

Perceptual Mapping/Positioning Analysis (Download)



Many marketers use perceptual and preference maps to scope out the landscape of customers' minds. At the basic level, these maps take stated, numerical evaluations of the key attributes of the brands as rated by customers and translate that information into a picture or map. Perceptual maps provide pictorial representations of the marketplace that are much more useful to managers than anecdotes or even rich numerical data. Designed appropriately, these maps do for a marketer what EKG charts do for a cardiologist seeking a quick but comprehensive diagnosis of a patient's condition.

By linking preference point shares to economic value of individual customers (or segments) through transactional analysis or just self-reported category spend, we can develop approximations of the potential "lift" associated with moving a brand's positioning in one direction or another. This lift, when compared to the estimated cost of achieving the new "positioning" in the minds of the target customers, provides the basis for an assessment of the ROI associated with each option.

This tool has proven useful for many organizations seeking to determine the market potential of a positioning for a new offering, to assess the cannibalization risk of consolidating existing offerings, and to calculate the ROI or NPV of positioning changes in the marketplace. It can also be useful for:

- finding unmet (or inadequately met) customer needs and wants, as in the American Airlines example;
- identifying and leveraging product strengths effectively; and
- determining how best to overcome product weaknesses.

While perceptual and preference maps are only the starting point in a more disciplined approach to positioning, they offer a big step forward for many organizations struggling to move beyond opinion and emotional rhetoric.

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