Abstract:
The goal of many product positioning strategies is to create similarity perceptions with other products in the market. Product managers often seek to reach this goal by communicating the same information as competitors (e.g., highlighting the same product feature as an existing competitor product), which however, can also generate negative side effects (e.g., “me too” perceptions). This article introduces an alternative tactic aimed at overcoming such weaknesses, namely the communication of similar types of positioning bases as a means for creating similarity perceptions. To empirically test the value of this alternative, the study here uses an open sort task employing real products and advertisements. The study demonstrates that consumers classify products in terms of similarity based on their underlying positioning bases as anchored in advertisements. The study also shows that consumers do not use concrete positioning bases more often as a basis for classification than abstract positioning bases. These findings hold in three product categories which differ along several important characteristics, and point to the importance of selection of the type positioning basis. The study discusses
implications and limitations of the study as well as avenues for future research.

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