Brand Placement in Establishing Corporate Identity
-A University Example-[1]

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Abstract

With competition becoming ever fiercer, brands must conform to modern marketing and become more influential on consumer perceptions by developing strategies according to the needs and demands of consumers. Hence it is very important to determine how the brand is perceived and placed in the consumer's mind. Branding is a key issue on the modern agenda. As universities have understood the importance of establishing corporate identity and brand placement, they have joined the race and begun developing social strategies to develop their brand values. These include establishing brand belongingness, advertising and promotions and efforts to make the university stand out among similar ones. Brand placement in the minds of users is attempted through the name, logo, colors, characters and fonts representing the university used on clothing, office material and similar. Brand placement efforts include definitions by consumers of the product or service or attempts to distinguish these from those of competitors. This research deals with a clothing brand representing a university, brand image and product perceptions as well as the brand placement efforts. The scanning method was used in the research. The brand of casual clothing used as an example for brand placement as well as similarly known brands were examined for their product variety, prices and consumer portfolios. Measurement devices were prepared for the brand placement of the apparel designed and produced for the university, and a pilot trial was performed. In the pilot trial, a set of questions was asked to a group of randomly chosen 242 people, consisting of academics, university students and administrative staff. The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS 16.0. Findings were given in tables according to status variables. The finding of the research indicate that in brand placing efforts, for the intended consumer the apparel's fabric, stitching and print/embroidery quality, its price, durability, and practicality as well as the design, color scheme, brand reliability and brand image are important. It was also established that the apparel must reflect the university's corporate belongingness.

Keywords: Corporate Identity, Brand Placement, Clothing Brand Placement

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Introduction

In order to reach their targeted market in the face of today's competition, firms must protect and continue their presence. The variety of similar products of near-identical quality on the market fuels competition and makes it hard for consumers to choose among a large number of products and services. The most important identifying element for differentiating a producer's services and products from those of competitors is the brand (Can, 2007: 225).

The brand is the greatest value of a company, as well as the most important element to facilitate sales and ensure recognizability. "The brand is not a product, but the source of the product." Elements that add to the brand value are the probability for demand and its status vis-à-vis its competitors. Branding affects both the corporate identity and the firm's position against competitors (Yanar, Korkmaz, 2005:12).

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as "A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." (Keller, 2003: 3; Odabaşı ve Oyman, 2004; Yanar ve Korkmaz, 2005: 11; Er, 2009:5; Aydınol, 2010: 4; Çavuşoğlu, 2011:2;).

The Turkish Patent Institute defines a brand as "any sign, used by a company on the condition of differentiating its products and/or services from those of another company, that can be expressed particularly through words, including personal names, shapes, letters, numbers, the shapes and packaging of products or similarly, and can be printed and reproduced" (http://www.tpe.gov.tr/TurkPatent Enstitusu/commonContent/MAbout).

For the consumers, the brand is basically an element expressing the functional and emotional qualities of the product that helps them remember the information related to the product and aids in making the purchase decision. As consumers try to choose between alternatives, the brand reduces the risk they take by offering a continuous guarantee of quality. Companies have to ensure that their products, and the marketing related to these, are noticeably different from those of their competitors. This effort to diversify the product and endow it with meaning for the consumer is known as brand positioning or position determining for the product (Kurtuldu, 2005: 93).

Brand positioning is defined as the pursuance of practices for the recognition of the products and the brands constituting their identity by the consumer and for greater recollection by the consumer than competitors (Erdem, Karsu, Memiş, Yıldız, 2010: 353). In general, brand positioning is the process by which the presence of the company's products or services on the market are defined. For the consumers, brand recognition is the way they perceive of the position the brand holds in the market (Çifçi, Cop, 2007:3: Yanar, Korkmaz, 2005: 14). In the positioning process, the targeted market structure, consumer profiles and competitor must be considered and researched in multiple dimensions. In marketing, positioning is the process of creating an image or identity for the brand, the conceptions to be created in the minds of the target group (Buluç, 2013:159).

For an impactful brand positioning and differentiation from competitors according to brand qualities and characteristics, the following have to be determined:

- ✓ Which elements of the brand identity and value proposal should be part of the positioning and communication

- ✓ Which of these will attract the attention of the consumer

- ✓ Who the competitors will be

- ✓ Who the primary and secondary target consumers will be

- ✓ Whether the existing image needs to be developed

- ✓ The communication targets and

- ✓ The superior qualities of the brand image (Batı, 2013: 63).

The brand manager must determine the criteria that impact the consumers' decision making and purchase and must prepare a product and brand communication plan. The aim of this plan is to position the product and brand as different and preferential in the consumer's mind. During positioning, qualities, function, application, user, competitors, categories and quality/price positioning must be taken into account (Kotler, 1999; Can, 2007: 233).

The way the consumer perceives and remembers the brand as well as the concepts the brand is identified with, are important clues for brand positioning (Erdem, Karsu, Memiş, Yıldız, 2010: 353). The processes related to the positioning of the product in relation to competitor, in the targeted market and in the mind of the consumer must be developed in coordination for optimal creation of corporate identity and brand positioning.

Having understood the importance of brand positioning and the company identity formation process, universities have joined the race and begun to develop brand value building strategies in the areas of education and social life. These strategies include developing feelings of corporate identity, aiding in advertising and promotion, and ensuring that the university stands out among others. Brand positioning in the minds of users is targeted through the use of the university's name, logo, colors, characters, typefaces etc. symbolizing the university and through the use of these on clothing, stationary and similar products.

A review of studies on brand positioning strategies and innovations reveals papers titled ''Marka Konumlandırma ve Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Cep Telefonu Tercihinde Marka Konumlandırmanın Etkisi Üzerine Bir Araştırma''(Baran, 2012), "Akaryakıt İstasyonları Marka Konumlandırma Süreci: Isparta'da Çok Boyutlu Ölçekleme Analizi İle Bir Uygulama" (Büyüker İşler, 2014),"Denim Pazarında Marka Konumlandırılmalarının Karşılaştırılması" (Erdem, Karsu, Memiş, Yıldız, 2010) "Hazır Giyim Sektöründe Marka Konumlandırma; Örnek Bir Uygulama" (Er, 2009). However, no study on brand positioning concerning clothing with university logos.

Since brand positioning efforts are important to many sectors, they are also key in fashioning universities into brands. With this in mind, universities in Turkey and abroad that ensured the sale of clothing reflecting university belongingness were researched, and clothing product groups reflecting corporate belongingness through branding and brand positioning and constituting the scope of the research were studied. Among universities abroad with both campus stores and online stores, the online clothing stores of Georgia State (http://www.bkstr.com/georgiastatestore/shop/apparel-andaccessories),   Georgia   Tech

(http://gtalumni.org/s/1481/alumni/index.aspx?sid=1481&gid= 21&pgid=697), and Harvard (http://www.harvard.com/goods/university_clothing) were accessed.

The study of stores in Turkey revealed that a small number of universities owned both campus stores and online stores, some universities had campus stores, while a large number had neither, although even these universities had clothing, mostly t-shirts with university logos, produced for special events like competitions and spring festivals, though there was no attempt at university-owned production and sales.

The aim of this study is brand positioning in the minds of consumers at a university through clothing. The purpose was to determine the existing and intended brand image and product perception of the university and the clothing brand representing the university dealt with in the study, and to perform brand positioning.

Materials and Method

The study material consists of data obtained through a questionnaire conducted on 242 participants chosen at random among academics, personnel and students of the university, and of related data.

The study focuses on brand positioning at a university in Ankara which was founded in 2011 and offers higher education in art and the social sciences. T-shirts, sweatshirts, hat-and-scarf sets, baseball caps and bags with the university logo are designed at the university, and most of the production as well as the sales are done on campus.

The survey method and the interview method were used in the study. Survey models aim to identify a situation from the past or present as it stands. The purpose is to identify the situation, person or object forming the focus of the study under its own conditions, or as it is (Karasar, 2009: 77).

The interview method is among the most frequently used methods in research studies in the social sciences. It is a valuable method for obtaining data on persons' behavior, emotions, thoughts and beliefs on a given subject. The interview is an oral communication process between at least two people (Özgüven, 1980). According to Karasar (2005), this is a technique of obtaining data (investigation) through oral communication. In this research, the survey model was determined as the research model since the brand positioning of the university clothing brand necessitated a survey.

After the focus of the research was decided upon, a literature review was performed. "User positioning," a positioning category chosen from Kotler's (1999) brand positioning categories for the product target consumer group, was used as an example (Can, 2007: 233). After the literature review, product groups, price policies and consumer portfolios of the companies Gant, Gap, Levis, Mavi, LTB, Defacto and LCW were examined. These companies were chosen since they specialize in the production and sales of casual ready-made clothing, which was chosen as example for brand positioning. Specilsits on th subjects were also interviewed. N light of the data obtained, a questionnaire was designed for the brand positioning of the university clothing brand.

The research population consists of 80 academics, 91 staff members and 486 students of the university. The following formula was used for determining the sample:

$$\frac{t^2 \left(PQ\right)/d^2}{1 + \left(\dfrac{1}{N}\right) t^2 \left(PQ\right)/d^2}$$

After the formula was applied, the questionnaire was conducted among 242 persons constituting the calculated research sample, 49 among whom were academics, 72 staff members and 242 students.

Since the research was focused on brand positioning, the brand image of the clothing produced by a university and bearing its logo and the existing and intended product perception, it was performed in two stages, a pilot scheme and an actual study. After the pilot scheme, the assessment instrument was revised for maximum efficacy in the actual study.

In order to determine the assessment validity and reliability of variables, the Cronbach's alpha test statistics results were taken into account. The reliability analysis of the clothing purchase factor scale showed the alpha value as 87.1% and the brand criteria scale showed the value as 92.8%. The assessment scale being $0.80 \leq \alpha < 1.00$ in the assessment of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicates high reliability in the scale (Özdamar, 2002: 673). These values show that the questionnaire is very reliable.

The data obtained were analysed with the help of SPSS 16.0 statistics software. The frequency and percentage value data were entered into the SPSS system, and the resulting number and percentage values were given in cross tabulation. In the cross tabulation, participants in the status variable were coded as follows: student: std; academic: acd, staff member: stf.

Findings and Discussion

Some of the finding of the research are given below instead of within tables due to page limitations:

- 51.2% of participants were female, 47.5 were male.

- 49.6% of participants were students, 20.2% were academics, and 29.8 were members of staff.

- Participants were born between 1945 and 1999, with the largest number of individuals being born in 1995.

- A large majority (77.3%) stated that they always buy clothes according to their own perferences.

- When determining positioning strategies, brands directly or indirectly use one or more competitors as reference framework (Baran, 2012: 16). Similarly, in this study, participants' familiarity with brands that could conceivably be competitors producing the same product segment as the university was assessed. In order to determine familiarity with casual clothing brands, the sample group was asked to list the first three casual clothing brands they could think of. The research results showed that Zara (12.9%), Mavi (12.4%) and LCW (12.4%) were the best known brands.

Table 1. Importance of factors considered when buying casual clothing

	unimportant			Important			Very important		
	Std%	Acd%	Stf %	Std%	Acd%	Stf %	Std%	Acd%	Stf %
Quality of material	1.7	.0	.4	4.3	1.3	.9	**42.9**	**18.9**	**29.6**
Quality of seams	4.3	1.3	3.0	8.7	4.3	4.3	**36.4**	**15.2**	**22.5**
Quality of printing and embroidery	6.6	1.8	4.9	4.9	4.4	3.5	**36.7**	**14.6**	**22.6**
Price	1.7	.9	2.2	8.3	3.0	4.3	**39.1**	**17.0**	**23.5**
Washability	7.5	3.5	4.4	8.4	5.3	4.4	**32.7**	**12.4**	**21.2**
Durability	2.2	1.3	1.8	5.8	2.7	3.1	**39.9**	**17.0**	**26.0**
Practicality	2.2	.4	1.3	8.0	2.2	2.7	**37.6**	**18.6**	**27.0**
Design	2.6	.4	1.3	5.2	1.7	1.7	**40.7**	**19.0**	**27.3**
Color scheme	.4	1.3	2.2	5.6	.4	3.5	**42.4**	**19.0**	**25.1**
Brand reliability	7.6	1.8	2.7	6.3	3.6	5.8	**35.3**	**16.1**	**21.0**
Advertising	**22.2**	**14.9**	**17.2**	10.0	3.2	7.7	17.6	2.3	5.0
Sales campaigns	5.9	3.0	5.4	3.4	1.5	2.5	**36.9**	**17.2**	**24.1**
Brand image	12.4	**8.4**	8.0	12.8	5.8	5.3	**24.8**	7.1	**15.5**
Reflects feeling of university/corporate belongingness	18.8	**9.4**	9.9	9.0	5.8	6.3	**21.1**	5.8	**13.9**

Data concerning priorities when purchasing clothing shown in Table 1 show that:

- Among status variables, for academics, students and staff members, the quality of the material, seams, printing and embroidery was very important, as was the washability, durability, practicality, design, color scheme, brand reliability and whether the item was to be obtained on a sale.
- Sales campaings were important for academics, students and staff members alike.
- While for students and staff members, brand image and the fact that the item should reflect the feeling of university belongingness was important, this was unimportant for academics.
- For all categories among status variables, advertising for clothing was unimportant.

Table 2. Views on the university brand and on brands in the same segment

	UNIVERSITY BRAND			GANT			GAP			MAVI			LC WAKIKI		
	Std %	Acd %	Stf %	Std %	Acd %	Stf %	Std %	Acd %	Stf %	Std %	Acd %	Stf %	Std %	Acd %	Stf %
Materials are of good quality.	**12.0**	3.5	7.6	7.3	.9	5.3	**13.8**	4.7	7.0	**15.5**	5.0	10.6	3.5	1.2	2.1
Seams and stitching are of good quality.	**9.2**	3.9	7.1	6.7	.7	6.4	**14.1**	5.7	6.7	**15.9**	5.3	10.2	4.2	1.4	2.5
Products are stylish.	**9.8**	3.8	8.1	3.0	.9	6.8	**10.2**	5.1	8.9	**16.2**	5.1	12.3	3.8	2.1	3.8
Printing and embroidery are of good quality.	**10.5**	5.5	8.2	6.4	.9	5.9	**15.0**	4.1	6.8	**16.8**	4.1	9.5	4.1	.9	1.4
Prices are high.	**9.1**	3.5	7.1	4.7	1.6	9.1	**16.5**	6.3	9.1	**13.8**	5.9	7.1	3.9	1.2	1.2
Prices are low.	6.9	1.1	2.7	2.7	1.6	4.3	4.8	2.7	2.1	6.9	2.1	3.7	**27.1**	**11.7**	**19.7**
Prices are affordable.	**9.6**	2.9	4.5	3.8	1.0	3.2	**10.5**	4.5	5.4	**14.1**	5.4	9.3	11.2	6.1	8.6
Easy to clean	8.6	4.3	4.3	4.7	.9	3.4	**12.4**	4.7	5.2	**16.3**	5.6	8.2	**10.7**	6.0	4.7
Durable	8.3	2.7	5.3	4.5	1.5	5.3	**13.6**	6.1	6.4	**18.2**	6.8	10.2	5.3	1.9	3.8
Practical	7.4	3.7	6.3	4.8	1.1	4.1	**11.9**	5.6	7.1	**13.8**	5.6	**10.0**	8.2	5.6	4.8
Designs are unique.	6.6	3.6	4.1	6.1	1.5	5.6	**17.3**	**7.1**	**7.6**	**14.7**	4.1	**11.7**	5.1	2.0	3.0
Fashionable	7.6	3.1	4.9	5.4	1.3	4.5	**13.4**	5.8	7.6	**17.0**	5.8	**12.1**	4.5	3.6	3.6
Large variety of products	**5.6**	**1.9**	**1.9**	5.6	.9	4.2	**12.6**	7.0	6.5	**16.8**	4.2	**13.6**	10.7	6.1	2.3
I like the color scheme.	**9.9**	2.9	5.4	5.8	.8	4.1	**14.0**	4.5	6.6	**14.5**	3.3	11.2	9.1	3.7	4.1
Reliable brand	6.9	3.4	4.6	6.9	.8	5.7	**13.4**	6.1	8.8	**15.7**	6.5	10.7	6.1	1.5	2.7
Impressive advertising	7.7	1.4	3.5	7.0	2.1	.0	**12.0**	4.2	5.6	**23.9**	4.9	14.1	6.3	2.8	4.2
Frequent sales	**3.5**	**.6**	**1.2**	3.5	2.3	.0	6.9	4.6	4.6	**11.6**	1.7	5.8	**23.7**	11.0	19.1
Impressive brand image	6.7	2.6	2.1	7.2	.5	6.7	**19.1**	5.2	8.8	**17.0**	4.6	11.3	3.1	2.1	3.1
Clothing is not gender neutral.	5.4	2.2	3.8	6.5	1.6	5.4	9.1	4.8	7.5	**19.4**	4.3	9.1	**10.2**	3.2	7.5
Clothing is gender neutral.	**14.4**	3.3	3.3	4.6	2.6	.0	**19.6**	3.3	3.9	**14.4**	2.6	9.8	9.8	2.0	6.5
Age-appropriate	**9.3**	**3.2**	**3.2**	3.5	.3	3.8	12.8	5.1	7.0	17.3	5.8	9.3	10.2	4.5	4.8
Products are easy to find.	1.9	2.3	3.5	5.1	.8	2.7	**9.3**	4.7	5.4	**15.2**	7.0	8.6	**16.0**	8.2	9.3
I do not hesitate to buy.	5.0	3.3	5.4	4.5	.8	4.1	**10.7**	6.6	8.7	**12.8**	7.9	**13.6**	7.9	3.7	5.0

Data on the university brand and on brands in the same segment in Table 2 show that:

- Among the status variables, students found the university's clothing brand as well as GAP and Mavi to have good quality materials, stitching, printing and embroidery, and fashionable items at high yet affordable prices. All participants found that the brand LCW kept prices consistently low.

Positioning strategies were first developed with a focus on consumer advantage. Price/quality are useful and frequently used positioning dimensions that have to be analyzed separately (Erdem, Karsu, Memiş, Yıldız, 2010:357). In the research, price/quality variables were assessed separately for each brand.

- Students found the products by GAP and Mavi to be easy to clean, durable and practical.

- Both students and staff members found that Mavi products were fashionable, available from a large variety of products, and of unique design.

In brand positioning, the company will try to ensure that the consumer perceives the brand as different from others (Odabaşı and Oyman, 2001: 368; Can, 2007: 233). Thus the company must analyze consumers/buyers, products, prices, distribution, product information, target markets and competitors correctly and effectively (Can, 2007: 233).

- Students liked the color schemes of products by the university clothing brand, GAP and Mavi.

- Students found the GAP and Mavi brands to be reliable and their advertising to be impressive.

Attitudes towards the product are a result of advertising (Kim, Damhorst, Lee, 2002:277-302). It has been stated before that consumers found the product to be of better quality if there was an advertising campaign, and that they thought advertising correctly informed them about the product and increased competition (Ağaç, Gürşahbaz, 2009:150). Positioning according to a competitor brand is useful. The competitor might have a strong image that is the result of years of effort. This image can be used as reference and used as a bridge for the communication of another image (Özaslan, 2007).

- The university clothing brand was stated to have no sales campaigns, while Mavi and LCW have frequent sales.

- Both students and staff members from the brand image of Mavi to be impressive, while only students found the GAP brand image to be impressive.

- Students stated that the products by Mavi and LCW were not gender neutral, while the products by the university brand and GAP were gender neutral.

- Among status variables, academics and staff member stated that the products by the university clothing brand were not age-appropriate, whereas students found these to be age-appropriate for themselves.

- Students stated that GAP, LCW and Mavi products were easy to find and that they did not hesitate to buy them.

Conclusion

This study was attempted in order to perform brand positioning in the minds of consumers at a university through clothing. The purpose was to determine the existing and intended brand image and product perception of the university and the clothing brand representing the university dealt with in the study, and to perform brand positioning.

The evaluation of the findings of the study indicates that clothing design, color scheme, quality of material, seams, printing and embroidery, practicality, durability, washability, brand reliability and sales campaigns were important factors influencing the purchase decision for all status categories. While it was important for students and staff members that the clothing reflect the feeling of university belongingness, as was brand image, these were irrelevant for academics. Sales campaigns, however, were found to be important for all participants.

The university clothing brand, studied in preparation for brand positioning, was found to have just about adequate color schemes, materials, seams, printing and embroidery, but was found to be less fashionable than brands in the same segment, and did not measure up to these brands as far as washability, durability, practicality, design and variety of products were concerned.

The improvement of the products and design with regard to these points is likely to contribute to the positioning of the brand. The results of the study show that students found the university clothing brand to be expensive, yet affordable, while academics and staff found the sales campaigns to be inadequate. Sales could be increased by taking pricing and sales strategies of competing brands from the same market segment as examples.

The finding of the study indicated that students found the university brand clothing sold in the university store to be age-appropriate; whereas academics and staff found these products to be neither age-appropriate nor gender-appropriate. This indicates the necessity for the production of a variety of product groups and collections appealing to the various target consumer groups.

The study showed that students found the products by the brands GAP and Mavi to be fashionable, with good quality materials, seams, printing and embroidery, good color schemes, high yet affordable prices, good brand reliability and impressive advertising as well as, in the case of GAP, gender neutral clothing. Among the brands used as example for brand positioning, LCW was found to have frequent sales campaigns. Findings showed that students reported to be able to find products by LCW, GAP and Mavi easily and to buy them without hesitation. Greater care is required in the design and production of the university brand products especially in regard to the quality of materials, seams, printing and embroidery, durability and practicality, as well as the choice of color schemes, which will help improve brand reliability.

Performing brand positioning by taking into account the price and sales policies of the brands chosen as examples, as well as the design and production of product groups appealing to various age groups from the general consumer portfolio, would also be likely to increase sales.

Universities have begun developing strategies for creating brand value in the areas of education and social life. Some of the most important of these strategies include creating feelings of corporate belongingness, contributing to advertising and promotion, and ensuring

that the university stands out among others. The successful use of the university logo, symbols, lettering or colors on clothing, stationery etc. will contribute to brand positioning efforts.

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