

## CHAPTER 1

# BRAND POSITIONING

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**W**hen TiVo launched its digital video recorder (DVR) system in 1999, the leading technology market research firm Forrester predicted, “These hard-drive machines will take off faster than any other consumer electronics product has before.” Forrester projected that there would be greater than 50 percent household penetration by 2005. They were optimistic because TiVo allowed viewers to store a library of shows tailored to their preferences, pause or rewind live TV, and quickly skip through commercials. In addition, TiVo was easy to program. In its initial advertising, TiVo announced that it would revolutionize television by empowering viewers to “Watch what you want, when you want.”

Although TiVo aficionados love it and recommend it with an almost evangelical zeal, sales have fallen far short of Forrester’s (and others’) enthusiastic initial forecasts. As of January 2005, only 2.3 million households (slightly less than 2 percent) had TiVo. At the same time, the adoption rate of DVRs was increasing as cable companies began to embrace the technology and offer their own systems. But TiVo’s future remained uncertain. We contend that a critical factor in TiVo’s lackluster performance was the absence of a clear brand positioning.

Brand positioning refers to the specific, intended meaning for a brand in consumers’ minds. More precisely, a brand’s 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. In the case of TiVo, the brand was positioned as empowering consumers, but how and why it accomplished this goal was never clear. Was TiVo like a VCR in allowing consumers to record programs for playback at a later time? If so, what made it a superior means of performing this function? If TiVo wasn’t a better version of the

VCR, then what was it and why was it uniquely empowering? Advertisements used to launch TiVo failed to answer these questions.

This chapter addresses the challenge of developing a strong brand positioning. We begin by outlining the key elements of a brand's position. These include the goal that the customer can expect to achieve by using the brand (frame of reference) and an indication of why the brand is superior in achieving the goal (point of difference). This is followed by a more detailed assessment of how to select an appropriate customer goal, create a superiority claim, and orchestrate these elements to develop an effective position. We conclude by discussing how a brand's positioning can be evolved over time.

## POSITIONING FUNDAMENTALS

A statement of a brand's position is typically developed by the brand manager. Ideally, it is grounded in insight about the goals and perceptions of a targeted group of consumers. Managers develop formal positioning statements to ensure a shared vision for the brand throughout the organization and to guide tactical thinking. Accordingly, a brand positioning statement may be distributed widely within the firm and even shared with the firm's partners (i.e., advertising agency and retailers). Although the positioning may be written in consumer-friendly language, consumers are not expected to read the positioning statement. Rather, the consumer will see the end results of this positioning statement—the brand design, pricing, communications, and channels of distribution.

Formats and terminology for presenting a brand's position vary by company, but certain components are generally viewed as critical:

1. A brief description of the *targeted consumers* in terms of some identifying characteristics, such as demographics and psychographics (activities, interests, opinions). These target characteristics are typically selected on the basis of category and brand usage.
2. A statement of the target's goal that will be served by consuming the brand, commonly referred to as the *frame of reference*. The frame of reference may guide the choice of targets, identify situations in which the brand might be used, and define relevant competitors (i.e., brands that claim to serve the same goal).
3. An assertion regarding why the brand is superior to alternatives in the frame of reference, referred to as the *point of difference*.
4. Supporting evidence for claims related to the frame of reference and point of difference, referred to as *reasons to believe*. This final element is

more important when the claims are relatively abstract (credence claims) versus concrete (verifiable) because concrete claims often are their own reason to believe.

These items may be represented in a formal positioning statement. To illustrate, consider the following positioning statement for Black & Decker's DeWalt line of power tools:

To the tradesman who uses his power tools to make a living and cannot afford downtime on the job (*target*), DeWalt professional power tools (*frame of reference*) are more dependable than other brands of professional power tools (*point of difference*) because they are engineered to the brand's historic high-quality standards and are backed by Black & Decker's extensive service network and guarantee to repair or replace any tool within 48 hours (*reasons to believe*).

The above positioning targets the tradesman and focuses on his goal of generating a reliable income by practicing his trade. DeWalt promises to help the tradesman achieve this goal more effectively than other brands of power tools by being more dependable. The essence of this positioning was captured in communications to the tradesman that promised "No downtime with DeWalt."

If Black & Decker had instead wished to target the Do-It-Yourselfer (DIY), a different frame of reference and point of difference would have been necessary. Here, the goal might be to complete home repair projects in a professional manner, and DeWalt might claim superiority to other power tools in achieving that goal by noting that its tools are the tools of choice by the professional tradesman. This alternative approach is illustrated below.

To the Do-It-Yourselfer who takes pride in achieving a professional result when doing home improvement projects, DeWalt power tools are superior to other power tools in helping you create a high-quality finish because they are engineered for and chosen by tradesmen, who depend on their tools to make a living.

Occasionally, a brand is positioned to more than one target. Indeed, a common growth strategy is to seek additional targets when demand within the initial target becomes saturated. For example, once DeWalt strongly established the brand among tradesmen, Black & Decker might

attempt to grow the brand by targeting DIYs with the positioning just described.

However, adopting such growth strategies requires caution. Although DIYs may wish to identify with professional tradesmen, the reverse is unlikely to be true. Thus, when attempting to reach multiple targets, it is important to consider whether one target will be aware of the other target's consumption of the brand and, if so, how feelings about the brand will be affected.

In fact, the introduction of the DeWalt line of professional power tools was motivated by the need to manage the perception of two targets for products marketed under the Black & Decker brand. The tradesman was the target for Black & Decker branded Professional Power Tools, and consumers were the target for a less rugged line of Black & Decker branded power tools, as well as small appliances (i.e., Black & Decker popcorn poppers, waffle irons, and Dustbuster). As consumers' acceptance of Black & Decker branded products grew, tradesmen's acceptance of the brand declined. Apparently, tradesmen preferred power tool brands (such as Makita and Milwaukee) that were not in their customers' tool boxes or their wives' kitchens. Black & Decker only regained its dominant position with tradesmen when it launched a separate (DeWalt) brand targeted solely at tradesmen.

## FRAME OF REFERENCE

When developing a brand position, the frame of reference can be represented in many ways. These frames of reference fall into two general categories: frames that are depicted in terms of product features and frames that are represented by more abstract consumers' goals.

### **Frame of Reference Based on Product Features**

A brand can establish a frame of reference by claiming membership in a product category. This strategy assumes that the consumer will understand (infer) that the brand serves the goal that is associated with the product category. Thus, DeWalt might use the professional, portable power tools category as a frame of reference, implying that DeWalt competes with other power tool brands offering professional quality performance. Coca-Cola uses soft drinks as a frame of reference, conveying that it is a beverage that tastes good with casual meals. And Subway uses fast-food restaurants as a frame of reference, signaling that it offers quick, tasty meals to be eaten on the go.

Another means of conveying a brand's frame of reference is to single out a specific competitor that has features exemplifying the goal a brand wishes to

achieve. DeWalt might compare itself to Makita, and Subway might compare itself to McDonald's. A specific competitor may be chosen as the frame of reference when consumers view that competitor as the gold standard for the category goal or benefit. For example, at the time that DeWalt was launched, Makita was widely seen as *the* tradesman's power tool brand. Thus, comparing DeWalt to Makita would have been an efficient, concrete way for DeWalt to convey that it too offered professional quality performance.

Choosing category membership or a specific competitor as the frame of reference implies that the brand competes with firms that share a number of concrete features. Thus, Subway has positioned itself as a fast-food restaurant chain, conveying that it is similar to other fast-food restaurants, such as McDonald's and Burger King. Like its category competitors, Subway provides quick service, numerous, convenient locations, and low prices. The features that are shared by members within a category are referred to as *points of parity*.<sup>1</sup>

Presenting points of parity to customers offers yet another means of representing the frame of reference. This approach is viable when the target customer is well aware of the relationship between a set of features and a specific category but is unfamiliar with the brand itself. For example, highlighting that Subway has the features associated with the fast-food category would help customers infer that Subway is a fast-food restaurant.

Caution is warranted in using points of parity to define the frame of reference. If a brand does not possess attributes associated with a category, obviously it cannot use parity to align itself with that category. For example, when Motorola launched its personal digital assistant, Envoy, the product served the goal of wireless communication that was associated with pagers. However, it would not have been credible for Envoy to claim that it was an enhanced version of a pager because it was too big (the size of a VHS tape) and too expensive (initially \$1,500); it did not belong in the pager category, and consumers knew it.

Nevertheless, there are circumstances in which brands use product categories with which they have little feature overlap as the frame of reference because they offer a clear way of highlighting the goal. For example, when Invisalign launched a new approach to straightening teeth, traditional braces served as the frame of reference. Although there is little or no feature similarity between traditional braces and Invisalign, consumers associate traditional braces with the goal of achieving a perfect smile. Invisalign promised to achieve this goal more effectively than metal braces by using clear, molded plastic trays that are invisible during the adjustment process.<sup>2</sup> However, there are risks associated with such an approach. The lack of feature similarity allowed orthodontists who were skeptical about Invisalign to

question whether the system would in fact achieve the same goal as traditional braces. (Additional discussion of the frame of reference concept appears in Chapter 15.)

### **Consumer Goals as the Basis for the Frame of Reference**

Although frames of reference are often represented in terms of product features, there are times when it is appropriate to choose a frame of reference based on abstract consumer goals. In the DeWalt power tools example described earlier in the chapter, launching the brand with the professional power tools category as the frame of reference made sense. It clearly categorized the brand and highlighted a point of difference that was meaningful to the tradesman—“no downtime” on the job. However, once the brand was established in the professional power tools category, a more abstract frame of reference related to the emotional goals of tradesmen might have been employed. Tradesmen (like most people) seek the acceptance and regard of their peers. This goal-based frame might be communicated by placing the power tools in the context of a job site and showing a group of tradesmen asking advice from the alpha male on the site, who is using DeWalt tools. Here, DeWalt tools would help tradesmen achieve the goal of fitting in. Having the “right” tools would help to achieve this goal, just as would driving the right truck, or hanging out at the right bar.<sup>3</sup>

A consumer goal-based frame of reference may also be helpful in planning the marketing strategy because it typically identifies potential competitors beyond those in the category where the brand holds membership. For example, the frame of reference for Coca-Cola might be soft drinks. However, the goals associated with the soft drink category—being refreshed or sociable—also may be met by non-soft drink competitors such as bottled waters or sports drinks. Focusing on consumers’ goals in selecting the frame of reference might help Coca-Cola to assess the threat to the soft drink posed by these competitors, and if it is substantial, to select points of difference that address this threat.

When launching a truly new product, it is often tempting to employ an abstract frame of reference because the product is likely to lack the points of parity necessary to claim membership in an established product category. As noted earlier, Motorola’s Envoy served the goal of wireless communication, but it lacked sufficient points of parity to claim membership in the pager (or any other established) category. Thus, an abstract frame of reference of staying in touch while on the go was employed. Envoy failed, in part, because consumers did not understand Envoy’s role in relation to the many other

products they might use to stay in touch when on the go (e.g., pagers, cell phones, and e-mail).

TiVo followed a strategy similar to that of Envoy and had similar difficulty gaining customers. TiVo was positioned as serving the abstract goal of viewer freedom and was not associated with a specific product category. Ads depicted a person engaging in self-expressive acts such as removing parking meters and driving the wrong way down a one-way street to represent the feeling of freedom that comes from owning TiVo. Although TiVo did enhance personal freedom, the viewer was left to conjure up the TiVo features that would accomplish this goal. The slogan “TiVo, TV your way” indicated that the freedom pertained to television watching, but it was a mystery to consumers just how TiVo accomplished this goal. A more successful strategy might have involved comparing TiVo to a familiar category. For example, TiVo might have been compared to the home video category, which represents the freedom to choose your own movie whenever you like.

Thus, when introducing a new product, a frame of reference based on abstract consumer goals is likely to be inappropriate. Framing the brand concretely using other products and product features is necessary because consumers learn about new brands by relating them to familiar ones. Palm Pilot understood this point. In contrast to Envoy, this personal digital assistant was launched using electronic organizers as a concrete frame of reference. The claim that Palm Pilot was an electronic organizer was credible because Palm Pilot only served the key functions associated with electronic organizers. It was an address book, a date book, and a to-do list. In contrast to Envoy and TiVo, Palm Pilot enjoyed rapid adoption, selling more than one million units in its 18 months on the market.

More generally, whether a frame of reference is based on product features or abstract consumer goals depends on the decisions at hand. When developing a broad strategic plan, the positioning may be discussed in relatively abstract, visionary terms. When executing the plan, the positioning is more likely to be articulated in terms of a specific target, product category, and point of difference. Translating the abstract consumer goal-based positioning into more specific terms assists retailers, who must decide where to shelve the brand. It also provides guidance to consumers, who must locate the brand in order to purchase it. Kraft’s 2003 launch of the easy-to-prepare dinner kit FreshPrep illustrates the importance of having a concrete frame of reference when making tactical decisions. Both grocers and consumers were uncertain about whether the product belonged at the meat counter, in the deli case, or in the dairy section, and this confusion was a contributing factor in the product’s failure to gain acceptance in the marketplace.

## POINT OF DIFFERENCE

The point of difference indicates how the brand is superior to other alternatives within the frame of reference. Like the frame of reference, the point of difference can be expressed at various levels of abstraction. Some brands claim relatively concrete, functional benefits such as superior performance or greater economy. Other brands promise more abstract, emotional benefits related to how important, special, or good the consumer will feel as a result of using the brand. Attribute, image, or attitude information provides a reason for believing the functional or emotional benefit.

### **Functional Benefits**

In many categories, brands can be distinguished by their functional benefits. Gillette has traditionally differentiated its razors from those of its competitors by claiming to provide a closer, more comfortable shave. In contrast, BIC has focused on superior economy in terms of saving time and money. BIC promises a good (enough) shave more conveniently and less expensively than competing brands.

Superiority on functional benefits gains credibility when it is supported by reasons to believe. This support may take the form of tangible product features. In 2005, Gillette's M3Power was the only wet shaver that had battery-powered vibration to stimulate hair, which lent credence to the claim that it provided a closer, more comfortable shave than Schick's Quattro. In our earlier DeWalt example, the brand's extensive service network and the promise to replace any tool that could not be repaired in 48 hours made the claim of "no downtime with DeWalt" believable. Likewise, with fast-food chain Subway, nutrition information posted in stores and printed on napkins provided a reason to believe Subway's assertion that it offered healthier fast food than its competitors. And at Wal-Mart, out-of-the-way locations and a no-frills atmosphere reinforced the retailer's differentiation on the basis of low prices.

The product attributes presented as reasons to believe a functional benefit are not always technically relevant.<sup>4</sup> Alberto-Culver added real silk to its Silkience shampoo to reinforce the claim that the shampoo left hair silkier than other shampoos. Although adding silk to the shampoo was irrelevant to how silky it left hair, it reinforced the association between silkiness and the shampoo in consumers' minds. Similarly, Folgers supported its claim of superior taste by noting that its coffee beans were mountain grown. The claim was accurate but largely irrelevant to the functional benefit, because most coffee is mountain grown.



Superiority claims also can be supported by the brand image, which is represented by who uses the brand and when it is used. For example, a person with expertise in a product category may support a claim of superior performance. When golf champion Tiger Woods endorsed Nike, he was providing a compelling reason to believe that Nike offered superior gear for golfers. An endorsement by someone known for being tight with a dollar (comedians Jack Benny and Minnie Pearl had this reputation) would lend support to a claim involving superior economy. Similarly, associating a brand with use on occasions of special significance (i.e., a wine being consumed at a wedding in a Paul Masson ad) may support claims of superior performance, whereas associating a brand with use on occasions when cost is likely to be an issue (i.e., the need to feed a band of teenage boys, as depicted in a Wal-Mart ad) may support claims of superior economy.

### **Emotional Benefits**

Differentiating a brand in terms of functional benefits is attractive because such benefits are relatively concrete and, thus, can be communicated to consumers and trade partners simply and clearly. However, functional benefits are typically linked to more abstract benefits that provide a basis for making an *emotional connection* with the brand. For example, McDonald's promoted its cleanliness and good-tasting food as a basis for implying that eating at McDonald's was fun.

Emotional resonance sometimes emerges independent of an underlying functional benefit. Himalaya perfume claimed to make women feel refreshed and enticing. Emotional benefits shift the emphasis from the brand and its functions to the user and the feelings to be gained by using the brand. These benefits are related to enduring, basic human needs and desires.

Some brands promise emotional benefits that revolve around self-presentation and a person's relationship with others. Motorcycle manufacturer Harley-Davidson promises its customers that they will be seen as strong, rebellious, and independent and will enjoy membership in a club of like-minded others (i.e., the Harley Owners Group (HOG)). Abercrombie promises peer acceptance to its teen market because the company has historically offered hip or trendy clothing styles. The Tiffany blue box that arrives on Valentine's Day is a powerful message that is likely to evoke an affectionate response from the recipient. Brands that promote this type of emotional benefit are sometimes referred to as image or "badge" brands, reflecting their role in communicating with others.

Other brands claim to offer emotional benefits that are more internally

focused. These benefits may be related to consumers' desire for self-expression, personal growth and achievement, and self-determination. Starbucks makes a great cup of coffee, but the brand has been built on much more than the functional benefits that it delivers. Starbucks' regulars have traditionally ordered their cup of java in highly personalized ways ("one Venti, decaf, skim cappuccino, dry") and enjoy their drinks in comfy chairs with smooth jazz in the background. A trip to Starbucks promises self-expression and self-indulgence in an otherwise unfulfilling day.

Like functional benefits, emotional benefits are often grounded in product attributes or the image that is represented by the people and occasions of use. The unique, powerful (and trademarked!) sound of a Harley motorcycle conveys rebelliousness, and Starbucks' background music and upholstered couches signal self-indulgence.

In addition, some brands rely on depicting the feeling experienced by brand users as a means of supporting their point of difference. Apple's iPod is positioned as a carefree, fun-loving brand. This positioning is supported by its bright colors, easy downloading, and wearable styling. However, the most compelling support for the point of difference may be the attitude of iPod users, which is depicted in the dancing silhouettes in the company's ads—these folks are obviously having a blast grooving to their music! The Gap has embraced a similar carefree, casual chic positioning in the clothing category. Not surprisingly, it too has supplemented information about product features (i.e., bright colors and relaxed fit) with communications that represent the attitude of the clothing wearer. Ads have included khaki wearers dancing to popular tunes and fashion maven Sarah Jessica Parker playfully accessorizing her Gap gear.

## SUSTAINING A POSITION OVER TIME

Once a brand position is well established, focus centers on sustaining the position. In a few instances, a brand's frame of reference and point of difference can be sustained without change. Along these lines, Marlboro has not altered its cigarette positioning since the mid-1950s. The position is empowerment, which is supported by masculine imagery such as cowboys and race cars. For many years, Charmin's has positioned its brand of toilet tissue as squeezably soft. In these cases, a critical motivation for using the brand and the context in which it is used have not changed, and thus it has not been necessary for the brand to change in order to maintain its relevance.

In most cases, however, some modification of the position is needed to sustain a brand over time. Two classes of strategies can be used to enhance a

brand's position. The first is fortifying the brand position, which entails maintaining the same brand and position but embellishing the positioning. The second approach involves leveraging, where a positioning is used to extend the brand equity to new products.<sup>5</sup>

### **Fortifying Strategies**

Two strategies may be employed to fortify a brand. One approach is to modernize the way in which the brand is presented to the consumer. An alternative approach is to represent the positioning in a more or less abstract manner than previously, using a technique called "laddering."

**Modern Instantiation** Once a brand has a well-established point of difference, it is difficult to change. Dash was a superior detergent that was positioned as performing well in front-loading washing machines because of its low level of suds. When front-loaders declined in popularity, so did the demand for Dash. An effort was made to reposition the brand by featuring other attributes such as its deodorizing capability. But years of positioning Dash as a low-suds detergent could not be overcome. Reebok was initially positioned as a women's athletic shoe. This positioning was supported by offering comfort as the point of difference—the shoes were manufactured using soft garment leather. Despite extensive marketing efforts over the past 20 years to change that image by using male celebrities and depicting athletic male pursuits, Reebok's persona has remained feminine, and today the brand is still considered a women's shoe.

If an established brand cannot readily change its position to accommodate changing consumer tastes and competition, it needs to sustain the relevance of its already-established position. In most instances, this is achieved by identifying modern ways to represent the brand. For example, Special K historically positioned itself as the ready-to-eat cereal that offered a healthy way of keeping fit. For many years, fitness was defined in terms of being slender. However, in the face of growing displeasure with the objectification of women, a modern representation of fitness was needed. Special K sustained the fit-functional benefit by redefining it as athletic and active rather than thin. Supermodel Cindy Crawford served as the spokesperson to personify the fit benefit. In effect, Special K's benefit was not changed. But it received a contemporary depiction in order to sustain the brand's franchise.

In some instances a contemporary representation requires adjustments beyond changing the spokesperson and the advertising. It also requires changes in other elements of the marketing mix. For many years, per capita

consumption of milk had declined in the United States and many other parts of the world. Efforts were made to reverse this trend through advertising. In a national print campaign during the mid-1990s, celebrities were shown with a milk mustache endorsing the nutritional value of milk. And at about the same time in California, a television campaign was aired that illustrated the consequences of running out of milk. The “Got milk?” slogan became so popular in California that it was used to promote milk in other countries. By the late 1990s, the campaigns were merged and featured celebrities with a milk mustache asking, “Got milk?”

As creative as these campaigns were, they weren’t ultimately successful in reversing the per capita decline in milk consumption. People already knew that milk was nutritious. They were avoiding milk because it contained fat, and low-fat diets had become immensely popular. Thus, a contemporary representation of nutrition required consumers to understand that milk could be nutritious, taste good, *and* be low-fat. Developing a contemporary package was a first step in developing a modern version of a healthful beverage. When the category finally provided a low-fat, vitamin-enriched milk that tasted good, the decline in consumption began to slow by 2003.

**Laddering** Pantene shampoo was a minor brand in the early 1990s when it was acquired by Procter & Gamble. Pantene’s ingredient, ProV, served as a basis for claiming that the brand would offer shiny hair, which implied that it would ensure healthy hair. Within several years, this positioning propelled Pantene to the leading share brand in the category.

The Pantene strategy illustrates the effective use of another fortifying strategy called laddering. One way to ladder is to give multiple reasons to believe a brand’s functional benefits. Pantene’s position as providing the healthiest hair was supported not only by its ProV ingredient, but also by the fact that it had different shampoos to make hair softer or feel thicker. Thus, *laddering down* can serve as a means of sustaining a brand’s position by presenting additional reasons to believe the brand’s functional benefit.

Pantene not only laddered down by supporting its shiny hair benefit in terms of the Pro-V and other reasons to believe, but it also used shiny hair to imply a more abstract emotional benefit, healthy hair. In turn, healthy hair might be used to imply a feeling of self-confidence among Pantene users. Thus, a ladder is established with tangible features at the bottom that offer a reason to believe the functional benefit, which indicates what the brand does for the consumer. In turn, the functional benefit provides a basis for inferring emotional benefits, which describe how the functional benefit makes the consumer feel. Laddering up from a tangible feature to a func-

tional benefit to an emotional benefit provides a means of sustaining a brand's position.

In summary, laddering up entails the transformation of the marketing effort from focusing on the brand to focusing on the customer. At the lowest level of the ladder, attribute information is used to depict the unique features of the brand. At the highest level of the ladder, the focus is on the person rather than the brand. Emphasis is given to how the target customer feels as a result of using the brand. In so doing, a brand may distinguish itself from competitors even if other brands eventually achieve attribute parity.

However, laddering does not imply that the goal is necessarily to sustain a brand position by moving to the top of the ladder. For some products, most consumers are unlikely to develop a deep emotional attachment to the brand. For example, lightbulbs are perceived as functional by many segments of the population. Brand positioning to such a target entails specifying a functional benefit (convenience due to long bulb life) and perhaps sustaining the brand position by presenting multiple reasons to believe the benefit (Philips Halogena offered a two-year guarantee) or by developing a modern instantiation of the benefit's application (Philips ran advertisements showing their lightbulbs outlasting a young man's four years at college). In other instances, only the emotional benefit might be appropriate to present. For example, image products such as luxury goods and fragrances are not marketed on the basis of tangible features or functional benefits, but rather on the emotional benefits that resonate with consumers, such as feeling empowered or unique. (Further discussion of laddering for business to business brands appears in Chapter 9.)

### **Leveraging Strategies**

Whereas fortifying strategies involve bolstering a current brand's position, leveraging strategies entail using some aspect of the brand's positioning as the basis for launching new products. These new products may broaden the brand's frame of reference or demonstrate the relevance of the brand's point of difference in a new category.

***Broadening the Frame of Reference*** Oreo is a cookie sandwich made with two chocolate cookies and a vanilla creme filling. Its frame of reference has traditionally been that of a special treat (see Chapter 15). To increase the demand for the brand, Oreo was extended to a larger snack position. This entailed producing mini Oreos that were sold in a snack pack. Not only were these cookies distributed in the grocery aisle of the supermarket, but the new mini Oreos package was also frequently available at checkout, which is

consistent with a snack offering. And like other snack products, the line was extended so that it came with dark filling and creme cookies as well as many other flavors. The result was a substantial increase in Oreo sales. Thus, extensions of the Oreo brand expanded its frame of reference from special occasions to more frequent snacking.

When broadening the frame of reference, it is important not to undermine customers' initial motivation for buying the brand. For example, a diet aid was positioned as a lunch substitute (eat two diet wafers in lieu of lunch). In an effort to increase demand, the brand was also marketed as a snack. This confused users about the product's appropriate usage. If it was a snack, then surely it wasn't adequate as a meal substitute. The result was reduced lunch consumption. In the case of Oreo, Kraft is presumably willing to compromise the "special treat" aspect of Oreo in order to generate more frequent consumption through everyday snacking.

***Leveraging the Point of Difference in New Categories*** Dove is a bar soap that has traditionally dominated its category. Its point of difference is superior moisturizing in a cleansing context. Dove leveraged this equity by launching Dove brand shampoos and conditioners, which extended the moisturizing point of difference into other cleansing categories. A line of deodorants was also launched. This extension had the advantage of a strong point of difference from other deodorants, which did not feature the moisturizing point of difference. Here the challenge was to demonstrate the relevance of moisturizing for the category. Consumers were assured that Dove deodorant was effective in keeping users dry and was better than other brands in limiting razor burn. (Further discussion of how brands can be extended to new categories appears in Chapter 5.)

## CHANGING A POSITION

It is difficult to change the position of a well-established brand. Most efforts to reposition a long-lived brand fail. However, when a brand is entering a new category, change is necessary as competitors arrive on the scene. For example, when Miller introduced the first light beer, the frame of reference was regular beer, and the point of difference was that light beer was less filling than regular beer. When Bud Light entered the category about a decade later, there were now two brands making the claim of less filling. As a result, the "less filling" benefit now was a point of parity that served as the frame of reference for what had become known as the light beer category. In effect, Bud Light's entry into the category turned Miller Lite's point of difference into a

point of parity in the new light beer category. We refer to this repositioning as *reframing* because it is the frame of reference that requires change.

The decline in Miller Lite's sales can be traced in part to its failure to reframe. Lite continued to be represented as less filling. Focusing on this parity claim provided Budweiser with the opportunity to distinguish itself from Lite by claiming that Bud Light was the superior-tasting light beer and using the Budweiser heritage as the reason to believe that benefit.

## SUMMARY

Brand positioning plays a key role in the building and managing of a strong brand by specifying how the brand is related to consumers' goals. It can be thought of as answering three questions: (1) Who should be targeted for brand use? (2) What goal does the brand allow the target to achieve? and (3) Why should the brand be chosen over other brands that achieve the same goal?

The frame of reference is an important and often overlooked element of a brand's position. Viewing the frame of reference as the goal that a brand promises to achieve allows a company to consider competition and growth opportunities outside the brand's own category. The frame of reference also offers guidance about the points of difference that are likely to be meaningful in goal achievement. Once a frame is established in customers' minds, it is difficult to change. However, reframing is necessary when a pioneer brand is faced with a viable second entrant into a category.

A brand's point of difference indicates why it is a superior means of achieving a goal. Points of difference may take the form of functional or emotional benefits. These types of benefits might be closely related in that the implication of a functional benefit (easy to use) serves as the basis for an emotional benefit (free time to explore a passion). Points of difference gain credibility by presenting reasons to believe their veracity. This entails presenting tangible evidence for the benefit, which can take the form of brand attributes, people who use the brand, or the contexts in which a brand is produced or used.

A sustained position provides a barrier to competitive entry. A position may be sustained by fortification of the brand through the development of a modern instantiation of the brand's position or by laddering from more functional to more emotional benefits. Alternatively, leveraging may be used to sustain a brand. This entails a disciplined broadening of the position or the development of extensions that share the brand's position. (For a more detailed discussion of brand extensions, see Chapter 5.)

Perhaps the most important contribution of a sound brand positioning is to offer guidelines for the execution of marketing strategy. Hallmark's greeting cards focus on superior quality in communicating sentiments. The "superior quality" point of difference guides the choice of materials (quality paper and verse), price (high), distribution (Gold Crown stores), advertising (carefully crafted two-minute emotional ads), and media (quality family programming). The "communicating sentiments" frame of reference provides a direction for growth that is based on the brand's heritage. It suggests that in addition to greeting cards, other vehicles for communicating sentiments should be offered, including flowers, candies, and stuffed animals. Thus, effective positioning not only charts the strategy a brand pursues, but directs the choices among alternative ways to execute the strategy.

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## NOTES

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