

# Executive Summary

Positioning – Chapters 1-12

The book *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* by Al Ries and Jack Trout discusses the concept of positioning in marketing, or the leveraging of a brand's relative position to competitors for a marketing advantage. As this book was first published over forty years ago, much of the content is hilariously outdated and many examples reference companies that have been defunct for decades. Many of the topics covered in the book are still applicable today, but few can be taken as sound advice without reconciling their historical context compared to the world today.

The first chapter of the book contains the most important and applicable message of the entire first half: marketing is about creating an image of a product in the consumer's mind. The authors call this idea "positioning," but that word also gets reused with slightly different meanings later in the book. This idea of creating an image in the consumer's mind instead of just detailing a product's virtues is a key component of modern marketing and has been for a long time.

Chapters three through five discuss the inherent advantages of becoming a market leader in a specific segment first, and how consumers build mental constructs of which brands are hierarchically ahead in a given market segment. These chapters have hilariously outdated examples of companies and their relationships to one another, which really drive home that this book was written during the late seventies. One of the more humorous examples, made more so by the recent bankruptcy and potential dissolution, is the example of Hertz being the immovable king at the top of the rental car ladder.

Chapters six through eight discuss how brands can market themselves relative to one another, and how marketing campaigns using these relationships can build rapport with or sour relations with

consumers. Such as the underdog effect benefitting a brand that markets itself as 'the second biggest' something, or that same effect being detrimental to a brand marketing itself as 'the biggest'. These chapters are still extremely relevant in modern marketing, as brands seen as smaller or more local nearly always elicit a more positive emotional response in consumers than large, multinational competitors.

Chapters nine through twelve discuss the power of a brand or product's name, and how poor choices or name dilution can be detrimental to a brand's position in the market. The points of advice in these chapters are some of the more hit-or-miss in the book's first half. Many of the drawbacks in naming and product lines that are mentioned as dangerous are almost entirely obviated by the internet providing instant information to consumers. Additionally, the book's assertion that product lines are inherently bad for a brand's business doesn't seem to hold true as a brief perusal of any store, either physical or online, will show that the vast majority of the successful products are part of a uniformly named line of products. Rarely are products nowadays referred to solely by their brand name (e.g., 'Dial' instead of bar soap).

Overall, the first half of this book is a solid read. The unintentionally humorous examples are always entertaining when looked at through a modern lens. Many of the points made by the authors hold up on their own merits, though some must be reframed in a more modern light that includes phones, television, and the internet being as prevalent as they are.

## References

Ries, A., & Trout, J. (2001). *Positioning the battle for your mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.