

# QUIRK'S

Marketing Research Review



## Brand positioning to multiple markets - change the message, not the mission

*Editor's note: Dennis Crowley is president and CEO of Brand Engineers, a Teaneck, N.J., research firm. He can be reached at 201-530-5360. This article appeared in the June 13, 2011, edition of Quirk's e-newsletter.*

**W**hen working with brands that have multiple customer targets, the question often arises whether the brand should tailor its positioning for each group. While this may seem logical, there is a greater benefit to establishing a strong brand position and only changing the messaging as needed.

As with many products, different customer segments may have different reasons for selecting your product. Depending on how these customer segments are defined, each group may find a specific attribute or benefit of your product most appealing to their specific circumstance. For each of these groups your product offers some unique value and resolves an apparent customer need. The temptation to position your product for each of these circumstances is attractive since the customer need is relatively easy to identify and the reason for selecting your product to resolve that need is generally clear. However, in order to maximize the long-term success of your brand you will have a much greater impact by creating one focused, singular position that is relevant across all your brand's audiences.

### **Why not?**

So why not tailor product positioning for each segment? To answer this question, we must answer a slightly different -

but related - question: How do I want my brand to be perceived in the market and in comparison to my competitors? Managers must think about the brand as they would an individual; brands have a personality and a general demeanor that is consistently recognizable (their positioning). In different situations certain traits may be emphasized or de-emphasized (their messages) (e.g., a person might be more intense and focused at work and more relaxed and lighthearted at a ball game). The overriding personality is recognizable to all but they communicate specific aspects more strongly depending on the circumstance.

Brand positioning reflects these same characteristics. All of your potential customers should gather the same perception of the brand that the positioning intends to define. However, your messages will emphasize specific traits or attributes that are particularly important to the segment you are attempting to communicate with. At its core, having multiple positions is completely at odds with your primary goal for defining the positioning in the first place. That is, to create a clear, differentiated perception that appeals to your target customers.

### **How this is done**

BMW is an excellent example of how this is done. BMW targets vehicles to customers from 20-somethings to middle-aged executives to families. It needs to appeal to a wide range of segments who, on the surface, each have very different needs in choosing a vehicle. As BMW successfully did, we push our clients to look beyond the surface needs of each group and look to what it is that unifies these various segments. What

BMW ultimately found was that each group - regardless of whether they wanted a two-door coupe, a large four-door sedan or an SUV - wanted the pleasure of driving a responsive, sports-like automobile that made driving fun. This understanding is reflected in its highly-successful position as "The Ultimate Driving Machine." This positioning transcends individual segments but appeals to each. It allows BMW to tailor its brand message to the various segments and increase the likelihood of getting a prospect into one of its vehicles.

BMW's personality is consistent with all potential customers understanding that whichever vehicle they are in the market for they will get a unique driving experience that they

cannot get in any competitive product. Yet BMW does not present the 3-Series to younger, less-well-established customers in the same way it presents the 7-Series to executives who can afford to spend \$90,000+ on an automobile.

#### **Reinforcing a brand's core values**

Focusing on and reinforcing a brand's core values is more valuable than chasing after varied consumer groups as needs present themselves and evolve. Consumers respect brands that stay true to their mission and find creative ways to bring all customers together under one brand umbrella using different messages. | Q

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