

THE BOOMING CONCEPT OF POSITIONING FOR FAIR & LOVELY FAIRNESS CREAMS

Dr. K. Prabhakar Rajkumar¹

Mareena Abraham²

Abstract

The fairness product market is flourishing in India, a country that represents a unique amalgamation of social, religious and cultural. India's FMCG market is evolving rapidly and it is like a fuel for the Indian economy. This rapid growth is due to the growth of cosmetics and fairness product in Indian market. The top selling skin lightening cream in Indian is Fair & Lovely from Hindustan Lever Ltd. (HLL) followed by CavinKare's Fairever brand. Fair & Lovely is the dominating brand in the fairness cream market in today's concern, it generates about \$60 million annually. This paper highlights the techniques and positioning dimensions, which created a stable place for Fair & Lovely products in competitive fairness cream market. The revolutionary innovations, success and achievement story of the brand is also significantly addressed in the paper. The article concludes with the momentous role of positioning that projected the Fair & Lovely brand as a brand that empower the women, increase women's confidence level and also to achieve their dreams and ambitions.

Keywords: Positioning Aspects, Awareness & Threat, Fair & Lovely, Fairness Cream Products.

¹ Assistant Professor, Dept of Commerce, Periyar University, Salem

² PH.D Research Solor, d Dept of Commerce, Periyar University, Salem



Introduction

Fairness or fair skin has always been the desire of people since decades and it has been always associated with beauty. In earlier times, most of the people used homemade products to enhance their beauty, such as turmeric, milk, honey to make their skin more beautiful and lighter in shade. In Indian society, the assumption of fairness or fair skin is signed as beauty. The obsession among the people in Indian society has created more opportunities for the cosmetics and FMCG industries to bank their market in India. The increasing number of fairness products is mainly because of favourable demographics such as younger population, increasing working class population, enhancement of the female working population, etc. The positive change in economic development, where people's income has increased to a greater extent and people especially women are willing to spend their hard earned money on their grooming and wellness. The shifting of youth toward a western style of lifestyle propelled their spending on luxury and imported fairness products.

The role of women towards fairness products when compared to men, women are more likely to be emotionally attached or involved with fairness products and personal care product brands. Women have continued to be more valuable customers for personal care product for years due to intrinsic (how she feels about herself) and extrinsic (how she is perceived by others). Women consumers' lifestyle is rapidly changing with the emergence of more educated, working and higher income women. The increasing number of working women has lead to more consciousness for appearances and look, which make them feel good in society.

Booming Concept of Positioning

Positioning plays a vital role in the marketing process. Positioning also influences the consumers' perception, purchase decision and buying behaviour of consumers. The word 'positioning' is one of the "invisible assets" of the firm. Positioning is mostly considered as a

terminology or a jargon. It is mainly expressed as a differentiator, the USP, proposition. Positioning is all about to attain a clear differentiator in the minds of consumers. In other word, it can be justified as positioning of any product means “unpositioning” the competition. Positioning does not happen by itself, it takes effort, time and resource own a positioning of the product. The positioning theory is most complex and critical concept in the marketing process. The changes in the years has changed the perception and improved the concept and strategies of positioning on a broader sense. Throughout the decades, the conceptual development of positioning was continued and many authors are still continuing to augment the concept. Positioning is the process of identifying and selecting the target segment, target competitors, distinctive product identity and which could ultimately satisfy the needs of consumers (DI Mingo, 1988). To create an optimal place in the prospect’s mind, positioning is not what is done with the product or brand; it is what is created in the minds of target consumers. In today’s concept positioning is called competitive positioning (Dibb and Simkin, 1993). Hooley and Greenly (2005), described that competitive positioning is central of market – focused management, which comprises of target market, where the firm will operate and how it will compete with other competitors in the market. The discernment of positioning started with the product attributes, features and benefits. Afterward, it slightly changed to market segmentation, perceptual space, targeted consumers, and strategies of competitors. In this competitive era, positioning concept is all about point of difference and point of parity for the products in the eyes of prospects which mean *competitive advantage and differentiation*.

Fair & Lovely: Evolution of the Brand



Beauty is a universal desire amongst all the women; it can be for specific beauty needs and beauty icons that differ across all the regions. In the US and Europe women look forward for

more than fairness or fair look, but they focus on youthful looks, therefore anti-aging creams are driving in skin care markets in these countries. When considered to Asian countries, their predominant beauty need is not anti-aging, but to have lighter skin shade, fairer skin colour. In India 78 percent of women would like to have fairer skin, as they believe it makes them more attractive and confident (source: habits and attitude study, HLL HR 1998). In the beginning Fair & Lovely was specifically designed to fulfill or meet the needs of the middle class Indian customers. The growing Indian middle class has become increasingly fashion conscious and is enjoying higher levels of disposable income. Fair & Lovely launched the product while keeping in mind the target group. The product was distributed widely in urban areas at a micro level via corner shop, local retailers, and drug stores and at the macro level at large departmental stores in malls and shopping plazas. Later on the brand positioned itself to rural areas also through rural marketing program, which was impressively reached by Fair & Lovely 'Vani' scheme, which created and developed high demand for skin whitening products even among the poorer segments living in Indian villages. This scheme spread across several thousand villages in multiple states across the Nation. The entire goal of the scheme is to encourage the rural women and empower them to earn their lively hood. A report suggested that Fair & Lovely earned huge significantly increased product sales in India through this Vani scheme launched by Fair & Lovely brand.

Fair & Lovely, was first introduced by HLL into the Indian market, its reach has now proliferated to more than 38 countries around the world. The remarkable growth and success of the Fair & Lovely in India promoted the HLL to launch their product in neighboring countries also. In Sri Lanka, the product was introduced in 1992 and soon become a huge success in this un-tapped market. Another interesting performance and success was shown in Pakistan the neighboring country of India. The scope of Fair & Lovely increased subsequently, the product gained a widespread market internationally in Africa, the Caribbean and Middle East such as Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Jordan, Oman and Iran, where women spend vast amount of money on beauty enhancing fairness creams.

The choice of the product in this paper is also appropriate because Hindustan Unilever Limited is more successful and doing well in fast moving consumer goods. HLL is one of the most

successful multinational firm in FMCG business and most dominating player in the market of India. The most familiar product of HLL is Fair & Lovely fairness cream among the Indian women. Fair & Lovely is indeed doing well in the Indian market; it is one of the more profitable and the fastest growing brand in Unilever portfolio. In Indian concern, Fair & Lovely have become the synonym for the skin fairness products with its efficient promotional and distributional campaigns throughout the country; it became a pioneer of skin fairness product in India. All the sectors, whether it's urban or rural all the communities are very decipherable about the success of Fair & Lovely.

Equating fairness with beauty is an obsession among Indian people, which has turned out the HLL firm to capture consumer insight toward fairness products. When it's concern with Fair & Lovely about 53 percent of share of market is occupied by HLL. Fair & Lovely is the top-selling skin lightening cream in India, followed by CavinKare's Fairever brand. Until CavinKare entered the market in 1999, Fair & Lovely held a 90 percent market share for the product. Fairever gained an impressive 15 percent market share since it began being sold in India, causing HLL to respond to increase advertising efforts. This article attempts to find out positioning dimensions for Fair & Lovely and makes suggestions to increase the brand potential. The fascination with fairness cream is not new. Fair & Lovely, India's first fairness cream was launched by Hindustan Unilever Limited back in 1975. In the last few decades Fair & Lovely have shown an avalanche for fairness product hitting in the market.

Doing Well and Achievements



Fair & Lovely first launched in India in 1975 and held a commanding market share in 50 – 60 percent for skin whitening in India in 2006, a market which valued over \$200 million and growing at 10 – 15 percent per annum (marketing practice, 2006). Fair & Lovely were the second fastest growing brand in a HLL portfolio of 63 brands, with a growth rate of 21.5 percent

per year (Hindustan lever Ltd, 2002). The closest rival competitors for Fair & Lovely are Cavinkare's brand Fairever and Godrej's Fairglow which are local Indian firms have a combined market share of 16 percent. There is a strong consumer base of about 27 million Indian customers, who regularly use Fair & Lovely product. This brand has successfully launched another new product formulation from lotion to gel and soaps. The brand Fair & Lovely is marketed by Hindustan Unilever Limited in 40 countries in Asia, Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and the Middle East. Where India is being largest single market for this brand and they are certainly doing well financially also.

In India, FMCG market is growing at a rapid rate and it is increasing the growth of the Indian economy. In regard of fairness creams it constitutes a significant proportion in FMCG companies. It increases the overall sales of Fast Moving Consumer Goods companies due to the importance given by Indian consumers towards the fair look and fairness products. In fairness product, Fair & Lovely was ranked as the best brand on specific factors like awareness, promotion and advertisements. Today about 250 million consumers are strongly connected with Fair & Lovely across the world. The brand has positioned itself and strongly committed towards "empowering women to change her destiny". In 2003, Fair & Lovely was the twelfth most trusted brand in India by ACNielsen ORG – MARG. In 2004, it was identified as a super brand. This brand positioned and re-positioned itself with additional attributes to increase the point of difference and competitive advantage from other competitive brands. According to the source ACNielsen ORG Retail Panel, the brand has grown up by Rs 3 billion in 2000 and about 6 billion in 2003. The first revolutionary innovation introduced by the Fair & Lovely was prologue of the new packaging format of the "big nose" sachet at Rs 5. Later on, another modernization was Ayurvedic Fair & Lovely fairness cream launched in 2002, which has the recipe of ancient fairness which is "Kumkumadi Tailam", a mixture of sixteen Ayurvedic ingredients. This product has become the second largest skin cream within a year. With this success of Ayurvedic cream in the market, Fair & Lovely introduced another product named Fair & Lovely Anti-Marks in 2003; this was launched to solve the primary skin problem for particular skin types.



In India, women love the concept of Fair & Lovely brand; here women really want to become fairer. This helped out the brand to stay one of the strongest brands in the Indian market with six years of its launch and even today it has a significant position in the minds of consumers. The most successful part of Fair & Lovely was when it was introduced internationally in 1998. Most importantly, the product gained a good strong position in the market through advertising indicators. In 2004, the brand launches other latest variant like oil control, fairness gel with papaya and watermelon extracts for oily skin. Fair & Lovely has strongly impacted the lives of over 250 million women around the world (source www.hll.com). Later on there was preface of fairness cream for men, called Fair & Lovely Menz was launched in 2006, which was the counter product for Emami Fair & Handsome which was introduced in the market in 2005. The latest and enhanced fairness creams popularized in the current market are Fair & Lovely BB Cream and Powder Cream. Fair & Lovely BB Cream is the combination of foundation and fairness cream, which gives a makeup finish on your face; moreover, it provides an instant fair look and cover dark spots and blemishes. Whereas, Fair & Lovely Powder Cream that bring the benefits of brightening powder and fairness cream, which gives 14 hours fair look, instant bright look, matte – non oily feel of the skin and which makes the skin glow and look beautiful.

The Hidden Threat for the Products

There is no denying the fact that effective positioning is required to create and maintain the consumers even for the best of the products. Human memory is very limited or short, and it frequently needs constant reminders about the supremacy of product attributes over their opponent. Brand and product need to be using anti – ageing positioning strategies with huge

regularity, to rejuvenate the product on the minds of consumers at the top. The concept of positioning has been followed and well practiced by big and famous companies across the world for decades. To attain or achieve the success in the marketing effort, basic understanding of human psychology is required, marketer acknowledged. This helps the marketers to understand the needs of prospects and gather information what kind of attribute should be added to the product and how it could be well communicated to ultimate prospect. Marketers are inquisitive in knowing, what influence the customers purchase a product.

Positioning Aspects of Fair & Lovely

Fair & Lovely's skin lightening technology is known to be the best in the world. This brand plays an important role in fairness solution. The Fair & Lovely established as the global center and innovating the product from last 40 years; through unceasing rigorous research and development, to deliver superior fairness for more women around the world. In 1973, a research scientist in the firm (HLL) lab discovered that vitamin B3 could lighten skin colour. After two years of meticulous research and experimentation, the world's first lightening cream, Fair & Lovely were launched. This product positioned itself as 100 percent safe ingredients, which will provide effective and visible fairness to women, beyond that it will provide hope and confidence to women. The positioning is not just a term used in the marketing process. It is a set of additions to the basic product, in the mind of consumers. This helps the product, to become loyal in the eyes of consumers for which they are ready to pay higher prices. Positioning of product makes the consumer committed towards the product. The fair & Lovely brand, product carrying its name having some consistency about their formulation, packaging, advertising and their 'positioning' in the consumer mind. The consumer is more concerned with getting value for their money. The positioning dimension is more important because some product has strong positioning features that create valuable images in prospects' minds, like for quality, engineering, workmanship, design, durability or some other attributes.

Fair & Lovely mainly focused on fairness related products only unlike other brands. This brand significantly well positioned in the prospects mind's of its entire product line only consists of fairness related product. This is the reason; this brand always sticks to only one strategy, and never diversifies its product category. This strategy created a strong base and positioning for

their product in consumers mind. It strongly targeted at mass people who lacks in self confidence and not having a desired skin tone. Fair & Lovely product promises the women, to give not only fair skin, but to enhance their self confidence by transforming a normal looking girl into a desirable 'Diva'. Fair & Lovely did not stop its innovating ideas and strategy for positioning, it always altered its positioning dimensions with changing times and situation through innovative research in the market; mainly they focused on to position their products by '*product benefits and attributes*'. In early 1975, the product positioned itself as safe & effective beauty cream and doesn't contain any harmful elements, which create a visible impact on their lives and which could transform fairness of women all over the world. After establishing a strong image in the minds of consumers, it started its way towards emotional appeal. Fair & Lovely played more attention on product success buttoned up by suitable advertisement of the product by *two sisters, who highlighted the significance of product and the cream could stop the darkening of skin in the sun moreover this cream treats your skin gently and safely*. In 1991 in India, most of women basically were homely and their entire objective is to have a good life partner.

Now Fair & Lovely positioned itself wrapped by an advertisement which describes about "to tell the story of prince" where this brand observant on *to help out the young girl to marry the man of her dreams by using fair & Lovely fairness creams*. Henceforth, when the ideology and aspiration of women changed, she now converges herself to have a career and own a position in the society. Now to full this dream of women, fair & lovely also established and emerged with the new positioning scenario of endowing the emotional attachment with women's. An endorsement done by the cricket commentator in the *Fair & Lovely* product gave "the women a hope for their dreams, to stand for their career and be expert in their field with gleaming and florescence beauty on their face". Then the pace came were, Fair & Lovely used a new technique for positioning of '*equal equal*'; by using this technique women will be easily recognized by others and can achieve an extraordinary career life. The strategy was to position the women who are very hard working and always chase their dreams. This positioning strategy influenced the women to stand out, to create more self confidence, self reliance and to be independent in the society.

The brand Fair & Lovely has travelled successfully a long journey of 41 years in the fairness cream market in India as well all around the world. The positioning aspects of the product changed timely, according to the needs and preference of the consumers over the period, it went to three phases. Firstly, it started with the introduction of the product in 1975; this phase is named as **Launch Phase or Introductory Phase**, this stage mainly focused on the effectiveness of fairness cream in the market. The brand was able to convince the consumers of the feature and attributes of the product, that product contains safe ingredients without any bleaching agents. The second stage was introduced as **Romance or Expansion Phase**, at this time product started connecting to consumers through emotional benefits. The product promised to make the consumers more fair and beautiful, which would help the unmarried girls get a good groom. The third stage of the product is **Destiny or Revolution Phase**, it mainly focuses on the females to make them more confident, build up their career, achieve her ambitions and dreams and help them to get empowered and to achieve recognition in the society.



Hierarchy of Dimensions for Positioning

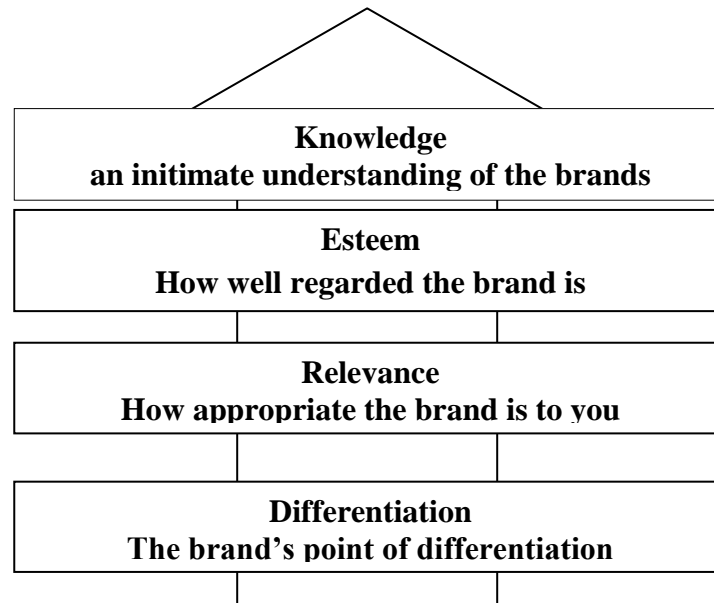
The power of Fair & Lovely product is some of the unique dimensions that make it worthy for the loyal consumers. This helps the product to stand strong and sustainable in the market, and also improves the growth of the brand in the competitive market. The combination of following aspects makes the brand well-built in the eyes of consumers. Firstly, product **Differentiation** is a

marketing strategy whereby marketers attempt to make their product unique to stand out from competitors. Differentiation becomes a cutting edge to gain more, when there are multiple identical products prevailing in the market. Product can be differentiated on its features, physical attributes, benefits etc among its competitors. Fair & Lovely always strongly positioned its attributes and benefits against its competitors such as Cavinkare's Fairever and Godrej's Fairglow. The brand created a significance difference from its launch stage till present. Fair & Lovely always went through innovative research to alter its positioning dimensions with changing times; fair & lovely differentiated itself as a strong competitor through suitable promotion methods via famous celebrity endorsement in advertisements. Secondly, in case of **Relevance** the fundamental job of the marketers is to make a strong bonding and more meaningful connection between consumers and brands. The features and attributes of the product should connect strongly with consumers taste and preference individually. Fair & Lovely have already created an extreme position in the minds of prospects, especially women. Name of the product firstly builds up a relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire and engage the consumers. Product package development and improvement always attract huge consumers. The promotion techniques influence the consumer to create more awareness of different variant in the product line. Moreover the unique concept of hope, build up of dreams and achieving the desired goals attracted more consumers towards the brand. Currently 250 million consumers worldwide connects fair & lovely as a brand that stand for “ beauty that empowers a woman to change her destiny”.

Thirdly, **Esteem** is all about respect and admiration. The marketers always aim that their product to stand out in the crowd of competitors in the eyes of their targeted consumers. In case of Fair & Lovely, Esteem implies the perceived value of the brand and consumer perception, which increase the popularity of the brand and create an intense bonding between brand and consumer. Consumer perceives the brand as empowering, achieving and transformative. Fourthly, brand **Knowledge** this makes the product to intimate and give a detailed understanding of positioning dimensions through relevant advertisement. It is an outcome of successful brand building and refers to the awareness of the consumers about the brand. The knowledge can be segregated into two category i.e. image and awareness. Fair & Lovely eye-catching image effectively connect to consumer worldwide and awareness is enhanced by promotional techniques done by the brand.

Fair & Lovely has established a strong differentiation and create a suitable relevance for their products; this help the consumer to hold high esteem and well equipped brand knowledge among its competitors in the market.

Positioning Aspects



Source: FMCG & Retail market blog

Conclusion

Ascertaining a suitable product position is the prior step of formulating marketing strategy for the product. The concept of positioning has been followed and well practiced by big and famous companies across the world for decades. To attain or achieve the success in the marketing effort, basic understanding of human psychology is required, marketer acknowledged. The positioning concept is well developed in Fair & Lovely brand, where it directly show that it dominate the fairness cream market. Fair & lovely is clearly doing very well in the market; it is one of the profitable and high growth brands in Unilever product portfolio in many countries, especially in India. The company is not breaching any law; millions of women are voluntarily coming forward, accepting and buying the product worldwide and it seems to have million of loyal customers. In Indian concern, Fair & Lovely have become the synonym for the skin fairness products with its efficient promotional and distributional campaigns throughout the country; it became a pioneer of skin fairness product in India. Fair & Lovely always want to create a

positive change or a revolution in the society in its own small ways, by helping women get the confidence to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Moreover, Fair & Lovely will do this by not just inspiring and encouraging women, but also enabling them by giving opportunities like higher education, career development and entrepreneurship via Fair & Lovely foundation.

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