. Which attributes have you chosen?

Typically, 100–200 respondents are given several perceptional maps and will write eight to ten competing tourist brand names on each map. If you make the maps into grids with numerical values on each axis, scoring results are easier. Results are analyzed by mean value.

By comparing means, you can see if your product is perceived as strong relative to your competitors, or weak. You can also see if there are “holes” in the market that could
present fresh opportunities. And you can see if several competitors are perceived as offering similar desirable products, which could be a threat.

Suggested Activity

1. Choose one destination you know well.
   
   A. Write a general description of this destination in 25 words or less:

   B. Describe the consumers who are desired as the target segment in 25 words or less:

   C. Describe two competitors of this destination in 25 words or less each:

       Competitor A

       Competitor B

2. Based on the descriptions of the three destinations, choose six attributes you think are important about your tourist product. Create perceptual maps, using two attributes on each map.

3. Reexamine the maps with the three destinations. Using your destination as the point of reference, do you see any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats in the market that can challenge your tourist product or challenge your competitor’s?

4. Compare the results of the research. Of the three destinations, which will most likely appeal to the target consumer group? Why?