



# Positioning strategies of foreign and indigenous firms in an African cultural milieu

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the pivotal role of positioning in marketing strategy formulation, few studies explicitly examine positioning strategies employed by foreign and indigenous firms operating in the same cultural milieu. Relying on the concepts of culture and positioning as the backdrop, this research contributes to the literature by answering two key research questions: What are the differences between African indigenous firms' and Africa-based foreign firms' pursuits of positioning strategies? And is a Western-developed typology of positioning strategies applicable in an African cultural milieu, and more specifically, in the Ghanaian cultural environment? The results of the study demonstrate that indigenous and foreign firms replicate each other's positioning strategies to carve out positions, although foreign firms aggressively pursue a wider range of strategies than indigenous firms. While there is a uniform attempt by indigenous and foreign firms to reach the mass-market and lower- to middle-class target audiences, foreign firms focus more on middle-class audiences than do indigenous firms. The authors discuss implications for marketing theory and practice.

## 1. Introduction

The adoption of marketing and positioning strategies never occurs in a cultural vacuum. Instead, it unfolds within social contexts that encode values, beliefs, and acceptable patterns of behavior (Anambane, 2017; Cayla & Arnould, 2008). Culture determines business models and approaches in international markets (Cayla & Arnould, 2008; Gao, 2013). Examining the relationship between culture and indigenous entrepreneurship in Ghana, Anambane (2017) concludes that culture not only acts as a motivational factor for women's entrepreneurship but also largely limits the growth and expansion of women-owned enterprises. Thus, the ability to appreciate the execution of marketing practices (e.g., branding, advertising, selling, pricing, positioning, and customer service) of indigenous and foreign firms in Africa, particularly given the contrast between African and Western cultures, is an opportune research task.

Values endemic to and dominant within consumers' cultures affect their cognitive processing styles and ultimately their buying behavior (Wen, Qin, Prybutok, & Blankson, 2012). The branding or product attributes that ensue from the employment of positioning strategies affect consumers' perceptions and responses to marketing efforts and ultimately impact purchasing behaviors (Cayla & Arnould, 2008; Monga & John, 2007). The determination of positioning strategies selected by indigenous and foreign firms warrants conceptualization and empirical examination in that several international brands have failed due to their inability to appreciate local culture and execute relevant positioning strategies (Gao, 2013; Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004).

We argue that the cultural milieu is closely related to the manner in which positioning strategies (see Ellson, 2004; Halkias, Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Milchram, 2017) and branding tactics (see Cayla & Arnould, 2008) are manifested. Despite the important relationship between culture and positioning strategies in international marketing

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strategy formulations, the extant literature has overlooked the examination of indigenous and foreign firms' positioning activities within a nation's cultural milieu, even though Ellson (2004) has long touted the pivotal role of organizational culture, environmental culture, and positioning in firms' marketing activities. Ellson (2004, pp. 56 & 60) writes, "the personality of an organization, and the environment within which the firm operates, provides the foundation of an accord between the customer and the business and a satisfactory framework for strategic positioning... the ultimate source of culture is based on a founder's beliefs and values that, when validated by the survival of the organization, become cognitive assumptions." In support, Lee (2000, cited in Gao, 2013, pp. 180–181) defines culture as the way of life of a people, and stresses that theories of management and marketing are culture-bound. For example, while Home Depot's DIY positioning model—which requires customers to labor on projects themselves—is compatible with American culture, the same Home Depot DIY positioning model is not compatible with Chinese culture (Gao, 2013, pp. 181).

Culture concerns patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are rooted in common values and societal conventions (Laroche, Ueltschy, Abe, Cleveland, & Yannopoulos, 2004; Nakata & Sivakumar, 1996) which therefore makes it a relevant piece of marketing study. The extant literature reveals that culture does indeed influence consumers' perceptions and evaluations of firms' marketing deliberations (Webster & White, 2010). Using survey data from the United States and China, Wen et al. (2012) found that culture has a moderating effect on the interrelationship among service quality, food quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the fast food industry. Also, Kalliny et al. (2011, p. 42) write that no study has examined advertising information in any African nation or any part of the Middle East, with the exception of Saudi Arabia. Nakata and Huang's (2005) examination of 600 articles revealed that 26% were devoted to marketing organization and strategy. The authors go on to highlight that the subcategories of marketing management and organization constituted 12% of the articles, while marketing strategy made up 14%. Even though Nakata and Huang (2005) did not indicate the specific marketing strategy categories, further examination of the key topics identified by Nakata and Huang (2005, pp. 613) still reveals the oversight by extant international marketing research literature of positioning—a key component of marketing strategy because culture is a major foundation of international marketing (Nakata & Sivakumar, 1996). These gaps in the literature provide additional momentum for this research and highlight the potential contribution of this study.

The primary objective of the study is to examine the manner in which indigenous and foreign firms in an African cultural milieu engage in positioning activities. The key research question thus states: How do foreign firms operating in Africa—and specifically, Ghana—compare with indigenous firms when it comes to the employment of positioning strategies in the marketplace?

Among the cultures of nations, the least explored are those from Africa. Specifically, unlike Asia and Latin America, Africa remains largely under-researched and lags behind other regions with regard to the comprehensive study of national cultures and firms' pursuits of positioning strategies (Yang, Wang, & Su, 2006). An exception, to a degree, is Darley, Luethge, and Blankson's (2013) review on African culture and international marketing. Consistent with extant literature, in this study, we use the term "Africa" interchangeably with sub-Saharan Africa and aim to represent black Africans south of the Sahara (see Ibeh & Debrah, 2011). Thus, for the purposes of this research, we exclude the Arab countries of North Africa that are often identified with the Middle East (Mellahi, Demirbag, & Riddle, 2011).

In the next sections of the article, as a backdrop to the study, we discuss the conceptual background encompassing taxonomies of cultural patterns and the concept of positioning. Next, we state the hypotheses before discussing the research method. We finally discuss the results, followed by conclusions, implications, limitations, and future research directions.

## 2. Conceptual background and hypotheses development

### 2.1. Taxonomies of cultural patterns

African culture differs from other cultures in the way Africans construct meanings, negotiate social contexts, and make sense of their environment (Ahiauzu, 1986). Understandably, to propose a monolithic African culture may be misleading because of strong national differences (Gannon, 2004). Mufune (2003) notes that even within African national states, a myriad of cultures and subcultures exist. Nonetheless, there are certain indigenous trends of thought, cultural influences, and value orientations that are shared by the majority of people in sub-Saharan Africa (Edoho, 2001; Oppong, 2003). Also, several African scholars argue for culture relatedness across Africa (Gyekye, 2003; Mbiti, 1990). African cultural characteristics and value systems include a hierarchical social structure, the importance of kinship, primacy of the group, time orientation (Safavi & Tweddell, 1990), and the driving norms of human interdependence, the virtue of symbiosis, and reciprocity (Mangaliso, 2001).

Despite the gradual shift away from traditional high collectivism in urban areas because of economic hardships and the influence of Western business and marketing practices (Kuada & Hinson, 2012), our observation of the vast majority of sub-Saharan Africans who live in small towns and rural communities reveals a rather slow pace of cultural change. Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger (2014) write that cultural values change at a "glacial pace," and that despite the convergence of economies and consumption patterns, people usually hold traditional attitudes, values, and beliefs rooted in the history and core culture of the country in which they live.

We now briefly discuss Hofstede's (1991) taxonomy, Hall's (1989) high and low context communication, and House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta's (2004) time orientation in the context of African culture. Hofstede's (1980) taxonomy (i.e., power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity) is important in marketing and allied literature; it proves to be stable and meaningful in explaining cultural differences (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Pomerantz, 2004), is accepted widely, provides criteria to interpret cultural differences (Cavusgil et al., 2014), and is often used to study cultural dynamics in international marketing contexts (Hewett, Money, & Sharma, 2006; Paul, Roy, & Mukhopadhyay, 2006; Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, 2007). Time orientation is also important in cultural explication because it affects decision making, negotiations, and human interactions (Kaynak, Kara, & Apil, 2011). Moreover, Hall's (1989) work on communication style has gained renewed attention because of the explosion of business interaction between East Asia and the rest of the world (Cavusgil et al., 2014).

### 2.2. Cultural dimensions

#### 2.2.1. Power distance

Cultures differ in the extent to which they view status inequality as good or bad and the ways in which they describe how a society deals with the inequalities in power that exist among people (Soares et al., 2007). Authority is inherent in one's position within a hierarchy in high power distance cultures. There are strong dependency relationships between parents and children or bosses and subordinates, and a significant social distance between superiors and subordinates. For low power distance cultures, the opposite is true: the gaps between the powerful and the weak are reduced. According to Hofstede (1991), most sub-Saharan African cultures exhibit high power distance (Munene, 1996). The elderly are seen as the true repositories of wisdom and knowledge, examples for the youth to emulate (Moemeka, 1996), and the forbearers or gatekeepers of society. Individuals treat elders with deference, respect, and dignity (Nnoruka, 1999).

### 2.2.2. Individualism-collectivism

Individualism describes the importance of the individual and the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence, while collectivism emphasizes the interrelationships of persons and the importance of human connections (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). Sub-Saharan Africans exhibit a high need for connectedness in their community, an imposition of societal/group norms, and adherence to traditional beliefs, which underscore the focus on a collective self over the individual self (Hofstede, 1991; Kiggundu, 1988; Munene, 1996; Triandis, 2004). Communities are characterized by placing the individual self after the collective self. This collectiveness fosters group dynamics, facilitates the building of team spirit, minimizes conflicts, creates loyalty, generates trust, and fosters friendly work environments (Nnandozie, 1998). Not surprisingly, the perceptions and behaviors of individuals in sub-Saharan Africa are distinct from the individualistic beliefs of those living in the United States. Individuals in the United States exhibit a preference for the personal self, which manifests as expressions of one's opinion, assertiveness, autonomy, creativity, emotional independence, and self-actualization (Hofstede, 1980; Lindridge, Vijayopal, & Dibb, 2014).

### 2.2.3. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which cultures focus on ways to reduce uncertainty and create stability (Hofstede, 1991; Thomas, 2002) and concerns how a society reacts to life's inherent ambiguities. Uncertainty avoidance cultures prefer structure and consistent routine, whereas uncertainty acceptance cultures exhibit positive responses to change and to new opportunities; while uncertainty avoidance societies prefer predictability and stability, uncertainty acceptance societies have a greater tolerance for unclear or indefinite situations (Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Pomerantz, 2004).

In Hofstede's (1983) survey, the multi-country regions of East Africa (i.e., Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia) and West Africa (i.e., Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone) scored at the intermediate position on the uncertainty avoidance dimension. In Hofstede's (1991) survey, Nigeria and Zimbabwe were included in the "cautious" group (Munene, 1996). In a study involving Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, and Nigeria, House et al. (2004) give these African countries mid-level scores on their uncertainty avoidance scale. The evidence suggests African cultures are in the moderate category of uncertainty avoidance.

### 2.2.4. Masculinity-femininity

Masculinity-femininity refers to a society's orientation based on traditional male and female values (Hofstede, 1991) and describes the extent to which "traditional" male orientations of assertiveness, competitiveness, materialism, ambition, and achievement are emphasized over "traditional" female orientations of nurturance, quality of life, relationships, and interpersonal harmony (Soares et al., 2007). A masculine orientation also includes respect for achievement and the acquisition of money and material possessions, whereas feminine orientation includes concern for the environment, championing the underdog, and caring for the less fortunate (Blackwell et al., 2006).

The high affiliation orientation within African culture strongly suggests that African societies exhibit some degree of femininity (Kiggundu, 1988; Nnandozie, 1998), and, in fact, some researchers note that African cultures tend toward the feminine (Pomerantz, 2004). The two African countries (i.e., Nigeria and Zimbabwe) included in Hofstede's (1991) survey fall in the "feminine" category.

### 2.2.5. High and low context

Hall's (1989) taxonomy organizes cultures by the amount of information implied by the context of the communication itself. High-context cultures prefer messages where the meaning is implied or is presumed to be part of the individual's internalized beliefs, values, and norms; in such cultures, meanings are internalized and an emphasis is placed on non-verbal cues or codes (Pomerantz, 2004). High-context

cultures view communication as a means to promote smooth, harmonious relationships, whereas low-context cultures rely on elaborate verbal explanations, putting much emphasis on spoken words (Kaynak et al., 2011).

Reactions in low-context cultures are direct and explicit, whereas reactions are reserved and indirect in high-context cultures (Lustig & Koester, 1996). People in high-context cultures refrain from critiquing each other openly because of their unwillingness to separate the actor from their actions (Sawadogo, 1994). Sub-Saharan Africa is usually placed in the high-context category.

### 2.2.6. Time orientation

Time orientation covers the temporal aspect of human life and whether time is anchored in the past, present, or future (House et al., 2004; Kaynak et al., 2011; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). This dimension also considers whether people make decisions with respect to events in the past, events in the present, or events in the future (Thomas, 2002). The term also encapsulates monochronic and polychronic time (Hall, 1989) as well as socialized time (Onwubiko, 1991).

Cultures with a linear time orientation have a highly organized view of time (Lustig & Koester, 1996). Punctuality is expected and people view time as a commodity. With this orientation toward time, time can be spent, wasted, lost, or managed. According to Hall (1989), cultures may also be monochronic or polychronic with respect to their time orientation. Cultures that have a monochronic orientation prefer to do one thing at a time, with a high importance placed on tasks and schedules (Pomerantz, 2004). Polychronic cultures, however, tend to do multiple things at the same time, with schedules being used as general guidelines rather than deadlines, and involvement with people is regarded as more important than schedules. To the African, "time is simply a composition of events which have occurred, those which are taking place now and those which are inevitable or immediately to occur" (Mbiti, 1990). Even the term "deadline" infers completion of the task, a notion that is absurd to Africans, as schedules and time should not dictate one's actions. Most of Africa is polychronic and recognizes the complexities of life and the elasticity of time (Pomerantz, 2004).

Time within African culture is also socialized. *Socialized time* is the use of time that does not sacrifice social duties and human relations in favor of clock-time or punctuality. Time is programmed into socio-culture norms of human behavior and interpersonal relationships (Onwubiko, 1991). Using time in social contexts takes precedence over the use of time in other contexts.

Fayolle, Basso, and Bouchard (2010) find that in business, culture serves as a conductor of performance while management's pursuit of strategies serves as the catalyst for competitive advantage. In view of the fact that the environment's culture affects the ways in which management evaluates firm goals and deliberations (Mukherjee, Hanlon, Kedia, & Srivastava, 2012), firms operating in cultures of high individualism, for example, achieve higher performance from their marketing and positioning activities relative to those in collectivistic cultures (Todorovic & Ma, 2008). This is because risk-taking and risky investments—more common in individualistic cultures (Darley et al., 2013)—reflect the use of a sizable amount of resources, including the employment of marketing and positioning strategies (Boso, Cadogan, & Story, 2012). At the same time, risk-avoidance—a common trait of collectivistic cultures (Anambane, 2017)—may reduce management's confidence in pursuing certain marketing and positioning strategies (Darley & Blankson, 2008). We now discuss the concept of positioning as a backdrop to the study.

## 2.3. The concept of positioning

Positioning is defined as the particular bundle of benefits targeted to consumers (Ghosh & John, 1999). These benefits underpin "value propositions" (Noseworthy & Trudel, 2011). Ries and Trout (2001) argue that positioning is not what is done to the product/service, but

rather what is done to the mind of the customer. Arnott (1992, p. 111) defines the concept of positioning as “the deliberate, proactive, iterative process of defining, modifying and monitoring consumer perceptions of a marketable offering.” Arnott suggests that the application of the concept of positioning involves three related activities: (a) defining the dimensions of a particular perceptual space that adequately represents the target audience's perceptions, (b) measuring objects' locations within that space, and (c) modifying actual characteristics of the offering and perceptions of the target audience via marketing communication strategies. Positioning efforts entail iterative processes that require the deliberate and proactive involvement of marketing managers.

Ansari, Economides, and Ghosh (1994) claim that the essence of the positioning decision is the selection of the optimal mix of tangible and intangible offering attributes, pricing, distribution of consumer preferences, and positions of competitive offerings. Coffie (2018) argues that the key positioning strategies for firms to pursue are “service reliability,” “social responsibility,” “branding,” “top of the range,” “value for money,” “attractiveness,” “country of origin,” and “safety,” which can enhance long-term competitive advantage (see also, Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010; Hooley & Greenley, 2005; Ries & Trout, 2001). These positioning strategies serve as the foundations on which marketing communication plans are formulated (Ries & Trout, 2001; Rossiter & Percy, 1997). These fundamentals are germane regardless of the national or international market for which or within which a positioning strategy is formulated and executed (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999).

### 2.3.1. Hypotheses development

Not only have researchers overlooked empirical investigation of positioning deliberation in international markets, but sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, also appears to be the most under-researched region in international business discourse (see Yang et al., 2006, p. 609). The capability to build a desirable and defensible market position is and shall always remain a key element of the marketing function's credibility and/or its justification for advertising execution and budgets (Hooley & Greenley, 2005; Rossiter & Percy, 1997). So too are marketing or advertising executives' insights into their positioning strategies, executions, and outcomes of the firms they lead or serve. On this basis, we assert that absent a proper diagnosis of the positioning efforts pursued (and outcomes achieved)—as reflected in their firms' communications (advertising, other promotions, etc.) efforts—executives cannot expect to select the best competitive options in their efforts to enhance and/or defend their firms' and their brands or offering positions within the targeted markets.

Such literature omissions may endanger, or, at the least, degrade the effectiveness of international marketing practices and research. Of course, these issues are problematic with respect to executives' appreciation of positioning practices in sub-Saharan Africa, and more specifically, Ghana, particularly in view of Ghana's comparatively stable and democratic governance, economic growth rates (Whitfield, 2005), growing joint ventures and foreign direct investments (Kuada, 2002), natural resources, and the recent discovery of oil in commercial quantity. Within the broader context of sub-Saharan Africa as a viable domain for academic study, the Ghanaian marketplace represents a challenging but potentially fruitful research area. The cultural complexity and challenges that routinely present in its transitional liberalized environment means that marketers must address challenges such as competition, growing middle class and expatriate communities (Bruner, 1996; Zachary, 2001), comparatively poor infrastructure, low purchasing power, socio-political challenges, and unpredictable government interventions in the operations of firms (Ayittey, 2001). The foregoing discussion further underscores both the motivation and justification for the study context.

The key factors offered as impetus for this research regarding the examination of Ghana-based firms' positioning activities include: (1) a

liberalized open-market environment, (2) the growth in local private businesses, (3) the influx of foreign firms, foreign goods, and foreign-enhanced marketing communications, (4) firms' appreciation of market orientation and customer service (Kuada & Hinson, 2012) and positioning orientation (Coffie, 2016, 2018), (5) the surge in business collaboration between firms in industrialized countries (e.g., Denmark), who then pass along their marketing and positioning skills to their Ghanaian counterparts (see Kuada, 2002), and (6) governmental attempts to project the country as “open for business.” The study also evaluates the stability of a typology of positioning strategies developed in a Western and industrialized environment (i.e., USA) in Ghana: a transitioning middle-income African economy.

The level of economic development thus allows for a limited scope of experimentation in positioning. Hence, we infer that indigenous firms—with their restricted experience—will be prone to emulate the strategies employed by foreign firms operating in the Ghanaian marketplace. Therefore, certain positioning strategies that are aimed at attracting the broader mass market and/or are competitively inclined (including “value for money,” “service,” and “attractiveness”) would remain prominent across both indigenous and foreign firms.

Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) note that while several international brands have failed to entrench themselves in different countries for myriad reasons, critical among them is a lack of appreciation for local culture, leading to an incongruous pursuit of positioning strategies. Without a diligent appreciation of culture, as in the case of Home Depot's failure in China (see Gao, 2013), success in international markets will elude a firm's foreign positioning deliberations. In Ghana, foreign firms face more challenges in wooing consumers as compared to their local counterparts who are already aware of local market pulses. Admittedly, doing business in Africa is not easy (Babarinde, 2009), particularly for foreign firms. However, creative thinking about how to surmount challenges in the African cultural environment, due diligence about investment opportunities, and creativity in managing bureaucracy are bound to find the untapped business environment to be a reservoir of profitable and viable business ventures.

In view of the fact that Ghanaian culture emanates from collectivist values—such as people orientation and risk aversion (Darley & Blankson, 2008)—indigenous firms and entrepreneurs often embed these values in their business activities (Anambane, 2017; Kuada & Hinson, 2012) and are risk-averse and conservative (Jackson, Amaeshi, & Yavuz, 2008). To that end, we concur with Blankson, Nkrumah, Opare, and Ketron's (2018) finding which shows that relative to foreign retailers, indigenous Ghanaian retailers pursue positioning strategies such as “service,” “value for money,” and “reliability” in the retail sector. In contrast, foreign retailers (even those originating from collectivist cultures, see Appendix 2) tend to be more aggressive and more future-oriented due to the learning curve. We infer that because of the competitive Ghanaian marketplace, foreign firms will be attracted to the positioning strategies employed by indigenous firms in addition to still other strategies, including “attractiveness,” “top of the range,” and “country of origin” strategies.

Moreover, apart from their risk aversion, indigenous firms have more constrained resources than foreign firms. The lack of resources means that indigenous firms may not be able to emulate all the positioning strategies engaged by foreign firms. Naturally, indigenous firms insist on the strategies they know have worked for them in the past within the local market culture (Cayla & Arnould, 2008; Jackson et al., 2008). On the other hand, since foreign firms have the necessary resources, and are more experienced and aggressive, they can pursue a wide selection of (i.e., multiple) positioning strategies compared to indigenous firms. Nevertheless, in order to cope with the competition from indigenous firms and accumulate competitive advantage, foreign firms have no choice but to try to develop their positioning strategies along the lines of indigenous firms and in congruence with the cultural milieu of the local market (Cayla & Arnould, 2008; Gao, 2013). To that end, foreign firms, like indigenous firms, must employ a wide range of



**Table 1A**  
Copy points identified from newspapers' ads of indigenous firms' offerings in Ghana.

Positioning strategy	Frequency			Percentage of total copy points	Expected N	Residual	Rank (in order of highest copy points)
	2016	2017	Total number of copy points identified				
Top of the range	107	41	148	30.3	81.2	66.8	1
Service	45	20	65	13.3	81.2	-16.2	4
Value of money	101	33	134	27.5	81.2	52.8	2
Attractiveness	50	21	71	14.5	81.2	-10.2	3
Reliability	30	30	60	12.3	81.2	-21.2	5
Country of origin	4	5	9	1.8	81.2	-72.2	6
Total copy points	337	150	487	100			
Mean = 2.70; Std. deviation = 1.44; $\chi^2 = 163.600$ ; df = 5; asymptotic sig. = 0.000							
Total number of ads content analyzed	148	52	200				
Number of newspapers examined	8	9	17				

Note: N = number; Std. = standard.

positioning strategies to offset being a foreigner in the local market. Worthy of note is that successful brands are characterized by their pursuit of multiple positioning strategies (Hooley, Piercy, & Nicoulaud, 2012; Rossiter & Percy, 1997). Based on these arguments, we formulate the following hypotheses:

**H1.** Within the Ghanaian marketplace, indigenous and foreign firms will employ similar positioning strategies in their bid to be competitive.

**H2a.** Within the Ghanaian marketplace, indigenous firms will pursue a limited (i.e., narrow) number of positioning strategies in view of their weak financial capability and their more risk-averse stance regarding marketing activities.

**H2b.** Within the Ghanaian marketplace, foreign firms will pursue a comprehensive (i.e., large) number of positioning strategies in view of their strong financial capability and their aggressive stance regarding marketing activities.

### 3. Research method

Ghana is an important research setting (Yang et al., 2006), given its population of 28.8 million (2018), and GDP of \$47 billion (2018) with a growth rate of 8.5% (World Bank, 2018). While Ghana is clearly a subsistence economy, it is an emerging market in Africa and is the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 1, which is the target of halving extreme poverty. Ghana embodies the characteristics of several sub-Saharan African economies and is an appropriate context for understanding business insights in a developing economy.

Pursuant to the purpose of this study, the primary objective is to measure the manner in which foreign and indigenous firms use positioning cues in the Ghanaian cultural milieu. A consumer-derived, managerially relevant, empirically based typology of positioning strategies developed and validated in the United States (Blankson, Kodua, & Njoroge, 2018) has been adapted for this study. The typology is generic (applicable to both goods and services) and is managerially relevant. Paying heed to suggestions regarding the use of adopted/adapted scales in cross-national/cultural settings (Douglas & Craig, 2006), we validated the typology prior to the commencement of this research in Ghana.

Validation involved discussion with five senior executives, two academicians, and four business owner-managers from Ghana regarding how Ghanaian-based firms pursue positioning strategies. Next, in a pilot study carried out in June 2013 and June 2014, we surveyed a convenience sample of 60 executives enrolled in EMBA programs at a major university in Ghana concerning their perceptions of the positioning strategies firms engage in Ghana. These executives represented

multinational firms from Western Europe, the United States, Canada, China, Japan, South Africa, and indigenous firms encompassing large family-owned, state, not-for-profit, and small firms. The executives defined the concept of positioning and went on to list the positioning strategies of their own firms. To allow us to appreciate the explication of their identified strategies, we requested them to discuss, in short written essay form, their firms' short-term, medium-term, and long-term marketing activities. We used inductive reasoning to determine the positioning strategies from their discussion following the suggestions and practices of de Chernatony and Cottam (2009), Dubois and Gadde (2002) and Coffie (2016).

#### 3.1. Sampling procedures

Advertising—the primary channel through which positioning strategies are executed (see Alden et al., 1999; Rossiter & Percy, 1997)—was selected as the domain from which firms' positioning strategies would be examined. The role that advertisements play in portraying positioning strategies is well-documented in marketing scholarship. As noted by Jewell and Barone (2007, pp. 551), “competitive positioning is often achieved via the use of comparative advertising, a form of advertising that has traditionally involved comparisons of brands from within the same product category.” Recently, in an experimental study, Noseworthy and Trudel (2011, pp. 11) manipulated product positioning through explicit promotional claims. Based on availability and convenience, data in the form of advertisements from two nationally distributed newspapers in Ghana (*The Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times*) were collected randomly over a period of six weeks in 2016 (May, June, July) and six weeks in 2017 (June, July, August). Seventeen newspapers were collected during this period. In all, the content of 200 ad components carrying indigenous firms' offerings was analyzed. At the same time, 63 ads for foreign firms' offerings were analyzed (see Tables 1A and 1B). Notably, Ghanaian newspapers feature only English-language ads.

#### 3.2. Coding procedures

The content coding involved the frequency procedure. Specifically, this involves pre-designated copy points or themes which are identified and assigned one (1) point (termed a *copy point*) (Kassarjian, 1977; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Each copy point or theme that is recognized is presumed to capture and/or reflect the use of a specific positioning strategy (Nelson & Paek, 2007). The detection of the positioning strategies (as they manifest in the form of advertising themes) involved both images/photos, background, and text in the advertisement (see also Kennedy & McGarvey, 2008). We used the single-point frequency system (i.e., counting the presence of a strategy) in that the use of

**Table 1B**  
Copy points identified from newspapers' ads of foreign firms' offerings in Ghana.

Positioning strategy	Frequency			Percentage of total copy points	Expected N	Residual	Rank (in order of highest copy points)
	2016	2017	Total number of copy points identified				
Top of the range	41	27	68	33	34.3	33.7	1
Service	22	19	41	19.9	34.3	6.7	2
Value of Money	20	16	36	17.4	34.3	1.7	3
Attractiveness	16	20	36	17.4	34.3	1.7	3
Reliability	7	7	14	6.7	34.3	-20.3	4
Country of Origin	6	5	11	5.3	34.3	-23.3	5
Total copy points	112	94	206	100			
Mean = 2.61; Std. deviation = 1.52; $\chi^2 = 62.369$ ; df = 5; Asymptotic sig. = 0.000							
Total number of ads content analyzed	36	27	63				
Number of Newspapers examined	8	9	17				

Note: N = number; Std. = standard.

single-point recording method simplifies calculations and further lessens the chance of error. The procedure was used in this study because of its recommendation and employment by scholars, including Nelson and Paek (2007), Kolbe and Burnett (1991), and Kennedy and McGarvey (2008).

Coding was based on the appearance of any or several of the positioning-scale items in a particular advertisement (see Ries & Trout, 2001). Thus, a firm's advertisement may carry a single positioning strategy or multiple positioning strategies that are employed concurrently (Rossiter & Percy, 1997). Consistent with the fundamental principle of summated scales, when any of the scale items of a distinct positioning item was agreed upon by the coders as manifesting within an advertisement, the incidence was presumed to point toward the presence of its corresponding positioning strategy. This enhanced the objectivity of the content analysis exercise (Kassarjian, 1977; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Thus, an advertisement may feature more than one positioning strategy (e.g., "service" and "value for money") in view of firms' use of multiple positioning strategies (Rossiter & Percy, 1997). To that end, multiple counts of positioning strategies were permitted (Kennedy & McGarvey, 2008).

### 3.3. Reliability analysis

Mindful of concerns raised about coding by independent judges (Varki, Cooil, & Rust, 2000), a pilot test was initiated. This was undertaken to ensure that the results were reliable and valid prior to engaging in the main content analysis procedure. The purpose of this pilot study, which also involved the assessment and coding of ad content, was to familiarize coders with the coding procedures and the research setting. The judges were comprised of three undergraduate marketing students and one MBA student. These judges were given three newspapers, each containing several advertisements, to practice coding over a weekend. The pilot study provided an appreciation of the study context.

There are three types of reliability tests conducted in content analyses: stability, accuracy, and reproducibility. Stability becomes relevant when the same content is coded more than once by the same coder. Therefore, after conducting the first analysis of the data by the authors but prior to the "inter-judge" (i.e., inter-coder) reliability exercise, the authors took turns revisiting the materials for a general cross-check and overview, as prescribed by Kirk and Miller (1986). More specifically, we re-examined the process by re-coding a handful of advertisements several times to ensure consistency among the authors. Next, we created a description of our coding procedures to capture the essence of the strategies in a particular advertisement. From this step, we interpreted how the advertisements must be coded and used those interpretations in our training of the independent judges. These

approaches confirm the reliability of the coding procedure by further ensuring the stability of the adopted coding procedures (Stern & Resnik, 1991).

To ensure accuracy, a session was scheduled where an academic expert was asked to analyze the content of ads from two randomly selected newspapers—*The Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times*—over two weeks. This content analysis coding revealed > 90% agreement with the prior coding efforts of the authors and indicated the presence of considerable accuracy in the coding procedures (Kassarjian, 1977).

Reproducibility involves inter-judge tests. Once again, four independent and internationally experienced individuals were recruited. The team of independent judges who initially had served in the pilot study included three undergraduate students (two Ghanaian foreign students studying economics and one American student studying marketing) and one MBA finance student from Brazil. All judges had overseas experience and were familiar with other cultures (Nelson & Paek, 2007). These individuals served as "judges" and were formally trained by the first author in four individual sessions. Each session lasted 1 h and involved evaluations of 20 print ads. Judges were taught how to identify copy points in the categories that satisfy the meanings established in the positioning strategies (Appendix 1). The rationale given for the reproducibility method (also called the inter-judge reliability test) is that the process should achieve agreement between the judges and the authors (Fay & Currier, 1994). Thus, the level of reliability agreement should be high, ranging between 80% and 100% (Javalgi, Cutler, & Malhotra, 1995; Kassarjian, 1977). In this research, a 90% agreement between two judges and the authors was achieved, while two other judges registered a 95% level of agreement with the authors.

The validity of the coding procedure relates to concerns about the concepts and methods used in the classification scheme itself. The review of relevant literature and authors' efforts undertaken to ensure adequate understanding of the coding procedures (pilot study, training of judges, consultations with an academic expert) and reliability measures employed provide assurance for the reliability and validity of the coding procedure (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Weber, 1990). Moreover, following a precedent established by Goodwin, Mayo, and Hill (1997), the reliability and validity of the coding procedure was further assessed by first sending copies of the findings to two Ghanaian marketing academics with expertise in advertising and content analysis, two business executives in Ghana, and two American marketing academics for their review. Their minor suggestions, which concerned writing clarity, were incorporated in the final manuscript.

## 4. Results and discussion

The null hypothesis stipulating that no differences exist across the

application of the positioning strategies (Sawyer & Peter, 1983), was rejected, following the nonparametric asymptotic chi-square tests for indigenous and foreign firms' data. All six positioning strategies were statistically significant ( $p < 0.000$ ) (indigenous firms:  $\chi^2 = 163.6$ ;  $df = 5$ ; Asymptotic sig. = 0.000; foreign firms:  $\chi^2 = 62.36$ ;  $df = 5$ ; Asymptotic sig. = 0.000). The  $P$  value suggests these results are not due to chance. Thus, there is a good fit to the data set for both indigenous and foreign firms' positioning activities. Tables 1A and 1B show a summary of the results.

Consistent with the literature, our assumption is that firms utilize positioning strategies that are effective in their communication channels and that firms would gravitate naturally toward a greater use of positioning strategies that do work (Ries & Trout, 2001). Similarly, strategies used minimally are not popular (Rossiter & Percy, 1997).

As shown in Tables 1A and 1B, the most consistent and dominant positioning strategy for both indigenous and foreign firms is “top of the range” (33% and 30.3% for foreign and indigenous firms, respectively). “Top of the range” is followed by “value for money” (17.4% foreign; 27.2% indigenous). Notably, compared to foreign firms, indigenous firms employ “value for money” to a higher degree. In subsistence marketplaces such as Ghana, the pursuit of “value for money” is expected (Blankson, Cowan, & Darley, 2018). Foreign firms, compared to indigenous firms, pursue “attractiveness” somewhat more often (17.4% foreign; 14.5% indigenous). However, foreign firms (41/206 = 19.9%) engage in a “service” positioning strategy more than indigenous firms (65/487 = 13.3%). These findings reveal a uniform attempt by indigenous and foreign firms to target the mass market (as in the case of “value for money”) and the lower- to middle-class target audiences (as in the case of “top of the range,” “attractiveness,” and “service”) in their bids to create competitive advantages and thus remain well-positioned in the Ghanaian marketplace. However, worthy of note is that foreign firms focus more on “attractiveness” than indigenous firms do, while the relative convergence in positioning strategies is an attempt by indigenous firms to emulate the strategies of increasingly dominant foreign firms. Foreign firms also tilt toward a “service” strategy in their effort to remain relevant to a majority of the population. Thus, as predicted, foreign firms have no option but to compete with indigenous firms using a combination of high-end (e.g., “top of the range,” “service” and “attractiveness”) and low-end (“value for money”) positioning strategies that are commensurate with the middle-income, open-market Ghanaian marketplace. Based on these results, we find support for H1.

To test for H2a and H2b, we used an independent sample  $t$ -test to check the strategies employed by indigenous and foreign firms in the Ghanaian culture marketplace. As expected, the results indicate that in order to withstand the growing competition and thus secure favorable positions in the Ghanaian marketplace, foreign firms pursue a wide range of positioning strategies compared to indigenous firms. Thus, with their depth of resources, foreign firms aggressively pursue an extensive number (i.e., a wide selection) of positioning strategies (i.e., “top of the range,” “service,” “value for money” and “attractiveness”) as compared to indigenous firms (i.e., “top of the range” and “value for money”) (foreign firms mean value = 3.11; indigenous firms mean = 2.25,  $p < 0.000$ ). H2a and H2b are thus supported. Moreover, an examination of Appendix 2, which lists the strategies employed by firms, confirms a higher selection of strategies by foreign firms (e.g., 18 foreign firms use four or more strategies concurrently compared to 10 indigenous firms; 11 foreign firms employ one or two strategies concurrently relative to 73 indigenous firms). The latter further confirms H2a and H2b.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

In this paper, we sought to examine the positioning strategies that are employed in the contemporary Ghanaian cultural milieu. The results suggest that all six positioning strategies (Appendix 1) are

invariably employed in firms' positioning deliberations in Ghana. Specifically, our first hypothesis (H1), which states that within the Ghanaian marketplace indigenous and foreign firms will employ similar positioning strategies in their bid to be competitive, is significant. Likewise, hypothesis 2a, which states that within the Ghanaian marketplace indigenous firms will pursue a limited (i.e., narrow) number of positioning strategies in view of their weak financial capability and their more risk-averse stance regarding marketing activities is significant. Finally, hypothesis 2b, which states that within the Ghanaian marketplace foreign firms will pursue a comprehensive (i.e., large) number of positioning strategies in view of their strong financial capability and their aggressive stance regarding marketing activities is significant. The case of “country of origin” is an interesting ancillary finding because of the stark contrast in its engagement as a positioning strategy: foreign firms use it much more often (5.3%) than indigenous firms (1.8%) (see Tables 1A and 1B). A possible reason for this finding is the potent effect of “country of origin” strategy in firm positioning and marketing deliberations (Chao, 1998; Koubaa, 2008; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009): foreign firms capitalize on a “country of origin” strategy in developing countries because of consumers' historical affiliations with and revered perceptions of foreign firms' brands compared to local brands (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, & Hyder, 2000).

We also conclude that the adopted typology of positioning strategies is stable and applicable in the Ghanaian marketplace. The latter provides justification for adopting the Western-derived typology of positioning strategies with the purpose of studying Ghana-based firms' positioning practices. This study also provides insight into the most prominent positioning strategies used by firms in an African cultural milieu. To that end, this study contributes to knowledge not only by responding to Mpoyi, Festervand, and Sokoya's (2006) suggestions for African companies to create competitive strategies but also by putting forward empirically based competitive positioning strategies pursued in the African marketplace and, more specifically, in Ghana. To our best knowledge, this study is the first to employ content analysis in examining positioning strategies employed by indigenous and foreign firms in the study setting.

Three major contributions to international marketing and international business literature become evident in this study and are described below:

- First, the results have generated theoretical and practical value for researchers and practitioners currently engaged in positioning research, positioning practice, or policy-making in Africa and Ghana in particular. The results are also valuable for researchers or practitioners considering engaging in any of those activities.
- Second, this research has responded to calls for research assessing firms' positioning practices in Ghana's liberalized post-SAP (Structural Adjustment Program) marketplace (Coffie, 2018).
- Third, the authors have attempted to answer calls from other scholars for additional studies of the degree to which conventional marketing principles originating from Western marketplaces can be applied successfully within transitional African markets and economies (Mpoyi et al., 2006).

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

The results of the content analysis suggest that the applicability of Western-based positioning strategies in a sub-Saharan African economy is feasible—consistent with Blankson, Nkrumah, et al. (2018). This is in line with calls for studies on the degree to which conventional marketing principles originating from developed economies can successfully apply within African culture markets (Dadzie, Johnston, Yoo, & Brashear, 2002). Overall, the findings contribute to international marketing literature by showing that both foreign and indigenous firms follow relatively similar positioning strategies to reach the mass market and lower- to middle-class target audiences, albeit foreign firms focus

more on the middle class than do indigenous firms.

For academics, this research adds to our understanding and appreciation of the concept of positioning in subsistence markets. Moreover, in light of African firms' competitive disadvantages and their vulnerability in global competition and global negotiations (Mpoyi et al., 2006), this study may serve as a foundation toward the appreciation of the strategies capable of serving as competitive advantages in business operations. To that end, this study contributes to knowledge not only by supporting Mpoyi et al.'s (2006) suggestions for African companies to create competitive strategies but by putting forward empirically based positioning strategies pursued in Ghana's cultural milieu.

Therefore, on the basis of the study, we conclude that even in Africa, a continent ignored in global business discourse (see Yang et al., 2006), a liberalized, open-market business climate can ignite competition in which firms position themselves through “top of the range,” “value for money,” “service,” and “attractiveness” strategies. The results thus reveal the pursuit of the mass market and lower-middle-class target audiences, a characterization akin to Ghana-based (see Bruner, 1996; Zachary, 2001) firms' orientations in the marketplace.

## 5.2. Managerial implications

Contrary to Cui and Liu's (2001) claim that emerging markets present significant challenges in the determination of global marketing strategies in that several segments are distinctive and need to be catered to in a unique manner, this research highlights that the Ghanaian cultural milieu influences firms' pursuit of positioning strategies to the mass market as well as to lower-middle-class audiences. Specifically, firms (indigenous and foreign) copy each other's strategies in order to survive. Armed with the insight put forward in this research, foreign firms can approach African economies with the positioning strategies outlined in this research. Their depth of resources and the ability to pursue a wide range of positioning strategies should provide foreign firms with competitive advantages. At the same time, indigenous firms stand to gain from observing foreign firms' positioning activities and replicating them. Although misconceptions about African economies have led to several firms overlooking opportunities in Africa (see Mahajan, 2011), foreign firms would do well to follow Chinese and Indian firms that have established a strong presence throughout the African continent (Versi, 2012). This research is a stepping stone for further research in the African cultural milieu and the positioning activities of firms operating within it.

In view of the scarce stream of empirical studies dealing with firms' positioning activities in Ghana, this research comes at an opportune time, as the Ghanaian government is encouraging foreign investment, the establishment of private businesses, marketing activities, and entrepreneurship (Whitfield, 2005). With the insight developed in this study, foreign firms (e.g., Chinese, Indian, and Western) may target African and specifically Ghanaian firms for possible franchise agreements, partner with agents in the country, engage in joint ventures, or seek foreign direct investment (FDI) opportunities. Foreign entrepreneurs seeking local agents for collaboration as well as local and international advertising agencies could find this study of interest in providing actionable knowledge about the Ghanaian marketplace.

## Appendix 1. Typology of positioning strategies

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Strategy 1	Top of the range: top of the range (higher-end), upper class, the brand name, status, prestigious, highly selective in the choice of customers.
Strategy 2	Service: consider people as important, friendliness of our staff/personnel, personal attention to customers, high principles, impressive service, safety use of our products or services.
Strategy 3	Value for money: affordability, reasonable price, value for money.
Strategy 4	Attractiveness: cool, youth market, elegant, posh.
Strategy 5	Reliability: durability, warranty, good aesthetics.
Strategy 6	Country of origin: country of origin, patriotism, middle class.

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Source: Blankson, Kodua, and Njoroge (2018).

Local businesses and foreign firms already settled in Ghana may adopt the positioning strategies discussed in this study as benchmarks in their present or future positioning strategies. Such results are important for marketing managers and advertising executives as well as for business consultants interested in the Ghanaian marketplace.

The strategies may be employed individually or collectively in marketing communications that reflect, in one way or another, the location, situations, castings, lighting, style, and tone used in advertisements, commercials, promotions, public relations, and other sales-inducing efforts. More specifically, managers and advertising executives may pursue the following two sets of tactics:

- (1) Attitude change: Managers and advertising executives may direct efforts geared toward altering or re-positioning consumer beliefs or perceptions of their firms and their offerings by using the strategies put forward in this research.
- (2) Brand change: Managers and advertising executives may actually or symbolically modify the offerings' positioning strategies and tactics to reflect the strategies identified in this study.

## 6. Limitations and future research directions

We acknowledge that this research is relatively dated and cross-sectional in nature and the results do not capture the current interface between culture and positioning activities. This problem is common in cross-sectional and cross-cultural research (Malhotra, Agarwal, & Peterson, 1996). Future researchers should endeavor to undertake longitudinal studies to measure positioning deliberation. In addition, we acknowledge that there are disparities in the number of advertisements analyzed from foreign firms and those from indigenous firms. Even though it was beyond the reach of this study, we suggest longitudinal data collection efforts for matching data samples. We recognize that to remedy the current deficit in knowledge about firms' positioning activities in Ghana, more studies must be undertaken to validate or replicate this research. While it was beyond the scope of this study to assess the size of the firms and examine the country of origin of the foreign firms (Appendix 2) whose advertisements were analyzed, the challenge for future researchers is to ascertain the differences in positioning practices in terms of size of the firm and country of origin of firms.

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## Appendix 2. List of foreign and indigenous firms and their respective positioning strategies used

Foreign firm name	Positioning strategy used* used	Indigenous firm name	Positioning strategy used*
Volkswagen	1,2,3	Mobile Zone	3,4
Zain Telecom Network	2,3	Compu-Ghana	3,4
DSTV	1,2,3,4	Freddies Corner	3,4
Sanyo	3,4	Power Abler	3,5,6
MTN	2,3,4	Atlantic Computers	3,5
Broad Crown	3,4,5,6	F.C Skin & Beauty “Klinik”	1,3
Emirates	1,2,3,4	North American Video Giant	4
Zain	2,3	House Party	4
Honda	1,2,3,4,5	Telefonia	3,4,5
Toyota	1,2,3,5	IPMC	3,4
Somovision	1,2,3,4	Ezo Jam Ltd.	4
DSTV	2,3,4	Aquatec	3,5
Ford	1,2,3	Star Assurance	1,3,5
Pierre Cardin	3,4,5	TT Brothers Ltd.	2
MTN	1,2,3,4	Hanbee Plaza	4,5
Acer	1,2,4	Ashesi University	1
Tigo	1,2,3,4	Kumesh Ghana Ltd.	3,4
Lekmark	3,4	Rowi Electronics	3,4
BMW	1,2,3,5	Computer House	3,4,5,6
Cetera	3	PHC Motors Ltd.	1,2,3,4,5
Unilever	3	Solatek (Fridge Guard)	1,4,5
Japan Motors	1,3,4,5	Seth Steel	1,4
Ecobank	1,2,3,4	Texsa	1,6
Guinness	2,3	Telefonika	3,4
BMW	1,2,3,4	Power Abler	4,5
Kimo	3	Price Club	3,4
Honda	1,3,5	Micro Ware House	3,4,5,6
Western Union	2,3,4	Atlantic Computers	1,3
Mac Book Air	1,3,4	Next Computers	1,4
KLM	1,2,3,4	Masoquarry	1,4
Mantrac (CAT)	3	Bacchus wine shops	2,4
Senda Motors Ltd.	1,3,4	City & Business Guide	2,3
Landrover	1,2,3,4	Furniture City	1,3
HP Laptop	3,4	Fairwork Ltd.	3
Compaq Presario	3,4	Kay Gee	1,3,5
Cetera	3,4,6	Tintas Renner	3
Cerelac (Nestle)	1,2,3	Screppies enterprise	1,4
MTN	1,2,3	EPP book service	1,3,4
ABD	3,4	Mobilezone	3,4
I Burst Africa	1,3	Sikelele	2
One Touch	2,3,4	Jay Electronics	5
Tigo	1,2,3,4	Unique Trust	1,2,3,4
OneTouch-vodafone	1,2,3,4	Comet properties Ltd.	1,2,3
Amal bank	1,2,3,4	Freddies corner	3,4
Melcom	2,3,4,5,6	BWA	3,5
		Oman Fofor	3
		Divine cleaners	1
		Surfcom	1,4
		Edtiman computers	3,4
		Navigation, communication & technology Ltd.	4
		Mobile Zone	2,3,4
		APL	1,3
		Unik image	1
		Atlantic Climate Control Ltd.	1,3,6
		Computer house	3,4,6
		Set mat	3,4
		Blink security System	1,3,4,5
		Future Planet	3,4
		Sky Bil Computer Systems	4
		Intercontinental Bank	2,3,4
		Computers & Accessories	3,4
		Omatek	2,3,5
		Hysen Data System Ltd.,	3,4,5
		True Mobile Internet	2,3,4
		Epack	2,3,4
		EPP Book Services	1,3,4
		Eddiko Systems	4
		Link	3,4,5
		Tele fonika	3,4
		Next computers	3
		Neovita	3
		Henkoq Ventures	2,3,4,5
		E-Tranzag	2,3,4
		Atlantis Structures	1,2,3
		Estep Rack Cabinet	2

Hp dx 2390	3,4
Suvnil Paints	3
Kasapa	2,3,4
Novotec Ltd.	2,3,4
Ronny Properties	1,3
Kay Gee	1,3,5
Unibank	2,3,4
Newtec	1
Magna Tris Land estate	1,3,4
Computer House	3,4
Men's suit outlet	4
Mobi Game	2,4
Novotec Ltd.	1,3,4
Computers & Accessories	1,4
Fidelity Bank	3,4
Mobile Zone	2,3,4
Can-West Ltd.	3,4
Lexmark	3,4,5
Set Mat	2,3,4
Combert Impressions	3
House party Computers	3,4
Kimo Ltd.	1,2,3
UT Financial services	3,4
Computer House	3,4
Technology Consult	4
Sky Biz Computer systems	4
Mahama & Associates	3,5
J.A Plant Pool Ltd.	3,5,6
Gneiss Marketing Ltd.	4
Sikelele	2,3,4,5
Bond Financial Services Ltd.	2,3,4
Modern Auto Services	1,3,5
UT Financial services	1,2,3,4
Accu Computers Ltd.	1,3,4,5
FoodSaf	2,3
Fidelity Bank	2,3,4
NIB	2,3
HFC Bank	2,3,4
Otfak	1
Kwali works construction	1
Comet properties Ltd.	1,2,3,4,5

Notes: Positioning strategy used\* (1) service; (2) attractiveness; (3) top of the range; (4) value for money; (5) reliability; (6) country of origin. We used inductive reasoning to determine the strategy pursued by a firm following suggestions and practices of de Chernatony and Cottam (2009) and Dubois and Gadde (2002).

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