

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALING ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTIONS OF BRANDS AMONG TENNIS PLAYERS

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ABSTRACT

Positioning has been provided as the weapon in the competition for years. Positioning is related with creating brand perceptions in the minds of consumers. The aim of this study is to explore the positions of eight tennis shoes brands (Babolat, Head, Adidas, Nike, Puma, Reebok, Yonex, Lotto) that exist in the Indian 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. Twenty male tennis players of LNIPE, Gwalior were asked to give their preferences of one shoe over another on a 8-point scale. The results of this study indicated that two most important dimensions that are effective on consumer evaluations of tennis shoes brands are found to be performance & leisure and technology & fashion. The map also presents the market opportunities for new entrants and for those brands to be repositioned.

Key Words: Brand Positioning, Tennis Shoes Brands, Perceptual Mapping

INTRODUCTION:

Branding is an integral part of any business and every successful business has its foundation laid on its unique brand. Branding has persisted for centuries as way to distinguish one producer's goods from another manufacturer's products and services. It occurs when the consumer has a high level of brand awareness and strong favourable and often unique association with that brand. Branding issues such as brand familiarity, brand awareness and brand loyalty has become crucially important. Brand positioning refers to the decision and activities intended to create and maintain a certain concept of the firm's products in the customers mind (Ferrel, 1997). According to Pranulis (1998) survey techniques like scales of graphic evaluation, Likert's scale, and semantic differential scale can be proposed to identify the current position of product and

other competing products. Positioning map develops an understanding of how the relative strength and weaknesses of different product are perceived by buyers. It builds knowledge about the similarities and dissimilarities between competing products. It assists the process of re-positioning of existing products and the positioning of new products (Kumar and Srivastava 2013).

According to Gwin and Gwin(2003), 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. 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.

Positioning map is an important tool in development and tracking of promotional strategy. It enables manager to identify gaps and opportunities in the market and allows monitoring of effects of past marketing communications (Arora, 2006).

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). 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. Multidimensional scaling is a sequence of techniques for exploring similarities or preferences among objects.

In this study, positioning is undertaken within the context of the tennis shoes market in India. The aim of this study is to analyze and reveal the competition in the Indian Tennis shoes market through perceptual mapping. As consumers are exposed to many different tennis shoe brands both with similar and different properties in the Indian market, understanding the roles and situations of those brands within the competition is very important. In order to assess the

positions of the brands included in this study, multidimensional scaling technique among the perceptual mapping techniques is used.

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify unrecognized dimensions affecting the consumer purchasing behaviour
- To find out the relative position of different brands of tennis shoes in respect of customer perception

PROCEDURE:

Selection of the subjects-

Twenty male tennis players of LNIPE, Gwalior from the Tennis match practice group were selected as the subject for the present study. Their age ranged from 18 to 28 years.

Selection of the variables-

The following eight brands of the tennis shoes were selected for the study. They are:

- Babolat
- Adidas
- Head
- Nike
- Puma
- Reebok
- Yonex
- Lotto

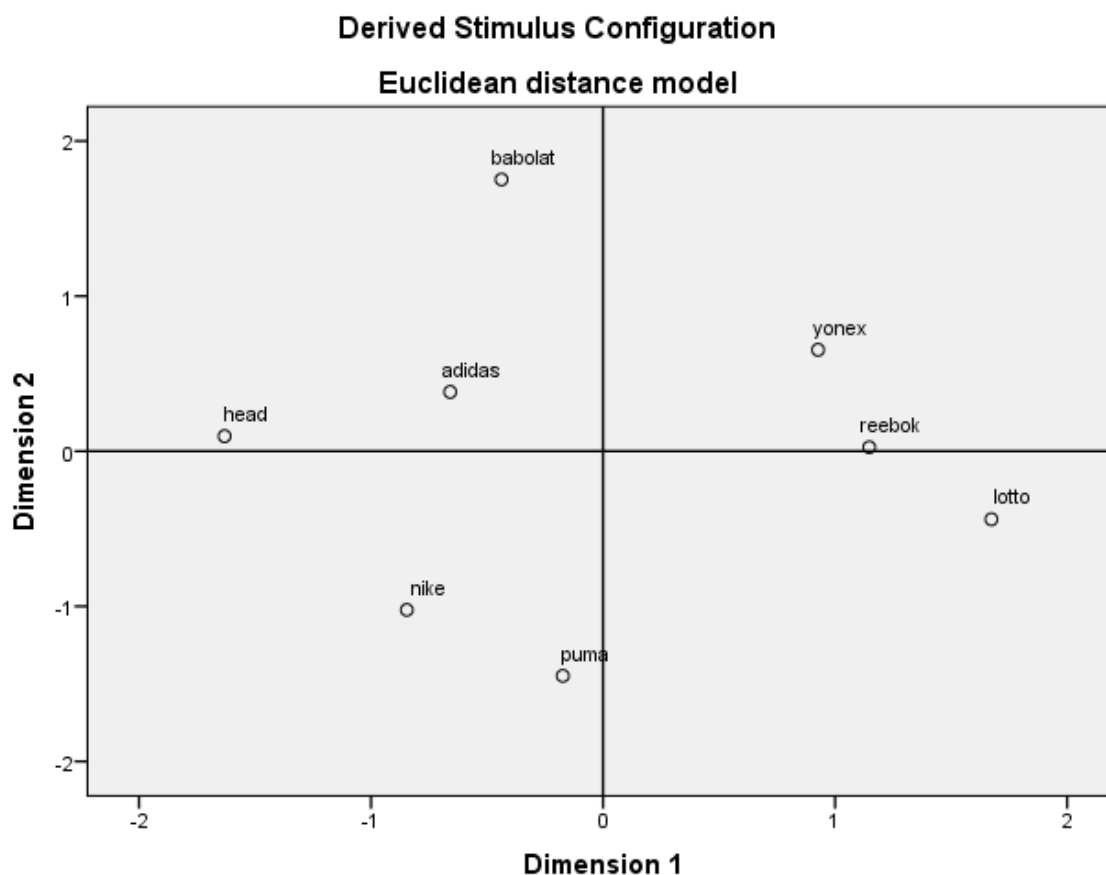
Collection of data-

Twenty male tennis players of LNIPE were asked to rate 8 tennis shoes by showing the cards bearing the name of a pair of shoes. All possible pair of shoes were shown, and the players were asked to rate their preferences of one shoe over other on an 8-point scale. If the players perceived that the two shoes were completely dissimilar, a score of 8 was given, and if the two shoes were exactly similar, a score of 0 was given.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The perceptual map that is produced as a result of the multidimensional scaling analysis regarding the eight tennis shoes 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 .20997 and R^2 value of the model is .626.

Figure 1: The Perceptual Map Illustrating the Positions of Eight Tennis Shoes Brands



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).

In this perceptual map, the customer perceptions of various shoes on the two dimensions of technology/fashion and performance/leisure can be seen. The fashionable shoes (reebok, yonex, lotto) are on the right side while the shoes that are technologically sound are on the left. The performance oriented shoes are along the top, suggesting that the top-to-bottom direction is a performance –leisure axis. This sample of consumers felt that babolat shoes were better in performance and technology from the ones in the study. They felt that puma shoes were more leisure oriented. Shoes that are positioned close to each other were seen as similar on the relevant dimensions by the consumers. Yonex and Reebok are perceived to be similar in fashion. They are close competitors and form a competitive group. Lotto, perhaps more fashionable is small distance away from these two. A company considering the introduction of a new shoe will look for an area on the map free from competitors. It can be noticed that Lotto has one area of the map to itself, suggesting an entry of a more fashionable shoe from lotto or from any other company.

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