

The Seven MUST DO's of Perceptual Maps

1. Make several perceptual maps using different axis attributes

Why? Because a key aspect of perceptual map is to analyze and understand the market. If we pick two attributes and only map those, then we are imposing our view of the market on the final map and we are not guided by the perception of consumers. Check out our list of [possible axis attributes](#).

As you can see, the use of different attributes will provide a unique view of the market (as shown in the two maps below) and will aid our understanding and help generate insights.



2. Use determinant attributes for the map – not the most important attributes

A determinant attribute is the product feature or benefit that determines the final choice between competing brands – and it may not be a significant attribute.

For example, we may choose an airline for a long flight because they have more in-flight food choices. This the food choice becomes the determinant attribute – that is, how consumers choose between competing offerings - read more about [determinant attributes here](#).

3. Make different maps for different market segments

Market segments have their own needs, preferences, and perceptions – that why we have undertaken the segmentation process. So, where possible, it is a great idea to construct a perceptual map which shows each segment's view of the market and the competitors.

4. Use time-based perceptual maps

Perceptions change over time because brands develop, competitors evolve, new players enter the market, and even consumer needs change in the long-term.

That's why, where possible, we should also map the position of key brands last year to see how they have evolved, as shown below. This approach will provide valuable insight into competitors and their likely marketing strategy.



5. Include both key and indirect competitors

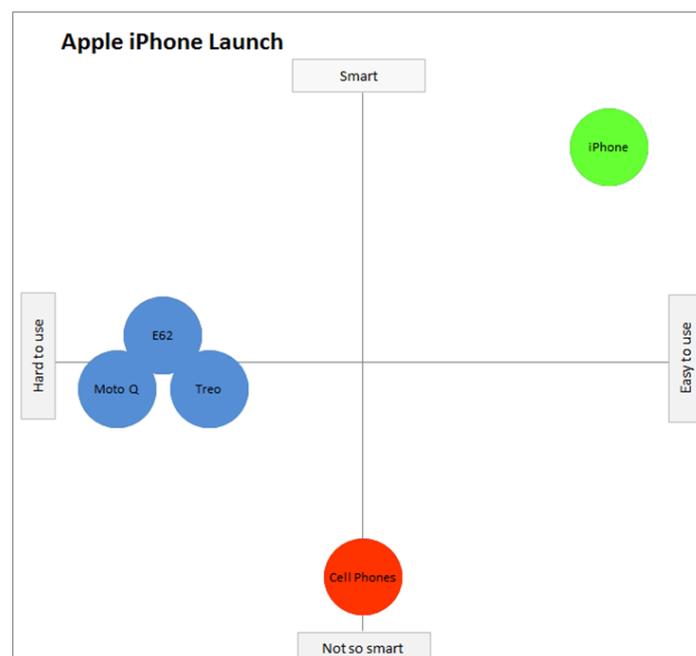
We tend to usually only include our direct competitors in our maps. This is because they are top-of-mind to us as marketers.

However, is that how consumers think? For example, is a consumer considering going to McDonalds for lunch only choosing between fast food options, or are they thinking about grabbing a snack, a coffee, or even making food at home? Check out our article on [using perceptual maps to understand competitor sets](#).

6. Be realistic about positioning goals

The top-right corner of the map is not always the best positioning approach, nor it is always achievable. When setting long-term positioning goals, be realistic about what is possible, especially if our competitors have similar plans!

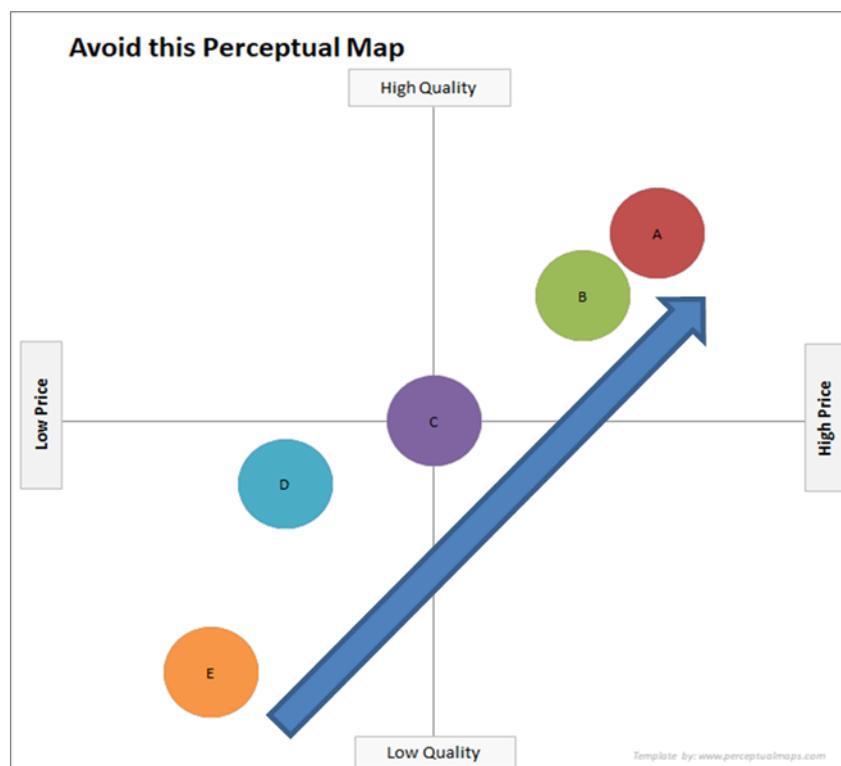
This is the perceptual map used by Steve Jobs when launching the first-ever iPhone. While Apple might be able to pull this market move off, most firms need to adopt a step-by-step approach to market domination.



7. Never put price and quality on the same map

As a marketing lecturer, I know that this is a common map configuration provided by students. But it is a quite unhelpful map.

Why? Because consumers usually connect price and quality in their minds, especially for product categories that they lack experience with. This means that you will end up with a highly correlated map, as essentially you are mapping the same attribute twice.



Happy mapping,

Geoff Fripp

[Perceptual Maps 4 Marketing](#)