

# Positioning as a Catalyst Towards Innovations

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## ABSTRACT

In order to keep up with the rising demand for better products and constantly facing challenging competition, innovation must be encouraged in the product development process. The authors of the paper look for an answer to the question of whether targeted positioning in product development contributes to more successful innovation. Within the framework of this paper, the authors develop a new theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model, emphasize the importance of positioning towards innovations, make research how the positioning is performed in innovative solutions, and how positioning affects the implementation of innovations. In the practical part of the paper structured phenomenological approach to interviews is applied, and the obtained results show a relation that, if the positioning is performed purposefully in the direction of innovation and, if the positioning elements comprehensively are applied in product development, then it facilitates the more successful introduction of innovations. The transfer of knowledge between science and entrepreneurship in the process of innovation creation is also essential for product differentiation, successful commercialization, and adding value to solutions. The authors develop a model of knowledge transfer in the development of innovation reflecting the interaction importance of entrepreneurship and science.

**Keywords:** Positioning, Innovation, Product development, Knowledge transfer.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Innovation is one of the main pillars to improve the competitiveness of industries and increase productivity and exports at both – the business and national levels. In today's global economy, competition has become almost immeasurable [1-3], as a result, reaching consumers and entering the market is becoming increasingly complicated and requires a precise way to reach the target audience, it applies to implementing and developing brand and products, including innovation as well. It has long been considered that supply should be shaped in response to a problem and a need, but this alone is not enough to maintain supply demand and sustainability in a constantly changing market [4].

The positioning has become one of the key components in modern marketing management and in product development as a

tool for the search for differentiation. Differentiation is ensured through innovation, and as a positioning element, it gives a competitive advantage [1-3], [5]. Numerous studies highlight the significance of differentiation and uniqueness in strong brand development [6]. Open innovations with a collaborative approach provide not only interaction with partners and professionals but also stakeholders more broadly, incl. the target audience. Also, societal trust is a key factor in influencing the efficiency of open innovation [7]. Open innovation is increasingly being researched [8-9]. Brand positioning includes the context of the brand and product development, among other things. Kotler in 2016 extended the definition of brand positioning including brand trust and brand beneficence in the explanation of brand positioning [10].

The authors perceive innovation not only as a novelty and an invention but as a process because of which the innovation is realized. As early as 1911, Schumpeter began the explanation of the modern concept of innovation, including the implementation of innovation as a part of it, thus expanding the concept of innovation [11-12], pointing to the importance of entrepreneurship and commercialization in the viability of innovation. Cooperation with scientists is also an important component in the development of innovations, but there are barriers to this process that are reflected in the article.

**The tasks of the research:** 1) brand positioning impact on innovations; 2) benefits of open innovation; 3) analysis of brand positioning models; 4) importance of cooperation with scientists in the development of innovations; 5) correlation between brand positioning and innovations.

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The subject of this paper is positioning as a catalyst, and the object is innovation.

**Scientific aim** of the research is to study the correlation between brand positioning and innovations.

**Findings:** the authors confirm that the effect of positioning on innovation is observed, and if the positioning is performed comprehensively and purposefully in the direction of innovation, then it facilitates the more successful introduction of innovations.

**Conclusions:** brand positioning significantly affects the development of innovations in the company. Positioning is successfully applicable not only within the framework of marketing but within product design and as a catalyst to innovation.

To achieve the aim of the paper theoretical research and empiric research were done. Several research methods were used: 1) theoretical literature review and overview; 2) a new 2 models have been created as a result of the analytical synthesis method; 3) expert interviews; 4) grounded theory and open coding for analysis of expert interviews.

A theoretical literature review and overview were conducted with the aim to study the terms of positioning and innovation, as well as conducting research on theories of cooperation between science and entrepreneurship. After the literature analysis qualitative content analysis was done for literature study and a systematic review about models of brand positioning. Unique attributes of each model were determined and analysed. The involvement of experts in the evaluation of the developed model was performed as a focus group, for the analysis of the elements to determine whether a holistic approach is used. A new theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model accordingly to a holistic approach was created by the authors of the article.

Management-level expert in-depth interviews were performed with the aim to analyse positioning's affect on innovation creation (8 respondents). Finally, grounded theory and open coding were used to interpret the collected data from expert interviews. For the purposes of this study results of mentioned methods above were analysed and conclusions are made, and next research steps were defined as well – the authors will develop measurement criteria for the Brand Positioning Complex Model in the next research stage so that the model can be used as a proof positioning method for brand positioning audit and as a comprehensive tool to determine the direction of brand development and within the innovation creation.

### 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to reach the aim of the research – to explore the correlation between these two processes – whether brand positioning in the creation of innovation is related to the successful implementation of innovation, brand positioning as a marketing and product development strategy component is studied primarily.

#### **Brand positioning**

The amount of information a person faces in everyday life is too overwhelming, thus impossible to comprehend. So every brand and product including innovations has its place in the market intentionally or unintentionally formed. Reviewing positioning concept theories, one of the most important questions in marketing strategy is particularly the company's positioning in the market [1], [5], [13-15]. A person's consciousness selects and accepts only the information that meets his current experience and knowledge [16].

Trout determines the essence of positioning "Positioning is what you do with the human's mind because it is possible only there". Positioning is essential to a company in order to self-differentiate in consumers' minds. Positioning's purpose is not to create something new but to interact with what is already in people's minds using existing responses, besides to change existing things in people's minds is particularly difficult. That is a system organized by companies that allows one to find a way to a person's consciousness [15].

The importance of values in the brand's perception becomes increasingly important: a personal, emotional approach focused on the brand identity through personality features promotes loyalty and involvement. Marketing strategies are focusing on human qualities in the company, creating an emotional perception. The emotional attraction through the values of the

parties involved determines strong brand loyalty [16-17]. Starting from 2016 Kotler expands the branding conceptual model, including two new elements: brand trust and brand beneficence: "Marketers need to target not only the minds of the customers but also their hearts and well-being." [10]. Common values build stronger and long-term relationships with consumers. In the 21st century, human values are increasingly integrated into brand management, and communication, including product development, trying to find a connection with the consumer or a group of consumers with common values. For example, Aaker, in shaping a brand's emotional perception, defines the components of a brand's personality that include aspects of personality traits [16]. Wheeler also points out that it is important for companies to build an emotional relationship with the consumer in order to gain long-term loyalty [17]. Appropriate personalization of the brand and its maintenance in communication creates a stable emotional image of the brand. "Strong brands remain outside the densely populated market," says Wheeler. People fall in love with brands, trust them, and believe in their superiority [17]. Hopewell points out that the target audience's response will be more favourable if the brand concept is developed based on the target audience's motivation and emotional meanings and does not focus on higher functionalities [18]. If we want to stimulate consumer engagement with a brand, then the brand must be assigned target audience values [3], [19]. Over the last decade, corporate and brand values have become increasingly linked to ethical attitudes and need to be correlated [20]. Values determine motivational reasoning and understanding target audience values also helps to understand the decision-making process of customers in business – for strategy development and for innovation positioning as a process.

Describing brand positioning guidelines, Keller mentions, that developing a good positioning, first, a good positioning has a "foot in the present" and a "foot in the future" besides other factors [3]. It is important not only to know the market and competitors, but also it is necessary to know future trends for successful business development and accurate, purposeful brand positioning. The introduced new products in the market as well as the reflection of the concept reach the consumers with a time lag, therefore new product development and brand positioning must take place with a view to the future.

#### **Literature Review of Models of Brand Positioning and Branding**

Different models of brand positioning and branding models are available using different approaches. Each offers its own unique attributes [10], [13], [16], [20-25]. Brand positioning models and branding models help to guide the positioning process in a purposeful way, and the authors explore as comprehensive a positioning approach as possible within the article. Brand positioning should be seen as a complex for reaching benefits for the company including new product design. The authors propose 9 brand positioning models for further analysis (see Table 1) - henceforth, when reflecting models, the specified model numbering is maintained.

*Table 1  
Brand positioning and branding models  
(authors' adapted framework)*

| No. | Year | Author           | Name of model   |
|-----|------|------------------|---|
| 1   | 1986 | Park W. et al    | Brand concept management                                      |
| 2   | 1996 | Aaker D.         | Brand Identity Planning Model                                 |
| 3   | 1999 | Urde M.          | Brand Hexagon   |
| 4   | 2001 | Keller K.L.      | Customer based brand equity model                             |
| 5   | 2002 | Davis S.         | Brand asset management process                                |
| 6   | 2003 | Urde M.          | Internal and external core value-based brand building process |
| 7   | 2010 | Kotler Ph. et al | The 3i Model  |
| 8   | 2011 | Urde M.          | The market and brand-oriented framework                       |
| 9   | 2016 | Kotler Ph.       | 6-step branding conceptual model                              |

The proposed models viewed and analysed provide a comprehensive view of brand positioning - Unique attributes of the models are summarized and reflected in the Table 2.

### **Innovations**

Innovation gives differentiation benefits for brands and provides a more successful position in the highly competitive market we have nowadays, it drives economic development and enhances the positive impact of innovation on profitability. Various authors identify innovation as essential for competitiveness [11], [2], [26]. National industrial policy expresses confidence worldwide – innovation and innovation capacity cultivation are one of the main pillars to improve the competitiveness of national industries and increase productivity and exports. Schumpeter already in 1911 initiated the explanation of the modern concept of innovation, including the realization of innovation as a part of it, putting the entrepreneur as the main driving force of innovation [11], thereby pointing to the importance of entrepreneurship and commercialization in the viability of innovation. Schumpeter believed that economics is constantly transformed by its own internal forces as the 'circular flow' of economic life – economic development, characterized by disruption and innovation [11]. Innovations are those that provide benefits for the development of the company, including exports, and the newest research suggests that there is new evidence supporting the existence of a positive relationship between innovation and exporting and that some factors (particularly, variety of innovation and marketing innovation) are critical [27]. Export market participation improves a firm's performance through the stimulation of innovations [28]. Innovation and environmental information disclosure have positive effects on financial performance [29].

There are many different classifications and forms of innovation, and the explanation of the term of innovation is constantly being expanded and various interactions are being found. Since the end of the 20th century, scientists have extensively studied the field of innovation, which is well reflected in the summary by Chen et al. "Paradigm shift of innovation by country or region" [30].

A new form of innovation is proposed by Chen et al.: Holistic innovation – an emerging innovation paradigm based on Eastern wisdom. The four core elements of Holistic innovation are total innovation, open innovation, and collaborative innovation driven by the strategic vision [31].

Innovation is a sociological phenomenon with economic outcomes, thus sociological theory is necessary [32]. Sundbo concludes – there are three dominant groups of innovation theory highlighting such elements as determinants for the reasons for innovation occurrence: 1) the entrepreneur as a decisive driver of innovation; 2) the development of technologies; 3) the strategy and management of an enterprise [32].

One of the approaches to how empirical research classifies innovation – divides innovations into two levels according to the impact of innovation: 1) macro-level innovation: a novelty in the world, market, or sector, the level of innovation is based on the factors, which are exogenous for an enterprise; 2) micro-level innovation: a novelty for an enterprise or consumer [33].

Innovations can also be divided according to their development approach [34-37]: 1) open innovations: involve a collaborative approach. Companies integrate external knowledge and expertise into their innovative processes; 2) closed innovations: a closed approach to innovation, which entails the complete integration of research and development within the boundaries of the company [38-39].

Innovation is also scientifically studied as customer experience-driven innovation where a customer-centric view is an important aspect [40].

### **Open innovations**

In general, innovation creation is a complex process that involves a multi-level process. Researchers point out that innovative work behaviour is a multi-level process that involves individual, group, and organizational relationships [41]. Meta-analytic research shows that the team level is very important in the development of innovations [42].

Open innovation involves the exchange of knowledge and information between organizations made up of people [43]. The innovation process is based on managed knowledge flows across organizational boundaries. Organizations should use external ideas, knowledge, and technology in the open innovation process, and combine them with unused ideas and technology solutions within the organization [44].

The benefits of an open innovation model include cost reduction, cost efficiency, and time savings [45]. The starting point for an open innovation model is the involvement of people who can collaborate and improve the collaboration skills of internal actors. Brockman, Khurana, and Zhong confirm – the interaction between open innovation and societal trust has been confirmed – societal trust is a key factor in influencing the efficiency of open innovation [8].

An open innovation process can take many forms, involving different tactics. For example, product innovation rumours as a form of open innovation can be used, with an indication of related propositions for example, within online technology blogs [46]. In order to innovate, companies often need to collaborate with a large number of partners and stakeholders from outside their organization with the returns from their innovative ideas. But there is also the paradox of openness – the creation of innovations often requires openness, but the commercialization of innovations requires protection.

### **Interaction of Science and Entrepreneurship towards Innovations**

The involvement of science and cooperation with entrepreneurship is mutually beneficial and desirable because innovation is the process of adapting an invention to the user. Knowledge is acquired through both invention and innovation [47]. During the process, both parties communicate and interact to exchange their knowledge, resulting in innovation [48]. Many

authors believe that mutual trust is an essential condition for effective cooperation, at the same time, the following conditions are identified in the scientific literature that relates to the effectiveness of cooperation: the distance between the partners involved; motivation; culture; organizational structure; body of knowledge; expertise; interactions; behavioral culture [49]. The lack of these conditions hampers or even makes it impossible for science and business to work together. The motivation of scientists and the applicability of the results in science are important [50]. "Academic interests are generally irrelevant to the interests of companies that are more business-oriented", because if scientists do not see clear benefits in their work and scientific careers, they are not interested in new products that could be created through collaboration [51]. Publications in high-class scientific journals are a priority for the academic staff [52]. Entrepreneurs are much more interested in cooperating with science, as public interest in the transfer of knowledge and technology from science institutions to business is often relegated to the background, and sometimes scientific institutions are accused of bias, commercialization interests, and non-compliance with academic ethics [53].

The most common disincentives for business organizations are a focus on quick profits and a reluctance to make additional commitments [54]. There are also limited resources (time, people, finances) to establish and develop quality relations with scientific institutions, as well as there is a lack of specialists to cooperate with science and participate in research [55-57].

#### 4. PRACTICAL RESEARCH

##### Unique attributes of models of Brand Positioning and Branding analysis

Analysing models of brand positioning (according to Table 1) each model is characterized by unique attributes, and the authors summarize them in Table 2 using qualitative content analysis.

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Table 2  
Unique attributes of the models  
(authors' adapted framework)

| No. of model | Basic, Delivered from       | The method/ approach     | Purpose, direction |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1            | Consumer needs              | Process approach         | Brand              |
| 2            | Brand identity              | Process approach         | Brand              |
| 3            | Brand orientation           | Holistic approach        | Company & brand    |
| 4            | Brand orientation           | Holistic approach        | Brand              |
| 5            | Brand orientation           | Process approach         | Brand              |
| 6            | Emotional marketing, values | Process approach         | Brand & company    |
| 7            | Emotional marketing, values | Holistic approach        | Brand              |
| 8            | Brand orientation           | Holistic approach        | Brand & company    |
| 9            | Emotional marketing, values | Component-based approach | Brand              |

The models most often use a holistic approach and a process approach, which leads to the conclusion that positioning is either performed as a comprehensive brand (or product development)

or as a process of dividing the work into successive stages. In the further course of the work, the authors develop a new theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model (see Figure 1) using a holistic approach to provide a comprehensive positioning method. Most models refer to the brand, less often to the company (30%).

##### Elements of the Brand Positioning and Branding Models

Within the research elements of brand positioning models (according to Table 1) are defined and collected, see Table 3.

Table 3  
Elements overview of brand positioning and branding models  
(authors' developed framework)

| No. of Models | Elements of models   |
|---------------|--|
| 1             | Brand concept stages (Introduction, Elaboration, Fortification); Brand concepts (Functional, Symbolic, Experimental); Positioning Strategies; Developing marketing mix; Consumer perceptions of image/position.  |
| 2             | Developing a brand vision: Elements of a brand vision. Determining brand picture: Determining brand image; Creating brand contract; Brand-base customer model; Developing a brand asset management strategy: Positioning the brand; Extending the brand; Communicating brand's positioning; Leveraging the brand; Pricing the brand. Supporting a brand management culture: Measuring return on brand investment; Establishing a brand-based culture.  |
| 3             | Positioning, core values, Product category; Product; Vision and mission; Brand name; Company name; Target audience. Awareness; Associations; Loyalty. Quality, Personality, Communication.   |
| 4             | Brand identity model: Strategic brand analysis (Customer analysis, Competitor analysis, Self-analysis); Strategic identity system (Brand identity (Brand as product; Brand as organization; Brand as person; Brand as symbol)); Value proposition (Functional benefits; Emotional benefits; Self-expressive benefits); Credibility (support other brands); Relationship; Brand identity implementation system (Brand identity elaboration; Brand position; Brand-building programs; tracking). |
| 5             | Stages of brand development (Identity, Meaning, Response, Relationships); Branding objective at each stage (Deep broad brand awareness, Points-of-parity & difference, Positive, accessible reactions; Intense, active loyalty); Building blocks (Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgments, Feelings, Resonance).   |
| 6             | Internal brand building process (Mission, Vision, Organizational values, Core values, Brand architecture, Product attributes, Personality, Brand positioning, Communication strategy, Internal brand identity); Brand equity; External brand building process (Identity of the brand consumer; Interest & brand sensitivity; Brand awareness; Brand associations; Added values; Self-image; Relationship; Brand loyalty).  |
| 7             | Brand identity; Brand image; Brand integrity; Brand positioning; Differentiation.  |
| 8             | The brand promise and core values; Stakeholders (external); The organisation (internal). Market oriented approach; Brand oriented approach.  |
| 9             | Brand purpose; Brand positioning; Brand differentiation; Brand identity; Brand trust; Brand beneficence.   |

In the new theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model (see Figure 1) development process all elements are included in the positioning dimensions by grouping them after qualitative content analysis. Analysing elements, the authors of the paper conclude that elements of models can be grouped into four dimensions of brand positioning which are included in the developed model (see Figure 1).

**New Theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model**

A brand must have a clear and consonant brand-positioning-differentiation-integrity standing. Inauthentic brands won't survive when word-of-mouth becomes the new advertising medium and consumers rely more on acquaintances in their network community than on what companies say and advertise [11]. Furthermore, social networks also play a significant role as an extension of word-of-mouth, and precise and timely focus on brand positioning becomes particularly important. Brand positioning helps to create a brand united, so the brand's activities are consistent. Therefore, within the framework of the study authors develop a new theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model (Figure 1). A new model is created accordingly to the holistic approach as mentioned approach is an all-round perspective, comprehensive and multi-dimensional method. Developed a new brand positioning model that includes defined brand positioning elements (see Figure 1), elements of the existing brand positioning and branding models (see Table 2), and focus group results of experts involved confirm the holistic approach used.

The developed model includes four dimensions of brand positioning, defining the following dimensions: parts involved, areas involved, brand positioning objectives, and the result of brand positioning, see Figure 1.

In-depth interviews with management-level experts (company management) were conducted (8 respondents) to test the holistic approach of the developed model and to confirm the successful application of positioning in innovation creation. The results of the interviews confirmed the four dimensions embedded in the model and the identification of positioning elements in the

innovation creation process. By finding the position of the innovative solution in the initial stages of development, the companies ensured more successful commercialization of innovations and compliance with the needs of the target audience, ensuring more successful involvement of the target audience.

The authors will develop measurement criteria for the positioning model in the next research stage so that the model can be used as a proof positioning method for brand positioning audit and as a comprehensive tool to determine the direction of brand development and within the innovation creation.

**Positioning as a catalyst towards innovation**

In the development of new products, positioning is carried out in the same way as in the development of a brand, and similar interactions with influencing factors and components are formed as in the positioning of a brand (see Chapter 3.1. and Figure 1). When developing new products, it is valuable to use targeted product positioning already before the start of development. To determine the significance of innovation interactions with related processes, the authors develop a model of knowledge transfer in the development of innovation (see Figure 2), and the model reflects that positioning is the basis for developing innovation. The transfer of knowledge between science and entrepreneurship in the process of innovation creation is essential for product differentiation, successful commercialization, and adding value to the solution. The authors developed a model of knowledge transfer that reflects the interaction importance of entrepreneurship and science.

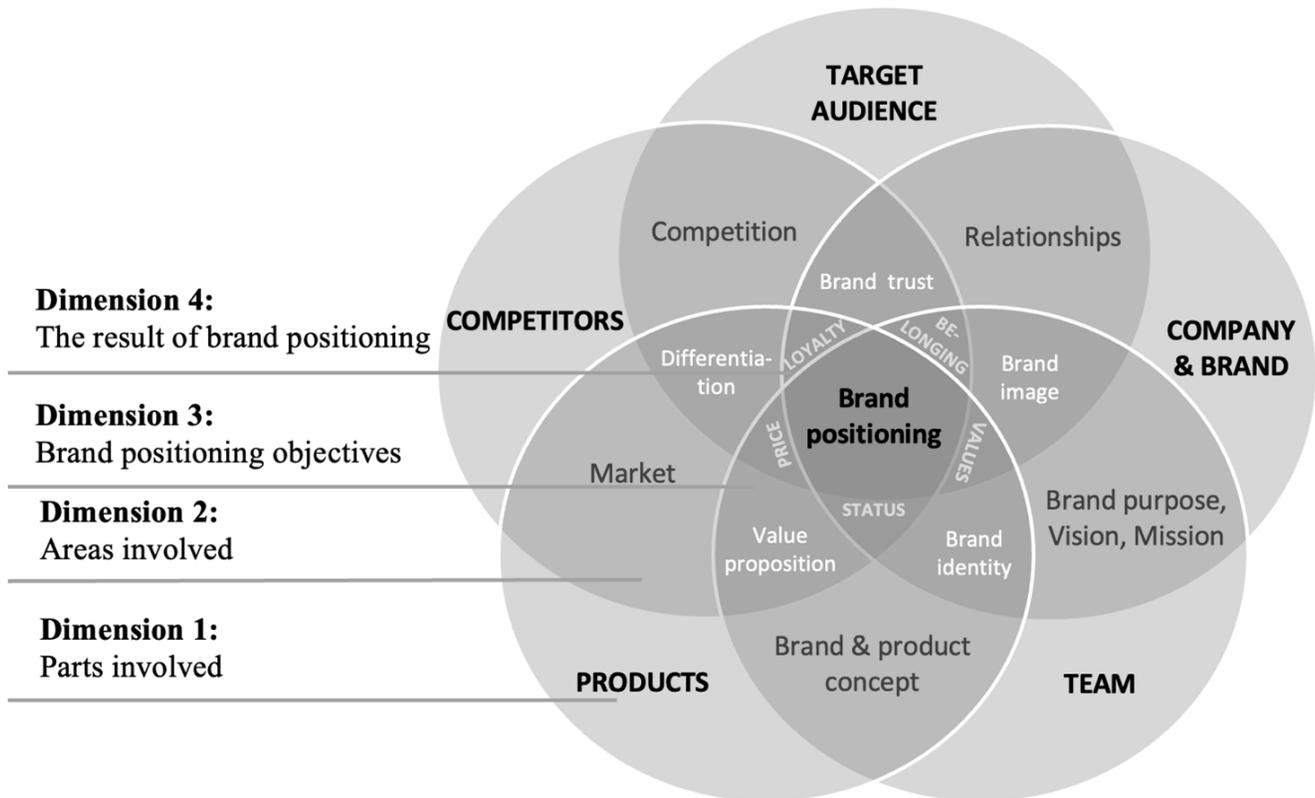
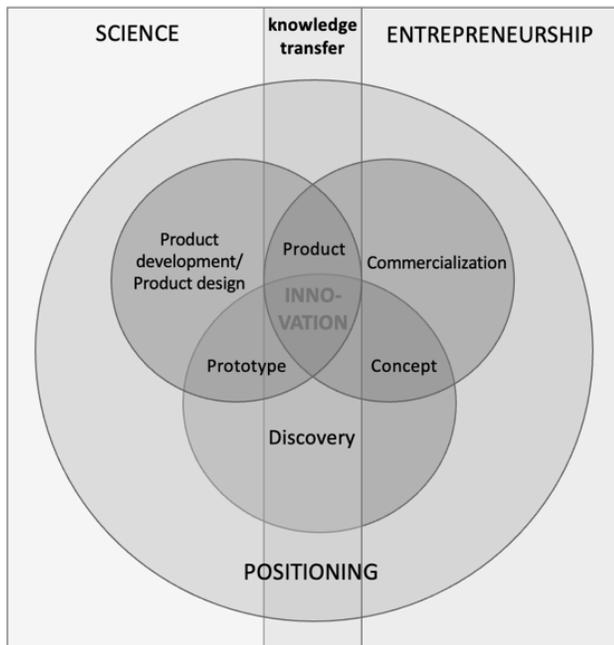


Figure 1: New theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model (authors' developed framework)

Figure 2: Model of knowledge transfer in the development of innovation (authors' developed framework)



The positioning includes components of the developed new theoretical Brand Positioning Complex Model (see Figure 2) as part of the innovation development process, and all the other components accordingly reflect a model of innovation development in the interaction of entrepreneurship with science.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The research confirmed the correlation between brand positioning and innovations. The authors conclude that brand positioning significantly affects the development of innovations in the company. The main conclusions were reached:

1. Brand positioning significantly affects the development of innovations in the company as differentiation as an important element of positioning is ensured through innovation, and it gives a competitive advantage. Therefore, by using brand positioning in the brand development strategy, the importance of innovation is enhanced.
2. Positioning is successfully applicable not only within the framework of marketing but within product design and as a catalyst towards innovations.
3. The transfer of knowledge between science and entrepreneurship in the process of innovation creation is also essential for product differentiation, successful commercialization, and adding value to solutions.

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