The strategic importance of brand positioning in the place brand concept: elements, structure and application capabilities

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Abstract. The concept of place brand building and managing is largely discussed in literature on the subject and more and more frequently put into practice. The key element which determines effective implementation thereof is to define brand positioning. This is because brand positioning determines the framework of visual and communication-related execution . What is more, it also determines future brand development as brand positioning is the basis for gaining competitive advantage, especially in the context of global changes.

In the article, the author identifies the fundamental elements which constitute the structure of the positioning claim which results from the brand positioning process and indicates the opportunities and limitations of applying the concept.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary branding is facing challenges including hyper-competition, mass good consumption and globalization. These premises affect consumer products and places alike. Countries, regions and cities compete against each other in an increasingly aggressive way (Anholt 2006). This rivalry develops in all aspects of places' operations; at stake is awareness of the inhabitants, tourists as well as investors. The growing

number of comparative ranking lists[1] of places further stimulates competition between countries, regions or cities (Florek, 2012). At the same time, it indicates the importance of identifying specific administrative units which may determine a place's competitive potential.

Mass consumption is yet another trend affecting administrative units which needs to be considered in the process of place brand management. It is very distinct in tourism: consumption of tourist products has become a common phenomenon. There are fewer and fewer places in the world which are not commercialized by tourism. It is worth emphasizing that commercialization is detrimental to the extent to which places differentiate themselves; in many areas of activity they tend to be dissimilar. This is because mass consumption tends to be a response to tourists' mass needs. A case in point are chain hotels providing standardised services regardless of the location. Place unification may be challenged by proper and informed brand positioning accompanied by consistent implementation thereof in all areas of brand activity. Commercialisation and mass consumption of places tend to be extremely dynamic. Conducive to this phenomenon is broadly interpreted globalization. Commercialisation and mass consumption enforce standards of conduct not only in tourism but also with respect to the other stakeholders. Therefore, specific places tend to become similar. If a place does not enjoy distinct and differentiating natural resources (a situation affecting a large number of places) the risk of unification grows. In this context, differentiation may be based upon a skilfully defined and consistently implemented concept of brand positioning.

In the face of these premises, it is imperative to focus on the target groups' needs and expectations in the process of place brand management. This reference to needs and well concealed motivation behind the stakeholders' behaviour may be the foundation of differentiating a place from the competitors and a response to the threat of unification of administrative units. One should bear in mind, however, that this differentiation should offer a value to the stakeholders and therefore create and maintain value of a place brand.

In brand management, two important points of reference: the target group and competition should be taken into consideration. This approach necessitates a concept of brand positioning in the process of management (Kunde 2002). Brand positioning defines the brand in question by indicating the differentiating elements in the context of the target group's needs and expectations as well as the competition. Therefore, it is a useful strategic tool which may and should be used in the process of managing an administrative unit.

THE POSITIONING CONCEPT IN BRAND MANAGEMENT

The notion of positioning was first used back in 1969 (Trout, 1996); over time, its meaning in brand management has evolved. Originally, the term was used in the context of the multitude of market information targeted at the audience. Too much market information triggered off a trend to omit or delete information which fails to forge instant and powerful associations. In the decoding process, this information was deemed unimportant. In this context, the concept of positioning referred primarily to the combat for the consumer's mind (Ries, Trout, 1981) and assuming a unique position in the audience's minds related to a very specific and differentiating set of associations. Positioning is the way a company wants customers to perceive, think and feel about its brand versus competitive entries. According to such a perspective brand positioning is of a high level of subjectivity since it refers to the customer's individual perceptions. Davis (2000) perceives the notion of brand positioning in a similar way; in his opinion positioning is the place

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[1]   Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), Human Development Index (HDI), Trust Index by AT Kearney, Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI), Global City Index Report, Global Power City Index, PricewaterhouseCoopers Cities of Opportunity; City Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Global Financial Centres Index, Mercer Cost of Living report, The Economist Quality of Living (www.infrastructure.gov.au), the Anholt GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (NBI) and the Future Brand Country Brand Index (CBI), The City Brand Barometer.

in consumers' minds that a brand wants to own. It has to be externally driven and relevant, it has to be differentiated from the competition and, most importantly, it has to be valued. Kapferer (1992) pinpoints that positioning is a process of emphasizing the brand's distinctive and motivating attributes in the light of competition. Keller (1998) emphasizes that arriving at the proper position requires establishing the correct point of difference (unique to the brand) and point of parity association (connected with the category, not necessarily unique to the brand). For Aaker (1996), who focuses on tactical operations aimed at building strong brands, positioning is the basis for creating and implementing brand building programs. Finally, Temporal (2002) notes that positioning is vital to brand management because it takes the basic tangible aspects of the product and actually builds the intangibles in the form of an image in people's minds.

While in the concept of positioning a brand's communication activity is the major area of reference, it is now emphasized that positioning has a broader market impact and refers to a brand's broadly defined marketing activity. Therefore, brand positioning refers to all its external activities and, at the same time, it determines behaviour within an organization (Ellwood 2009, p. 73). The recent understanding is that brand positioning is one of key concepts conditioning a brand's competitive market position (Guidry, 2011).

However, marketing experts agree about the essence of positioning, namely assuming a desired position in the audience's awareness by owning a specific set of associations in the context of competition (Ellwood 2009, Sutherland 2011, Temporal 2002, Kapferer 1992, Keller 1998, Woodward 1996; Nilson 1998). This approach indicates a strong relation between brand positioning and image (perceived as a set of associations) and brand identity. According to Kapferer (1992), positioning needs to result from brand identity. Only well- defined brand identity allows to precisely define brand positioning. This is because brand identity sets the boundaries of positioning by adjusting its expression, supporting its individualism and abiding by coherence and consistence. Brand identity consists of more detailed and useful information about a brand in the context of implementing the positioning idea in operations.

At the same time experts emphasize that positioning should be credible, significant to the audience, differentiating from the competitors and allowing for the organization's growth. This growth, however, should contribute to the brand's increased competitiveness.

Brand positioning should be identified in such a way that on the functional and emotional level alike, it refers to arguments and benefits of importance to the target group. Significance on the emotional level is more difficult to define yet key in building up a robust brand position in the target group's awareness. At the same time, it indicates this element's importance in stimulating involvement, level of energy and enthusiasm among a brand's target groups. Neuro-marketing research shows that more and more frequently, people make decisions with reference to emotional arguments. Subsequently, they try to explain their decisions and behaviour on the rational and logical levels. Robust brands skilfully and precisely refer to the target group's emotions. Reference to the audience's aspirations and hopes is a frequently employed technique. Brands propagating an optimistic outlook create stronger positive emotional bonds with their audiences. Therefore the created set of brand-related associations has a lasting and unique nature. However, there is danger in making promises which a brand cannot keep, leading to the brand's lost credibility.

The condition of significance in brand positioning necessitates detailed analyses and research into the target groups' behaviour and motifs. This is specifically complicated in the case of a place brand. It requires knowledge and experience as different groups of stakeholders represent different attitudes and expectations of a brand. Therefore, specific elements of positioning may be perceived by the target groups at various levels of importance.

Brand credibility is another key feature of positioning. Brand credibility is based on the brand's consistency in keeping the promises it makes. This consistency should refer to the brand's personality and values which are constant elements; they do not change even in the face of dramatic changes in the environment.

When a brand's actual potential and capabilities are not supported, the audience is inevitably disappointed and the brand loses its credibility. Lack of credibility is also reflected in the audience's involvement in the brand which may be of key importance to place brands. It is extremely difficult to regain lost credibility; the process is very time-consuming and expensive. One should also bear in mind that brand credibility does not exclude its aspiration-related nature. To a target group, a brand's aspiration nature is an important factor determining the brand's perception and affecting its image. Fulfilment of this condition of positioning calls for an in-depth audit of the brand's assets and indicating ways of using these assets, changing them and developing. An unbiased analysis of brand assets should be supplemented and verified with research into how the target group perceives these assets. This should be accompanied by a hierarchy of assets with respect to significance and credibility which will allow an organization to focus on areas of biggest potential of key importance to the target group. In the context of a place brand, this analysis becomes a matrix incorporating all groups of a brand's stakeholders.

However, differentiation is a feature of positioning most frequently referred to by practitioners and theoreticians. Positioning should differentiate the brand from other alternative brands in the market. In this context, brand positioning may be perceived as a process aimed at creating differences between brands. At the same time, the condition of significance and credibility is key to defining the differentiation area. A brand cannot differentiate itself unless both these conditions are fulfilled; the brand may then be perceived as different from the competition and as such superior. Brand differentiation may refer to the competition or the product category. It is worth remembering that differentiation in a strategy when a brand leaves a category or a brand new category is created is accompanied by a high risk of failure. This is why competition is more frequently used as a point of reference in identifying positioning. Polarization of the target groups is a useful technique of brand differentiation; as a result, the audience is divided into a brand's avid fans and those who dislike it. One of the gravest mistakes made in brand management is attempting to cajole all potential brand users. Such a brand is devoid of the target group's passion and involvement while its image is blurred and does not differentiate the brand. Owing to polarization, a brand builds up strong emotional relations with the target group. This element of positioning necessitates regular monitoring of competitive activity on the one hand and in-depth analyses of market trends on the other.

Well-defined, standing out positioning which fulfils the conditions of significance and credibility are sources of inspiration and stimulation in an organization. It is a prerequisite of growth indicating the directions of future operations. It is worth noting, however, that brand development is in compliance with its positioning which in turn will let the brand maintain its credibility. Excess brand extension resulting from chaotic growth may lead to loss of brand coherence and playing down the brand's value in the audience's eyes. This approach necessitates regular analyses of the audience's needs and expectations and, on the other hand, monitoring and controlling brand activity in the context of compliance with its positioning. Undoubtedly, a brand should develop as well as foresee and take into consideration changes to the environment. Desisting from such activity may lead to changing a brand's position in the context of competition and, as a result, to eroding the entire brand positioning. As a determinant of growth, positioning should be the focus of interest of people managing an administrative unit. A majority of such units in well developed countries have had and implemented growth strategies in various areas of activity. In this context, positioning could be a useful tool indicating cohesive directions of place development revolving around a single idea. Such an activity would allow for more transparent and unambiguous perception of a place.

However, for a brand to be successful it does not suffice to properly identify its positioning. Well defined albeit unskilfully communicated positioning on different levels of brand activity will not bring about the desired effect. As long as the target group does not perceive or identify in brand activities its major assumptions or ideas (which are the basis of brand-differentiating associations) the brand is not really positioned in

the audience's minds. Robust brands enjoy differentiating positioning which is consistently implemented in brand strategies aimed at target groups. These brand strategies include the right selection of activities aligned with elements of positioning. Therefore, two factors combined determine a brand's robustness: differentiating positioning and skilful implementation of positioning through a well-tailored strategy (Ellwood 2009). The strategic importance of positioning can be discussed only in the context of implementation thereof. Positioning implementation results in a specific brand image, compliant with brand identity and differentiating the brand from its competitors.

There are three basic types of brand positioning which form the foundation of the positioning strategy: functional positioning, symbolic positioning and positioning through experience.

Functional positioning refers primarily to functional, differentiating brand features of rational nature. This type of positioning allows to develop the brand idea which can solve a specific problem of the target group. Most frequently, functional positioning in the context of a place brand is effective with reference to the target group: investors or entrepreneurs. However, if an administrative unit has at its disposal unique assets resulting from e.g. the geographic location, infrastructure or natural resources, functional positioning may also be successfully implemented with reference to the remaining groups of stakeholders: locals and tourists.

On the other hand, symbolic positioning refers primarily to the target group's emotions. A brand based on this type of positioning focuses on enhancing its image, identity, affinity, social acceptance and life fulfilment of the target group. Therefore, the brand provides the audience with emotional support. This type of positioning may also be employed in the concept of a place brand.

The third type of positioning is based on the target group's experience accumulated in contacts with a brand. This contact may be sensuous (referring to the senses) or cognitive (referring to the need of knowledge and development). Brand experience seems of special importance in the context of territorial brands. With relation to place brand, we cannot refer to brand consumption or use; the notion of brand experience is more adequate here. Feelings and the satisfaction level related to contacts with a place brand largely determines the brand's image. Experiencing a brand is a valuable source of shaping target's group attitudes (Florin, Callen, Pratzel, Kropp 2007). Brand experience may refer to the rational and the emotional alike. Especially reaching and discovering the emotional necessitates special research methods and tools.

When there is a strong relation between positioning and the process of its implementation, the proactive aspect of managing a brand's market position in the target group's minds gains in importance (Sutherland 2011). If we do not manage brand positioning our competitors may take over control of it. Therefore positioning is dynamic and changeable. Once established, it requires regular review and updates mirroring the changes in the environment. Change determinants may result from the activity of competitors' brands or social processes affecting target groups. Hence positioning necessitates regular proactive efforts aimed at creating and maintaining the desired brand image. In this context, the prerequisite for proactivity are an organization's skills in predicting future changes in the environment accompanied by an ability to initiate the right activities. This calls for caution and in-depth research in order to identify important change trends.

THE PREMISES OF THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF POSITIONING IN THE PLACE BRAND CONCEPT

The strategic significance of brand positioning has been presented by Kotler (1994) who places positioning in his STP concept (Segmenting, Targeting, Positioning). Hence, positioning just like segmentation or the choice of the target group becomes the key foundation for defining a strategy for a brand. Also Davis

(2000) takes notice of the strategic significance of brand positioning as the basis for further decisions on brand management.

Temporal (2002) treats positioning as one of a brand's key strategic pillars determining the entire management process. Any strategic decisions related to building up and developing a brand refer to the assumptions behind the positioning. The strategic importance of positioning may be viewed in two fundamental dimensions: internal and external.

With the external dimension of positioning in mind, the focus is on its importance as a guide and verifier of any activities planned and sustained by a brand. This function is of special importance in the context of place brand management because of the multitude and dispersion of brand activities. Differentiation and intensity of brand activity in many areas calls for defining transparent and simple principles to ensure consistency of a place brand. This condition is fulfilled when brand positioning is well defined and serves as an indicator of a brand's areas of activity. The major issue in place brand management is the right selection of activities aimed at various target groups. Very frequently, these activities do not share elements which would create and support a consistent image of a place brand. This is further impeded by the fact that management of an administrative unit changes as the local governments change following elections. In this context, positioning may play a key role as a guide and coordinator of activities revolving around a common brand idea. The idea implanted in positioning should be capacious enough to enable brand development targeted at various groups of stakeholders of a place brand. On the other hand, the idea should be unique and differentiating. It is also worth noting that the success of brand positioning is largely affected by skilful implementation. This requires knowledge and competence on the part of the administrative unit's management.

In the external dimension, well-formulated brand positioning should involve all employees who may affect the image of a place brand and stimulate creative activity around the brand idea. In the case of administrative units, civil servants and representatives of administrative units may determine the place brand experience in the target groups. When employees strongly identify themselves with the brand positioning it translates into the place's energy.

On top of forging an emotional bond between the employees and the brand, positioning also plays a more pragmatic role. It offers a fundamental set of guidelines and directions of the brand's activity and development. On the basis of positioning, a form may be created to verify the adequacy of the planned activities. The closer the affinity between the activity and brand positioning, the higher the priority a specific activity should be given in the plans of an administrative unit. Therefore positioning may serve as a useful tool of strategic planning. Brand activity verification is subjective and requires *ex post* research to ultimately confirm the extent to which specific projects are aligned with the positioning.

Therefore the internal strategic dimension of positioning also demonstrates itself in brand control. Measurement of effectiveness of a place brand is relatively poorly covered in literature on the subject. Regular research into brand image in the context of its compliance with the adopted positioning may be an important element of the effectiveness of specific activities pursued by an administrative unit.

The usefulness of brand positioning at every stage of strategic activities (planning, verification of activities and operational tools, the system of monitoring and control) confirms the importance of positioning.

In the external dimension, by reference to the original meaning of the notion, brand positioning sets the frames of the communication strategy. It defines the major communication idea which may be creatively expressed by means of available methods, techniques and means of execution. Brand positioning is a mandatory element of every brief written for an external advertising agency. Well-defined positioning may indicate the subjects, style and tone of communication. Any communication activity of a brand should result in imprinting the brand in the audience's minds in line with the adopted and desired positioning.

Providing an organization with an opportunity of consistent growth is a key strategic feature of well-defined positioning. Sustainable development is at the same time the major goal of administrative units' operations. In this context, positioning may serve as a useful tool indicating possible directions of growth, creating and supporting brand image.

The external dimension of brand positioning may also demonstrate itself in the context of ordering relations within brand architecture. This issue is of special importance with respect to administrative units and place brand management. Brand architecture orders relations between mutually connected brands. In the case of administrative units, mutual relations are an inseparable element of their operations. Inclusion of the context of the brand category into positioning lays down the limits of brand influence.

ELEMENTS AND STRUCTURE OF THE POSITIONIG STATEMENT
IN THE PLACE BRAND CONTEXT

Positioning statement is an internal document which synthetically captures brand vision to turn it into the basis of tactical and operational efforts. For the document to be synthetic and brief, it necessitates broad analyses and studies owing to which the positioning statement will contribute to the brand's robustness and value. The key role of the brand positioning statement is to inspire and motivate an organization to pursue activities resulting in growth. This is the starting point in the entire process of brand management. Further in this article, the authors will focus on this specific stage of the entire process. While this stage does not determine a brand's success it is nevertheless a prerequisite affecting the extent to which a concept has been implemented. Literature on the subject identifies four major elements of the positioning statement: the target group (1), the frame of reference (2), the point of difference (3), the reason to believe (4) (Tybout, Sternthal 2005).

Identification of a place brand's target groups is extremely difficult; it also necessitates skills and experience. The magnitude of stakeholders (residents – native and immigrants, investors – local and global, tourists – internal, external and foreign, public opinion – leaders and broadly defined society) calls for individual research aimed at defining the stakeholders' needs and expectations of a place. The contemporary marketing approach necessitates in-depth insight not only into the needs and expectations but also the system of values determining the target groups' attitudes and behaviour. This approach assumes the form of consumer insight according to which triangulation is the major research method with special emphasis placed on ethnographic research. It is worth emphasizing that specific groups' expectations of a place brand may be mutually exclusive. Another important aspect is the fact that the roles of specific target groups are superimposed i.e. an inhabitant may be at the same time a local investor, an internal tourist and an opinion leader. Yet another reason why definition of this area requires time and competence.

In the context of a place brand, four major positioning strategies may be adopted depending on the approach to the target group (Florek, Janiszewska, 2007), namely concentrated, exclusive, interrelated and uniform positioning.

Concentrated positioning is aimed at one or several chosen target groups. This approach usually results from already shaped preferences of so-called 'natural' target group (Kotler *et al.* 1993) as a consequence of a place's existing features. Concentrated positioning might be appropriate and effective for places characterized by unique attraction(s) or feature(s). They often focus on market niche interested in these qualities.

Exclusive positioning is based on different positionings for diverse target groups. This approach is a consequence of expanding marketing activities into next, so far not penetrated target groups. It consists of the implementation of separate positionings for various, separate segments. It can be seen from practice that

this approach is very popular, usually when applying separate brand strategies for tourism and investment markets. Very often, relevant units such as tourist organizations or foreign investment agencies run their own, not related strategies or programs aimed at suitable targets.

Interrelated positioning – based on different positionings for diverse target groups with a common core. In this approach, still, the brand is positioned separately for each segment but there exists a common element which is the core of the brand that influences the character of particular positioning decisions. The brand core is something unalterable and constant regardless of the target grroup to which the brand positioning is defined. This shared point decides on the consistency of brand positioning. The synergy effect is therefore the crucial benefit of this approach allowing at the same time individual attitude towards diverse target groups. (Gilmore 2002).

Uniform positioning – where the same (single) positioning is defined for all, diverse targets groups. This option is the most unambiguous and coherent since it suggests one common positioning basis for all diverse target groups. The core brand in this case needs to be broad enough in its cognitive sense to enable developing a common positioning statement. As Gilmore (2002) notices, the positioning must be sufficiently rich and deep to 'translate' into multifaceted place's targets. The problem lies then in defining a universal positioning base being at the same time unique and distinctive.

The choice of the relevant approach and further positioning strategies depend on the potential of a place product and its characteristics, previous place brand strength and its perception as well as the number of possible segments and features of competitors' places. Of special importance is the structure of symbolic (or representational) and functional elements in place brand architecture that determine the options of brand positioning extension into various segments.

The above listed positioning strategies may be analysed in an evolution approach taking into account the extent of positioning integration on condition that the large number of target groups has been taken into account (Figure 1).
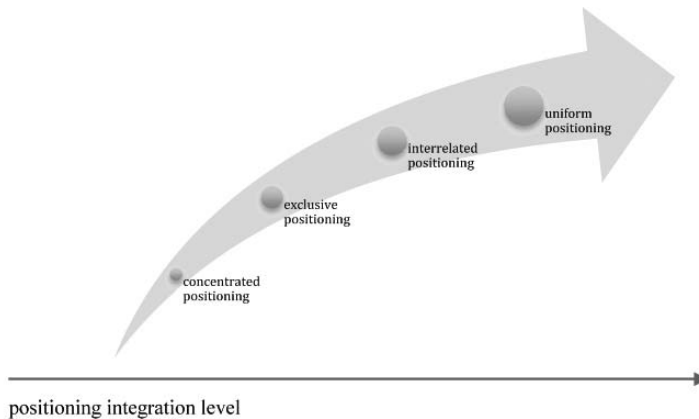

Figure 1. Evolution of positionig strategy
Source: author's own source.

Adoption of the right strategic option depends on the experience and competence of an administrative unit in the realm of brand management and positioning. The higher the level of positioning integration, the

bigger managerial skills are required. The level of integration also indicates consistence of the positioning concept with reference to the target groups. Therefore administrative units with poor experience in brand management should start positioning by adapting the concentrated or exclusive strategy. By gaining competence in adopting the strategy in the course of evolution one can look for common elements in the area of needs, expectations and specific target groups which will form the basis for an interrelated strategy. Another tactical step to be taken is extending the area of shared references within the interrelated strategy to ultimately create a basis for following the uniform strategy. Uniform positioning is the most cohesive strategic option taking into account the needs of various target groups. This strategy offers a tremendous benefit of simplicity and possibility of adopting it in many areas of a place brand's activity. One should indicate, however, possible threats resulting from the uniform positioning strategy. In this case, brand positioning should be universal and capacious enough to refer to the place brand stakeholders' diversified needs. However, this universal nature and capacity are contradictory to the need of looking for unique brand features to be included into positioning. The strategy requires considerable skills and experience to ensure that the universality and simplicity of positioning do not result in non-differentiating and banal positioning.

Adoption of the right strategic positioning option with reference to the target group allows to define another element of the positioning statement, namely a frame of reference. A frame of reference refers mostly to the brand category and defines the chief goals of the target group. This is why a frame of reference is a natural result of identifying and defining target groups. In the case of place brands, goals are most frequently defined in an emotional area related to brand experience. Defining a frame of reference may largely underpin the process of selecting a brand. This is because a frame of reference defines situations in which a brand may be experienced. At the same time, a frame of reference allows to indicate a brand's closest competitors who may have the ability to satisfy the same needs and achieve the same goals for the stakeholders. Defining a category in the context of a place brand is determined by geographic, administrative and functional factors accompanying an administrative unit.

By indicating a scope of competition, a frame of reference allows to identify the brand's point of difference. Identification of the competitors and a detailed analysis of their activity indicate areas of differentiation possible to use. Definition of the point of difference should simply explain how a brand is better than other, alternative brands. Just like a frame of reference, a point of difference may be expressed at various levels of abstraction. Some brands focus on specific, particular functional features which differentiate a brand from other. Other brands refer to more abstract emotional benefits emphasizing how well and how unique the audience will feel by experiencing a place brand. Unlike a frame of reference, a point of difference is an element of the positioning statement which may be subjected to changes resulting from external factors like the place brand's geopolitical situation and that of competitive brands as well as social changes. Therefore a point of difference requires regular measurements which verify the level of its significance or up-to-date status.

A point of difference necessitates a reason to believe. Benefits provided by a brand to the audience are a fundamental source of building up brand credibility. These benefits may be of functional or emotional nature. If a brand provides both benefits simultaneously, perception thereof in the target group will be more complete and more comprehensive. Preferably, the functional and emotional benefits complement each other. The functional benefits of a place brand come from unique resources of an administrative unit. For this reason, functional benefits as a reason to believe can be applied to a limited extent. Many places have very similar functional parameters. In this context, emotional benefits gain in importance as an important source of building up relations and bonds with a place brand's stakeholders. Emotional benefits frequently refer to self-presentation and relations with others and are connected to the need of self-expression.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite its synthetic approach, a positioning statement is an important marketing tool from a strategic point of view of managing an administrative unit. It is a starting point for subsequent activity pursued by an organization. It determines its operations internally (positioning as a guide and verifier of planned activities, as a tool of building up relations with employees, as a source of inspiration and stimulation to act, as a monitoring and controlling tool) as well as externally (positioning as a premise of building brand architecture, as an indicator of growth directions, as an indicator of the frames of the communication strategy). The multitude of functions assumed in an organization contributes to the fact that positioning has its strategic importance as a key tool at every stage of the management process: analytical, planning, implementation and control (Figure 2).
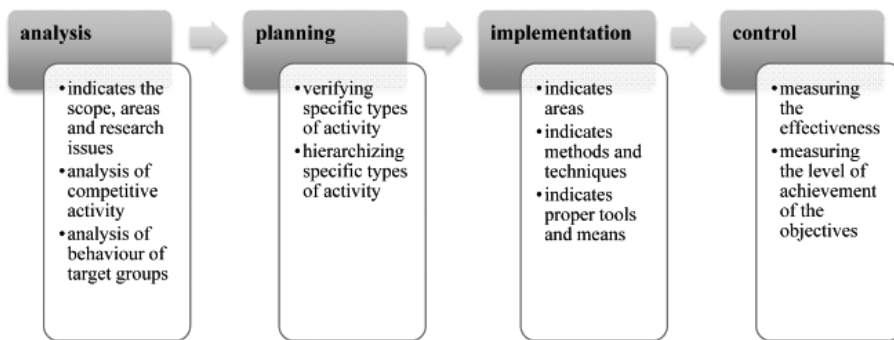

Figure 2. The role of positioning at every stage of the management process
Source: author's own source

At the analytical stage, positioning indicates the scope, areas and research issues encompassing an analysis of competitive activity and behaviour of target groups. Positioning also underpins the planning process and is a useful tool in verifying and hierarchizing specific types of activity with reference to the consistency and coherence of the brand idea. Implementation is a stage of special importance to positioning because it influences its effectiveness. Well-defined positioning underpins the process of implementation. It indicates areas, methods, techniques as well as tools and means which should be used in the implementation process. The control function refers to measuring the effectiveness of operations and the level of achievement of the objectives. The measurements refers to perception of a place brand in the stakeholders' minds with respect to compliance with the assumptions made for positioning.

A skilful use of positioning at every stage of the management process determines a cohesive image of a place brand. Positioning is the answer to the challenges posed by contemporary branding and allows an administrative unit to make informed amendments to the growth strategy in the context of competition and the stakeholders' changing needs and expectations. It serves as a compass setting directions of growth and as a guardian of consistence and coherence despite the changes resulting from political elections.

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