BRAND POSITIONING THROUGH MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALING: A STUDY IN THE TURKISH SHAMPOO MARKET

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the position of seven shampoo brands that exist in the Turkish market. In this research, perceptual mapping technique was used based on the attribute data and attribute ratings.

The results of this study indicate that two most important dimensions that are effective on consumer evaluations of shampoo brands are found to be brand affect and brand Trust & Customer Services.

Key Words: *Brand Positioning, Shampoo Brands, Perceptual Mapping*

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the macro-environmental factors, competition has ascended in a corrosive way globally. Branding issues such as brand familiarity, brand awareness and brand loyalty has become crucially important. These developments made "consumer behavior" a very front-page subject both for academicians and professionals. Understanding the consumer and how the consumer perceives the competition and the actors of it has become the objective of many marketing research studies.

Understanding the consumer behavior and strategically positioning the brand in a way to overcome the competition and set a relation with the target market via differentiation is the matter of priority in terms of strategic decisions. Positioning has been provided as the weapon in the competition for years. Through positioning brands try to build a sustainable competitive advantage via product attributes in the mind of the consumer (F. Gwin and R. Gwin, 2003:30).

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In order to make strategic positioning plans and execute them, it is very important to understand the market dynamics. Perceptual mapping is one of the limited numbers of techniques to visually represent the market dynamics and to reveal the brand competition as it is in the mind of the consumer.

The aim of this study is to analyze and reveal the competition in the Turkish shampoo market through perceptual mapping. As consumers are exposed to many different shampoo brands both with similar and different properties in the Turkish market, understanding the roles and situations of those brands within the competition is very important. In this context, this study aims to reveal the brand evaluation criteria in the shampoo market and the positions of seven shampoo brands in female consumers' minds in terms of these criteria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Positioning is related with creating brand perceptions in the minds of consumers and with achieving differentiated images apart from competitors' brands/offerings and meeting customer needs/expectations (Ghodeswar, 2008:6). In other words, brand positioning refers implicitly to consumers' memory of the brand's particular information content (Lee and Liao, 2009:81). A brands' position differentiates it from competitors on attributes considered important by target customers and gives it a distinctive identity in their minds (Ansari et. al, 1994:248). Firms position their brands by selecting the optimal mix of tangible and intangible product attributes as well as prices (Ansari et. al, 1994:248).

Brooksbank (1994) states that key components of marketing positioning are selecting customer targets, selecting competitor targets and defining competitive advantage. Brand manager's major objective should be to create the desired perception in the target consumer's mind (Ghodeswar, 2008: 6). One of the key tasks of a new product manager is to define a brand's positioning, and managers of existing brands must continue to monitor the effectiveness of the brand positioning and repositioning when needed (F. Gwin and R. Gwin, 2003:31). According to Gwin and Gwin, in developing a positioning strategy, the marketer must consider the target market, how the product is different or better than competitors, the value of this difference to the target market and the ability to demonstrate or communicate this difference to the target market (F. Gwin and R. Gwin, 2003:31).

In the literature there are numerous attempts to understand brand positioning in different product and service categories. Most of the previous studies focus on product attributes and preferences for explaining positioning of brands. (Bhat and

Reddy, 1998; Raj, 2006; Blankson, 2004; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2007; Lii and Liao, 2009; Niculescu, 2006; Ghose and Lovengard, 2001).

One of the examples to these studies is that of Bhat and Reddy's (1998), in which thyey underlined managerial implications for brand positioning through focusing on functional and symbolic brand concepts. The results of this study revealed the importance of functionality and symbolism in terms of positioning. In another study, Raj Arora (2006) investigated the utilities of various attributes that may be used in positioning teeth whitening products. The results of this study indicates that, customers prefer a product which provides benefits lasting for several months after use, a product that does not have side-effects and a slight preference for penny-a-day pricing approach. Here, the importance of product benefits are revealed in terms of positioning.

Blankson (2004) explored the positioning strategies related with store card brands and determined the related congruence in store card brands. The findings of this study identified the most popular positioning strategies namely, service, value for money, the brand name, top of the range, and brand name.

Blankson and Kalafatis (2007) conducted a study about positioning strategies of international and multicultural oriented service brands in UK plastic card industry. The results of the study was similar to Blanskson' (2004) study. According to the results, the brand name and top of the range positioning strategies were the most preferred ones.

Lee and Liao (2009), aimed to understand how the attributes of Chinese tea beverage brands influence consumers' evaluations of brand positioning and differences and competition among brands. The results indicate that, Chinese beverage brands use quenching thirst, attractive advertising and reliable quality aims to develop their positions.

Another study conducted by Niculescu (2006), was intended to assist the decision-making process in Romanian higher education. In this manner, market positioning of the specializations was covered. In the study perception of students divided into two major dimensions namely rationality and emotionality.

Applying empirical blind-taste study on different brands of colas by Ghose and Lovengard (2001), aimed to understand how perceptual and preference-based measures can provide information that useful for managers making positioning, segmentation and targeting decisions. In this study in the horizontal dimension of perceptual map non-diet, diet was used and on the vertical dimension cherry flavor and regular flavor was used for cola brands.

Another study conducted by Hartman et. al, (2005), focused on the effect of green positioning on brand attitudes by using car brands. The results indicated that overall positive influence of green brand positioning on brand attitude.

In this study, positioning is undertaken within the context of the shampoo market in Turkey. In order to assess the positions of the brands included in this study, multidimensional scaling technique among the perceptual mapping techniques is used.

2.1. Perceptual Mapping As a Tool For Positioning

Perceptual mapping technique is widely used by professionals and academicians in assessing the current positions of brands against their competitors in the market and for focusing on the new positioning opportunities. Perceptual maps are two or three dimensional illustrated figures that show how brands and products are perceived by consumers through qualitative and quantitative techniques (Myres, 1996:181). Similar to the cities located on geographical maps, the brands are located on the perceptual maps in a way that some are close to and some are far from each other (Altuna, 2010:125). The distances between the brands show how similarly those brands are perceived by consumers. Besides the proximities and dimensions; via the gaps on them, maps also present the market opportunities for new entrants and for those brands to be repositioned (Arslan et.al, 2001:4).

The approaches for creating perceptual maps are divided into two major groups as being based upon *attribute data* or *non-attribute data* (Aaker et.al., 1998:615). In order to analyze the non-attribute data multidimensional scaling technique is used whereas for the analysis of attribute data factor analysis, discriminant analysis, correspondence analysis may also be used besides the multidimensional scaling technique (Aaker et.al., 1998:615).

As this study is based on attribute data and attribute rating, multidimensional scaling technique is applied to produce the perceptual map.

Multidimensional scaling is mostly used by marketing professionals and academicians in order to identify the dimensions that the consumers use to evaluate the products and brands in according to and the number of these dimensions besides the positions of each brand according to these dimensions and the ideal position (Malhotra, 1999:636).

In this study a two dimensional map is produced via the multidimensional technique in order to have a view of the Turkish shampoo market.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to explore the positions of seven shampoo brands (*Elidor, Pantene, Elseve, Rejoice, Blendax, Ipek, Dove*) that exist in the Turkish market on a two dimensional perceptual map in order to reveal the proximities between these brands on the map which will represent how similarly and how different these brands are perceived when compared with each other.

The research is composed of two parts as exploratory and descriptive studies. As the mapping technique used in this research is based on the attribute data and attribute ratings, as part of the exploratory study, a pre-test was conducted in order to explore the attributes that consumers feature in their shampoo purchase decisions.

As part of the descriptive study, factor analysis was conducted in order to reduce the data without any data loss with a view to facilitate the interpretation of the perceptual map. Following the factor analysis, multidimensional scaling technique was applied through ALSCAL in order to produce the perceptual map where the dimensions achieved as the result of the factor analysis and the seven brands are shown together. The details regarding both parts of the study are provided below.

3.1. Survey Instrument and Procedures

Prior to the preparation of the questionnaire, a pre-test was conducted with a sample that was chosen among the Business Administration Students of two universities which are Marmara and Sakarya. The aim of this pre-test was to explore the attributes that the consumers take into consideration during their shampoo purchases and shampoo brand preferences and evaluations. As attribute based multidimensional scaling was planned to be applied for the further steps, it was very important to explore all those attributes in detail. One of the crucial points about attribute based multidimensional scaling methods is to cover the whole of the attributes regarding the analyzed brand category (Aaker et.al.; 2000:855). As part of the pre-test, a questionnaire form was circulated which included a few open-ended questions regarding the most frequently purchased shampoo brands and the most important attributes about the products that were effective on this purchase decision and brand evaluations of the respondents. As a result of this pre-test, a total number of 89 questionnaires were achieved. The analysis revealed a total number of 66 attributes which were found out to be important in terms of consumers' shampoo brand attitudes and evaluations. Thus, a total of 66 attributes were included in the final scale. Besides the attributes, the results of this pre-test also served as a basis for the brand selection of this study.

In accordance with the pre-test results, the most frequently repeated shampoo brands, some of which are global brands, were included in the research (*Elidor, Pantene, Elseve, Rejoice, Blendax, Ipek, Dove*).

The final questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part includes two questions determining the shampoo brand and point-of-purchase preferences of the respondents. The second part includes 66 5-point Likert-type statements (ranging from Strongly Agree (represented by 5) to Strongly Disagree (represented by 1)) which were based on the attributes that were obtained from the pilot study. The last part consists of the demographic questions regarding marital status, age, education and income levels.

A pilot test was conducted with 25 respondents in order to test whether the questionnaire was clear and the questions were easily understood. The Cronbach's Alpha score achieved for the pilot test was $\alpha=0.927$ which indicates that the internal consistency of the scale is very high.

As for the main study, data was collected through the use of 10 undergraduate students who were rewarded with extra points for their final projects. The students were trained to conduct the surveys face to face. Convenience sampling was used as the sampling method. The collected questionnaires were inspected in terms of incompleteness and other problems. As a result, a total of 378 usable questionnaires (*Elidor=60; Pantene=74; Elseve=57; Rejoice=40; Blendax=44; Ipek=38; Dove=39 and Other Brands=26*) were included for analysis.

3.2. Respondent Profile

Regarding the total sample (without making any distinctions of shampoo brand selections), the marital status of the respondents follows as 12.8% married whereas 87.2%.are single and the majority of respondents (81.2%) are aged between 19-25.

The frequency statistics show very nearly results when applied for each brand separately. According to the results of the separate frequency analysis, the majority of the sample is found to be accumulating between 19 – 25 ages (Pantene: 82.4%; Elidor: 82.8%; Elseve: 89.3%; Rejoice: 80%; Blendax: 75%; Ipek: 60.5%; Dove: 79.5%). In parallel with the total sample frequencies, for each brand separately, the majority of each sample is single (Pantene: 86.5%; Elidor: 81%; Elseve: 94.6%; Rejoice: 92.5%; Blendax: 84.1%; Ipek: 73%; Dove: 89.7%). The highest percentages regarding the income level for each brand separately is mostly achieved for the 1001 – 3000 TL option (Elidor: 66.1%; Elseve: 55.4%;

Rejoice: 47.5%; Blendax: 52.3% and Dove: 69.2%) except for Pantene (1000 and below; 44.6%) and Ipek (1000 and below; 39.5%).

The distribution regarding the other demographic characteristics for the total sample can be seen below (Table 1).

Table 1: Respondent Profile for The Total Sample

Characteristic:	Frequency	Percent	Characteristic:	Frequency	Percent
Age			**Income Level**		
18 and below	13	3.5	1000 and below	142	38.2
19-25	304	81.1	1001-3000	195	52.4
26-30	32	8.5	3001-5000	26	7.0
31-35	16	4.3	5001-7000	3	0.8
36-40	4	1.1	7001 and above	6	1.7
41 and above	6	1.6			
			Point-of-Purchase		
Marital Status			Market	332	88.1
Single	326	87.2	Pharmacy	30	8.0
Married	48	12.8	Hairdressing Rooms	7	1.9
			Online purchase	8	2.1
Education					
Primary Education	17	4.6			
High School	44	11.8			
Vocational School	89	23.9			
Graduate	21	58.4			
Post Graduate	5	1.3			

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Assessment of Reliability

The reliability of the scale has been assessed by alpha coefficient. The reliability analysis for the 66 Likert-type statements produced an acceptable level of .96 Cronbach's Alpha score. This level determined to be acceptable according to Nunnally (1979).

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were applied in order to explore the items that carried the maximum importance in terms of the respondents' attitudes towards the shampoo brands and their evaluations about these brands. In this section, only the primary statements regarding the highest mean values are discussed.

For the total sample (mean=3.97; s.d.=.953); Rejoice (mean=4.13, s.d.=.516) and Blendax (mean=4.18, s.d.=.888) , the item with the highest mean score among

those 66 items is "*The fragrance of this shampoo is beautiful*" whereas this is "*This brand offers customized products for various hair types*" for Elidor (mean=4.22; s.d.=.721) and Pantene (mean=4.07; s.d.=.896); *"I perceive this brand as a clinical one"* for Elseve (mean=4.25; s.d.=1.040); "You can find this brand anywhere you want" for Ipek (mean=3.81; s.d.=.938) and "I believe this brand cleanses my hair deeply" for Dove (mean=4.10, s.d.=.754).

4.3. Factor Analysis

A factor analysis has been conducted before further analyses for the purposes of dimension reduction in order to facilitate the labeling and interpretation of the perceptual map. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measuring sampling adequacy result is 0.958, which is an acceptable value for conducting factor analysis. Significance of Bartlett's test of sphericity is 0.00 that is also acceptable for conducting factor analysis.

Table 2: Factor Analysis Results and Factor Facets

Factors	Factor Loadings	Factors	Factor Loadings	Factors	Factor Loadings
Factor 1: Brand Image (% of Variance=23.428)		**Factor 4: Product Benefits (% of Variance=3.332)**		**Factor 9: Ease-of-Use (% of Variance=2.096)**	
Strong Brand	0.788	Volume effect	0.634	Ease-of-rinse	0.789
Expert Brand	0.703	Plump effect	0.557	Ease-of-foam	0.687
High Quality	0.660	Bulky effect	0.536	Smoothing effect	0.486
Technological infrastructure & scientific knowhow	0.656	Prevents hair loss	0.533	**Factor 10: Price (% of Variance=1.912)**	
Long-lasting effect	0.571	Product value vs. price	0.480	Convenient price	0.616
Makes me feel pretty	0.569	**Factor 5: Marketing Communication Tools (% of Variance=2.780)**		Beautiful fragrence	
New Product Development	0.534	Brand Ads	0.691	Cleanses deeply	0.474
Best product of its category	0.533	Sales Promotions	0.637	Non-sticky	0.415
Brand Image	0.524	Convenience of P-O-P	0.617	**Factor 11: Dermatologic Products (% of Variance=1.839)**	
Brand Personality	0.487	Different than other brands	0.448	Dermatologic product	0.924
Popular Brand	0.471	**Factor 6: Brand Slogan (% of Variance=2.612)**		Distinguishing products	0.858
Easy comb after	0.436	Brand Slogan	0.695	**Factor 12: Brand Trust (%**	

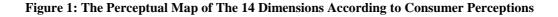|					
wash					of Variance=1.760)
Factor 2: Brand Affect (% of Variance=14.9)		Habit-forming brand	0.610	Keeps its promises	0.534
Makes me feel special	0.871	Trustworthy advertisement messages	0.604	Trustworthy	0.516
Makes me feel secure	0.809	Prevents oily hair	0.535	Ease-of-brush	0.378
Makes me feel different	0.805	Wide range of target market	0.464	**Factor 13: Customer Services (% of Variance=1.681)**	
Makes me feel privileged	0.791	Hair-dressers recommendations	0.306	Free consultation	0.677
Makes me feel happy	0.783			Shiny look	0.527
		Factor 7: Content (% of Variance=2.423)			
Clinical product	0.525	Natural content	0.711	**Factor 14:Anti-Dandruff Characteristic (% of Variance=1.574)**	
Factor 3: Product Features (% of Variance=3.623)		Vitamined content	0.663	Anti-dandruff	0.739
Rich content & vitamins	0.688	Nourishing content	0.496	Non-irritating for eyes	0.350
Customized products	0.649	User-friendly	0.339		
Package	0.645	**Factor 8: Social Benefits (% of Variance=2.273)**			
Brand name	0.640	Helps to shape	0.603		
Packaging sizes	0.595	Helps the others like my hair	0.555		
Ergonomic package	0.559	Enhances my charm	0.467		
Hygenic	0.543	Keeps my hair beautiful	0.428		
Multi-purpose product	0.494				
Brand Trust	0.482				

Table 2 shows the Factor Analysis results for the 66 items used to determine the dimensions that are effective on consumers' evaluations of shampoo brands. As the aim of the factor analysis is to reduce the dimensions that will appear on the perceptual map in order to facilitate the labeling and interpretation of the visual
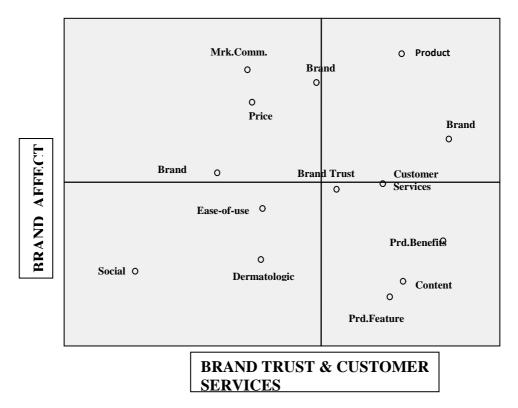
map; those items that showed lower scores than 0,5 and those factors with low scores of variances were not eliminated. All these 66 items were generated as a result of an exploratory study and the elimination of these items would lead to a change in the final results. The data of all shampoo brands were used for the factor analysis. According to the results of the analysis, a total of fourteen factors emerged using varimax rotations. The total variance of the model is 66.232 which means that the fourteen factors account for ab6ut 64% of the variance of the model. The variance of each factor is given in the table where they vary between 23.4% and 1.5%.

4.4. Analysis of The Positions of Shampoo Brands According to Consumer Perceptions: Multidimensional Scaling

Among the perceptual mapping techniques used in marketing which are mentioned above, multidimensional scaling technique that is based on the attribute data and attribute ratings is used in this study. When using multidimensional scaling, mostly two or maximum three dimensions are preferred in order to ease the visual interpretation of the map (Arslan et.al.; 2001:6).

The perceptual map that is produced as a result of the multidimensional scaling analysis regarding the seven shampoo brands is shown in Figure 1. This Figure shows the dispersion of these dimensions on a two-dimensional space map. The stress value obtained is found to be as 0,000 which is expected to be between 0,000 and 0,025 in order to regard absolute fit.(Arslan et.al., 2001:14). This value shows that the diagrammatic illustration of this two-dimensional space map has a good fit which means the model is close to the realistic proximities and successful (George and Mallery; 2001:229). R^2 value of the model is 0,98.

Figure 1: The Perceptual Map of The 14 Dimensions According to Consumer Perceptions

As seen from the figure, the seven dimensions are dispersed on the map. In order to label the two dimensions of the map, those seven dimensions and their positions (closeness) on the map are used. According to this, the first dimension (horizontal) is labelled as *"Brand Trust & Customer Services"* whereas the second dimension (vertical) is labelled as *"Brand Affect".*

Following the labeling of the two dimensions of the perceptual map; the next step is to position the seven shampoo brands on the map in order to see their positions across the two dimensions of the map and according to the fourteen dimensions of the factor analysis. The stress value is found to be 0,088 and R² value of the model is 0,964.
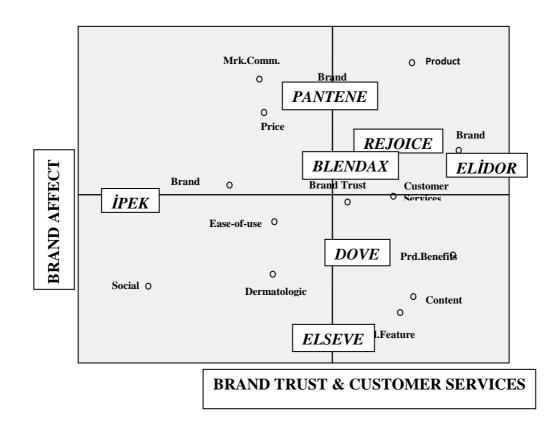
Figure 2: The Perceptual Map Illustrating The Positions of Seven Shampoo Brands

As can be seen from Figure 2, Blendax, Rejoice, Elidor and Pantene are positioned close to each other while İpek, Dove and Elseve are positioned at a distance. From this view, it can be said that Rejoice and Blendax are perceived to be very similar to each other by consumers. Elseve is the brand which is perceived to be considerably different than those brands as it is positioned at a remote location on the map. This also valid for İpek as İpek is positioned at a distal point of the map that is far from other brands.

Assessing the map in terms of the two dimensions *Brand Affect* and *Brand Trust & Customer Services;* Pantene seems to be highly positively perceived in terms of *Brand Affect* which means that Pantene elicits a positive emotional response in customers (Jahangır and Parvez; 2009). Regarding *Brand Trust & Customer*

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Services; it seems to be very close to the zero point which means the respondents' attitudes towards this brand in terms of this dimension is neutral. Analyzing its position in terms of other fourteen dimensions; Pantene seems to be positioned very near to "Marketing Communication Tools" and "Price" dimensions. That shows that respondents evaluate Pantene positively in terms of these two dimensions. Pantene is mostly identified with having a convenience price and effective marketing communication tools.

Following with Rejoce and Blendax, these two brands are seemed to be perceived as very similar to each other. This shows that these brands are the closest competitors to each other. Both brands are positioned positively (but still close to the zero point) in terms of *Brand Affect* dimension and Rejoice as very close to and Blendax as half on the zero point in terms of *Brand Trust & Customer Services.* Both brands seem to be identified mostly with the "Brand Trust" dimension which means among the fourteen dimensions, respondents' showed the highest scores for this factor.

As for Elidor, it is very positively perceived in terms of *Brand Trust & Customer Services* whereas it is very close to the zero point (neutral) in terms of *Brand Affect.* Among the fourteen dimensions it is mostly identified with "Brand Image" which shows that in terms of brand image, Elidor is evaluated positively.

Assessing the position of Ipek on the map, it can be seen that this brand is very negatively perceived in terms of *Brand Trust & Customer Services* whereas it is positioned close to the zero point having a tendency to the negative values in terms of *Brand Affect.* Ipek seems to be remote from the fourteen dimensions.

Elseve is very close to the zero point in terms of *Brand Trust & Customer Services* whereas on the negative zone in terms of *Brand Affect.* Elseve seems to be very close to the "Product Features" and "Dermatological Products" dimensions. That shows that respondents perceive this brand as having good product features and its products as being dermatological.

Finally, Dove seems to be proximately located to Elseve on the map which means that although Elseve has a distinct position in respondents minds, they still have similarities in terms of customer perceptions. The dimension closest to Dove on the map is "Product Benefits" which means Dove is mostly identified with its benefits primarily.

5. CONCLUSION

Positioning is very important in terms of strategic marketing. All of the marketing attempts and marketing mix strategies are shaped around the positioning strategy. Especially in the 21st century and new business era, competition is at the very heart and mind of the consumers. The positioning strategies of the brands determine the rules and strategic steps of competition in the market. Any brand that has a strong and favorable position in the minds of its consumers has the chance of achieving consumer loyalty and sustainability. As a tool of positioning analysis, perceptual mapping technique is widely used in marketing. As for determining the current situation, threats, weaknesses and opportunities, perceptual mapping is very useful.

Regarding the shampoo market, the most important two dimensions that are effective on consumers evaluations of shampoo brands are found to be *Brand Affect* and *Brand Trust & Customer Services*. Any brand that aims to be successful in that market should primarily work on building Brand Trust and providing Brand Affect and offer satisfying Customer Services. . As for the 7 brands included in this study, Blendax, Rejoice, Pantene and Elidor seem to be positively perceived in terms of Brand Affect whereas Dove, Elseve and Ipek have a relatively negative position. For Elseve and Dove, it may be recommended to focus on Brand Affect dimension and to substitute the negative perceptions with positive ones in order to move to the positive zone in terms of Brand Affect. According to the results of the study, Ipek should focus more on buildng customer trust and offering customer services whereas Elidor should focus more on creating positive brand affect through the marketing mix strategies. As for Blendax, Rejoice and Pantene, all three brands should primarily focus on building brand trust and offering customer services while setting differentiation strategies and unique positioning strategies different from eachother.

In conclusion, for any industry and market, for brands that are the actors in that market and for those brands that are planinng to take place in that market, positioning is the key concept to be successful. The use of scientific and systematic approaches are neccessary to have the accurate vision of the market in order to determine the correct positioning strategy. Through the perceptual mapping technique, repeated frequently, the competitors may have a chance of seeing the changing dynamics of the market and competition.

6. LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations to this study. Only seven shampoo brands were included in the research and respondents were recruited only in Istanbul and Sakarya. Convenience sampling was used. Therefore the results are valid for the sample and are not representative of the whole population.

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