

Strategic Positioning for Soft Drinks in the Algerian Market

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify the positioning of Algerian soft drink product compared with foreign competitor products by applying a survey to determine the image and prestige of the Algerian product in the consumer's perspective compared to foreign products. The study has touched a random sample consisting of 601 consumers from all of Algeria.

We result from the research that soft drinks local institutions recorded vulnerable and a deterioration in its competitive positioning compared to positioning perceived of soft drinks to foreign institutions, as they do not bother to focus more on the dimensions of which are of paramount importance to customers, as opposed to foreign products which differentiate it in line with the wishes and expectations of the Algerian customer.

Keywords: positioning strategy, perceptible positioning, competitive market, local product, foreign product

JELCodes: M30, M39, C19

1. Introduction

Positioning concept was introduced for the first time on the agenda of marketing studies by Al RIES and Jack TROUT (1972-1981), in 1972 issued their articles published in the world journal of marketing and advertising "Advertising Age" under the title of "The Positioning Era" where they described the basic curriculums of positioning. In 1981 they published an article about the 10 years ago of the evaluation of the curriculums that they hammered out (Moors, B., 2003).

On the basis of these articles, the concept of the features of determining the positioning can be summarized in the following:

Positioning of product on the market in this case relates with its relative location in the consumer's perspective compared with the products of competitors.

Positioning can be configured according to certain properties, such as the benefits and uses of the products.

Positioning can be developed directly to face the major rival.

The most important thing adopted by the two researchers that "positioning a new curriculum creates a complete change to the mind of the consumer. It allows the use of what is configured in the consumer's mind and work on it as a basic standard" (Dosquet, F., 2005).

In 1994 RIES and Trout contributed another search under the title "The 22 immutable laws of marketing". This work carries 22 fixed laws in marketing. They devoted the third and fourth law to talk about positioning. They called "the law of the mind", which provides a focus on positioning in the minds of customers so they implied their saying at third base by saying: "It is better to be first in the mind to be the first in the market" (Ries, A., & Trout, J., 1994).

For the perception law "The law of mind is the result of the special law of perceptive. So if marketing was a conflict about perspective and not about products, then the mind enjoys precedence on the market" (Ries, A., & Trout, J., 1994), so "marketing is not a struggle for the products, it is a struggle about the perception" (Ries, A., & Trout, J., 1994). Thus, the success or failure of marketing depends on the perception of customers to the offer or to the product in the market compared to competitors.

2. The Objectives of the Research and the Theoretical Framework of the Subject

The aim of the research is to measure the perceived positioning of soft drink product in competitive markets, by dropping a practical study on HamoudBoualem Foundation drink compared to the largest rivals in the market at a national level, and determine its position in the Algerian consumer's mind compared to products of some foreign institutions.

The importance of this research lies in studying the competition of the origin Algerian enterprises with the opening of the Algerian markets and the entry of foreign products which own a competitive strength, and when we choose the case of soft drink products that know a great competition due to the large number of competing institutions in this market. This study aims to answer the following question: How positioning strategy enables organizations of soft drink products to face the challenges in competitive markets?

From this question comes a set of sub-questions as follows:

What are the characteristics of soft drinks that have the utmost importance for the Algerian consumer?

How does the positioning of both local and foreign soft drinks determine in the Algerian consumer's mind?

2.1 Concept of Positioning

Along the lines of the researchers AL Ries and Jack Trout who see positioning as a "special will by occupying a site in the mind of the customer" by filling a number of neural areas where it is a struggle for perception wherein the basic approach of the positioning does not necessarily exist in the creation of something new and different, but in controlling in what will already exist at the top of the mind and reconnection with what it really exists.(Ries, A., &Trout, J., 2001).

Other researchers gave definitions of the term positioning, each according to his point of view linking it to the strategic options of the enterprise or marketing policies that followed by it when both Urban and Hauser (1993) see that " the positioning is something crucial for a new product, not only because it must achieve the benefits and needs of customers and clients, but it must submit what is better than the others competitors in the sector " (Gwin, C. F., & Gwin, C. R., 2003).So they are here demonstrating the importance of identifying the positioning when the foundation provides a new product. But Yves Chirouze (1995) extended this concept by saying "select positioning is a strategic tool that can be used as guarantee to face congestion in terms of products , markets, and advertising, It gives product image differentiates it from competitive products in the minds of consumers according to their expectations" (Yves, C., 1995), The concept here is most comprehensive and shows us the nature of the positioning as a strategic tool in facing the competition and its importance in caring the expectations and desires of consumers.

This was followed by further definitions, Jean-Jacques Lambin (1998) sees that "the concept of positioning explains how does brand position or organization, according to what want to be seen by the intended customers"(Lambin, J.J., 1998). He sees through this definition that the positioning is not particularly to the product but also its role overpasses the brand location or institution as a whole. Kotler (2000) adds that "the positioning is doing a design to the offers of the institution and its pictures to occupy privileged place in the minds of people in the target market" (Kotler, P., 2000) where he considers it essential that this design has specific feature, it is the same definition had been presented, in 2006, in partnership with all of Dubois and Keller (Kotler, P., Keller, K., & Dubois, B. ET MANCEAU D, 2006).

In 2003, the opinion of all of Lendrevie, Levy and Lindon came "positioning is filling a particular market with homogeneous products according to one or more of the specified criteria by the producer" (Lendrevie, J., &L évy, J.,& Lindon, D., 2003) . Here researchers focused on that option in select locations back to product standards and not according to the desires of the consumer as it is known and clear in previous definitions.

Researchers - Lendrevie, Levy and London - have developed this definition, in 2006, with another form. It is that "the positioning is a strategic choice through it the foundation seeks to give a presentation (of product, brand, or trade name) position and different credibility and attractive in the market, specifically in the mind of the customer" (Lendrevie, J., &L évy, J., & Lindon, D., 2006).

Wherein, they added the concept of "discrimination" to display the institution when it chooses a particular positioning add to these the attention of the most important element in determining the positioning which is the desires of the customer.

This definition focuses on:

The position in the first place requires "a series of decisions and rules adopted in advance for a certain period of time in order to achieve certain objectives relating to public policy" (Lendrevie, J., & Lévy, J., & Lindon, D., 2006).

The goal of positioning is to percept the customers in conformity with the expectations of the foundation. For that, it is necessary to the offer to be credible, and to be different and attractive in comparison with competitors. If after a study of consumer behavior toward the product that perception is different from what was expected, it will prove the failure of this policy.

Evans, in 2003, says that "positioning is the process of creating a product image in the minds of target customers" (Evans E., 2003) which is consistent with what Richard M.S. and Colin Gilligan (2005) introduced "Positioning is the process of designing an image and value so of target customers can understand what the institution or brand do in comparison with competitors" (Wilson, R., & Giligan, C., 2005).

Either Lamb (2004) considers the positioning in terms of its role in marketing management where he says "The positioning is a tool of marketing tools, which can be used to develop an effective marketing strategy" (Lamb, C. W., Hair, J. F., McDaniel, C., Boshoff, C., & Terblanche, N. S., 2004). This explains to us the strategic role of positioning in marketing.

Mullins et al. (2005) confirms this in saying, "The concept of positioning becomes one of the basic components of modern marketing management" (Mullins, J. W., Walker, O. C., & Boyd, H. W. och Larr éch é JC , 2005).

From the previous definitions found that the concept of positioning unanimously focuses on the identification of the positioning of a product or a brand could confirm the enterprise uniqueness in the market by giving the product identity and distinctive image from the others competitors, and allow to it to attract and hold the attention of customers, which ensures to it to achieve its profits with a better way.

2.2 Importance of the Positioning

Specialists in marketing pointed to four main reasons to determinethe positioning of product or a particular offer since the beginning of the development of marketing strategy (Lendrevie, J., & Lévy, J., & Lindon, D., 2006):

Positioning designed by the institution, but it coupled with the desires of consumers spontaneously. The positioning of all products is determined on a voluntary and involuntary basis. In the light of the multiplicity of brands, customers are turning to identify best, and proceed to classify products according to the attributes and features that concern them and consistent with their conditions.

Determining the positioning of a product involved in the purchase decision, due to the abundance of offers, the consumer uses the product classification system that originates on his conception -he is subjective to do his choice-, therefore, it is better for the institution to develop positioning in accordance with its objectives. Positioning is "the cornerstone of the marketing mix", which referred to by researchers in marketing. It ensures the consistency of the four elements of the marketing mix; this step should precede logically any strategic choice of the elements of the marketing mix - all of the product, the price, distribution, and promotion - so that it is complementary to each other and contributes in the promotion of the salient features and the characteristics in the product.

Positioning ensures continuity, and it is the strong motivation behind all marketing policies. Also it contributes at the clarification of the logisticaloffer that enterprise wants to develop it and to connect with their customers by using it. It also contributes at determining the paths and fields of the development of the product or service mark, and it has a sensitive function because it requires a radical policy involves many risks to modify it, that relates to the creation of confusion in the cognitive process of the brand in the minds of customers.

2.3 Positioning Dimensions

Positioning products is based on two basic principles. They are the definition or identification and discrimination.

Identification

Identification "is the group which the product belongs, from the standpoint of society", known as "World references for the product ".It means the class which the product belongs to in the mind of the consumer. Positioning allows identifying the reference of the product or the offer. It is important to choose the target group addressed by the offer in order to communicate with it because it happens that the same product can be related with more than one reference(Lendrevie, J., & Lévy, J., & Lindon, D., 2006) , where the problems and difficulties

decrease whenever the products were addressed to one specific category but the multiplicity of target groups, that product is going to, is another opportunity to expand the positioning selection which is the most important and the most credible (Daghfous, N., & Filiatrault, P., 2015).

It should also conduct a detailed study to determine positioning compared to other competitors, and knowing the points of strength and weakness. This is what allows organizations to disclose the advantage of their products. Once we determine the characteristic features, the offer must be combined. Then the show must be evaluated through a survey to a group of consumers. After that, it becomes necessary to develop a perceptual map to compare the offer of the institution with oriented products to the same world of references.

Differentiation

The second dimension of positioning is differentiation which consists from asking this question "What are the characteristics that we want to reach it through the consumers in our products?" So it is about features that the product is characterized by the same group. The selected property of differentiation of any choice is not the only important property. But it is also the property that by using it the customer can differentiate and distinguish between products and offers in the market (Ingham, M., 1995).

2.4 Measure Multidimensional for Measuring Mental Positioning of Product

It is the most complex standards and at the same time proves effective in measuring and comparing consumer perception of pictures of different institutions and indicates the position that the concerned institution occupies or wants to occupy it. The application of this measure gives us a graphic representation of the similarities and differences between the positioning of the institutions that were subjected to the measurement through cognitive map, which its structure passes through the following stages:

- **Identify specific characteristics in the evaluation:** At the beginning it must limit these specific characteristics that define mental perception, that customer institutes about the product :physical properties, the advantages of the product, the quality of use, price level...etc.
- **Evaluation of product on basis of specific characteristics:** The second stage is to choose variety of brands in the studied products, and questioning customers about their awareness for these brands concerning these specific characteristics, for this, it can be used a several ways like asking the respondents to choose answers from a specific list given to them, or requiring them to show their approval or disapproval of certain proposals.
- **Establish a cognitive map:** This is happening by showing the results of the previous study and present it in orthogonal graphic where all producers' offers are distributed and placed according to the expectations of consumers. Cognitive map is one of the important ways which by it, marketers can analyze and identify positioning that allows selecting the appropriate strategy in the end. Cognitive maps are only "a perceptions graph of consumer to some of the advantages of the service compared to competitors' services or compared to what the customer is looking forward to it" (Lambin, J. J., 1998).

2.5 Positioning Methodology

2.5.1 Identify Areas of Competition

Brands Image varies in the minds of consumers depending on the purchase and consumption conditions.

That was necessary to find the specific purchasing behavior effects, and select a different purchase scenarios. In light of the quantitative study tools (interview - meeting) can select different modes for the purchase and use in terms of the general characteristics of the place (house, cafe, office), and in terms of specific and particular dates (in the morning, in the evening, feast days), and from the social context (personal, between friends, with family, at work, ...). By using this process we discover and we reserve the most frequent scenario. We identify each purchasing scenario of the brands that appear in the minds of consumers, and the total which has been obtained is going to be the brands that consumers consider reasonable and appropriate for cases of purchase and use. We should determine the scope and competition fields by asking consumers evoke marks which perceive it that it represents the same purchase conditions.

2.5.2 Perceived Characteristics

Specialists must determine the overall perceived characteristics by consumers, which represents for them firmly believe the fact that a certain thing, where the consumer behavior is influenced by a lot of beliefs about the objective characteristics of the products or services. For example, most consumers in the world consider that Italian shoes are excellent quality products, even if they are other shoes more robust because the feeling toward Italian shoes are always positive. So we should separate these beliefs to identify the most important with keeping in mind three basic characteristics of the classification process:

- Characteristics that judged to be important by consumers.
- Characteristics that judged to be important are very distinct.
- Characteristics that judged to be important and they are not identical; appear in the consumer's mind when doing the process of making a purchase decision.

2.5.3 Analysis of Consumer Awareness

Consumer awareness of positioning products is analyzed by following these steps (Pioche A. , 1984):

- We established a list of products that are identified its private positioning where varieties of these products is determined by the institutions by identifying competitive fields of the product (the sum conjured elements) in the circumstances and basic conditions for purchase (purchase scenarios).

- Determine the manner in which consumers judge and classify various products and labels, then measure the positioning of each of the marks and the total elements conjured.

Those analyses inform us in clarifying various locations occupied by marks and different products in the minds of consumers, and thus it helps us to identify the most important fundamental points that indicate the possibility of satisfying the desires of customers.

2.5.4 Positioning Selection

The choice of positioning strategy based on the benefits of product purchase justifications, through attention to the tactical aspects of the special decisions and procedures for product marketing mix elements.

3. The Practical Design of the Study

3.1 Hypotheses of the Study

According to the previous theoretical narrative about positioning and access products in competitive markets, we can design the following hypothesis:

Each of quality, price, popularity, the most important characteristics that are of utmost importance to the Algerian consumer when choosing his favorite soft drink.

Soft drink HamoudBoualem has better positioning in terms of quality, price and fame in the Algerian consumer's mind.

3.2 Methodology of the Study

The study relies on using method surveyas it seeks to measure the actual position of gaseous drink HamoudBoualemin the Algerian consumer's mind, through the collection of information using the questionnaire tool geared to a sample of consumers of soft drinks, competing in the market at a national level.

3.3 Sample Installation

In the market, study results gathered from the questions asked on a sample of studied community (target group),this target group are all consumers of soft drinks products from all of Algeria, the sample size was determined by single 601 spread over the entire national territory andit was assembled by using the electronic questionnaire ,programming allows thereception of completed survey lists only.

3.4 Drafting the Questionnaire and Analyze the Results

Based on hypotheses, it was drafting the questionnaire with an easy way to provide the necessary information for the study, by building questions according to measures of attitudes that allow measurement of qualitative studies. There are also different techniques developed by psychologists to determine attitudes standards, carrying their names. Among these techniques, it has been relying on "Likert Quintet" scale technique because it is the most commonly used in marketing. Accordingly, the questionnaire included the following questions:

- **Part 1:** Closed questions related to the personal information of the items of the studied sample (social and demographic information).

-**Part 2:** Questions regarding the purchasing behavior of the sample studied towards soft drinks to determine most important dimensions to the consumer in choosing his drink of choice.

- **Part 3:** Questions designed to evaluate the specific beliefs for products under study, designed to determine the positioning of these products.

4. Analyze and Discuss the Results of the Study

4.1 Characteristics of the Sample

Here are the exact description of the personal characteristics of the individual sample:

Table 1. Distribution of the study sample items according to personal characteristics

The sex	Number	percentage (%)	The Income (1000 DA)	Number	percentage (%)	The educational level	Number	percentage (%)	The job	Number	percentage (%)
Male	271	45.1	Without income	182	30.3	primary	03	0.5	Without work	58	9.7
Female	330	54.9	Lessthan 8	49	8.2	Medium	18	3.0	Student	229	38.1
The age	Number	percentage (%)	From 8 to15	131	21.8	secondary	41	6.8	Worker	265	44.1
Lessthan 20	43	7.2	From 16 to 25	59	9.8	Academic	308	51.2	Director	12	02
30 -20	421	70	From 26 to 35	62	10.3	Postgraduate	231	38.4	free busineses	37	6.2
40 – 31	95	15.8	from 36 to 45	34	5.7						
50 – 41	26	4.3	More than45	84	14.0						
More than 50	16	2.7									
Total	601	100	total	601	100	totale	601	100	Totale	601	100

Descriptive statistical analysis of the sample items indicates that the largest contribution to the slide in the study sample are female, including 54.9%, while the male category was 41.1%. The largest segment in terms of age group was between 20 years and 30 years, with number of 421 by 70%, followed by category between 31 years and 40 years (15.8%). As for the part of the income, the category without income represented 182 single by 30.3%. and for the category of income earners is formed the rest, about 77.9%. The largest part of it, is for the income earners category of between 8,000 DA and 15,000 DA which is considered by 132 single by 21.8% of the total sample. In terms of educational level, the university category taking largest part 308 single by 51.2%.

4.2 Test Hypotheses

Each of quality, price, popularity, the most important characteristics that are of utmost importance to the Algerian consumer when choosing his favorite soft drink.

The following table presents the averages of consumer answers about the special considerations when choosing the gaseous favorite drink, which affecting the purchasing behavior.

Table 2. Ranking the most important properties of soft drinks for consumers

Drink properties	Not important at all	Not important	Repetition Somewhat important	important	Very Important	The arithmetic average
1. The price of drink	44	110	191	168	88	3.24
2. Quantity	43	113	174	195	76	3.25
3. The reputation of drink	07	26	81	130	357	4.45
4. The quality of composition (the taste)	03	06	32	188	372	4.53
5. The proportion of gas in the drink	30	38	114	224	195	3.86
6. proportion of sugar in the drink	51	93	136	205	116	3.4
7. feeling refreshed when taken	18	16	55	164	348	4.34

Through mathematical averages in the table, we note the convergence of the arithmetic average to the characteristic of "the price of drink." by (3.24) with the arithmetic average of amount of drink of characteristic by (3.25), both of them are in the field of answer "important", which shows that both these properties are of considerable importance to the Algerian consumer when choosing compositions of his favorite drink. As for the characteristics of the quality of the drink, it has ranged between the "important" and "very important", where all of the feature, "the proportion of gas beverage" and feature "sugar beverage" in the field "important," with an arithmetic mean estimated (3.86) and (3.40) for each respectively. This shows that they have the same degree of

importance. It was found that each of the two properties "quality structure" and "feeling refreshed 'as the most important ever for the Algerian consumer as well as " reputation of the drink "that fall within the domain" very important "with an arithmetic mean estimated (4.45), where averages were estimated by (4.53) and (4.34), respectively, and both of them are entering into the field " very important."

We conclude by the results that all of the price of the soft drink, and his fame, and its quality, has an importance to the Algerian consumer when choosing his preferred drink. Thus it is affecting his purchasing behavior to this product. However, the quality and reputation of the soft drink two properties which represent the maximum and more important than other characteristics.

Soft drink HamoudBoualem has better positioning in terms of quality, price and fame in the Algerian consumer's mind.

After the installation of soft drinks, the most important characteristics to consumers when choosing their favorite drink, we analyzed the perception of consumers for products of the following marks: - HamoudBoualem - Pepsi - Coca-Cola - Ifri ,based on a series of questions to evaluate the product HamoudBoualem compared to some foreign and domestic products by assessing the characteristics of each product by consumers' estimation to the degree of availability of these characteristics of the products under study, according to "Likert":

Table 3. Ordering brands to soft drinks products, according to the availability of the most important characteristics to the consumer

Dimensions	Feature	The order of products			
		Coca cola	Pepsi	HamoudBoualem	Ifri
the quality	The quality of composition (good taste)	04.74	04.42	03.92	02.95
	Quality of feeling refreshed	03.83	03.40	03.94	03.59
	The multiplicity of tastes	01.10	01.08	03.99	03.88
	The multiplicity of shapes and sizes	04.18	03.92	03.60	03.59
	Appropriate price to all social groups	03.01	02.91	03.82	03.83
Price	Consensus of price with size	03.35	03.24	03.85	03.82
	Consensus of price with quality	03.74	03.53	03.87	03.58
	Availability of the product	04.31	03.99	04.13	03.12
Promotion	The attractiveness of advertisements	04.21	04.20	03.19	02.71
	The attractiveness of packaging	03.85	03.68	03.53	03.36
	Product reputation	04.50	04.20	03.48	02.01

It shows through the table that both the soft drink Coca-Cola and Pepsi position in the minds of Algerians consumers on the basis of "quality composition (good taste)," by convergent arithmetic averages, where the arithmetic average of the approval of the customers about the availability of this feature in the drink of coca cola (04.74), and Pepsi (04.42) and with a very simple difference. Both the drinks - Coca-Cola and Pepsi - were getting closer in the availability of characteristic "product reputation or reputation" where the arithmetic average of the approval of the sample on the latter was in drink Coca-Cola (04.50) and in Pepsi was (04.20).

In connection with previous results both producers – Pepsi and Coca Cola – focused on positioning based on most important characteristics to the Algerian consumer and focus on it more than the remaining properties, which national institutions for the production of drinks – HamoudBoualem and Ifri did not depend on it in their positioning strategy, where HamoudBoualem products focused on the positioning , according to characteristic of product availability with an arithmetic mean to the approval of consumers reached by (04.13) ,but Coca-Cola drinks preceded it also in providing this property with an arithmetic mean reached (04.31) , although the difference was slight, but it affects the Foundation's position in the market.

Consumers was agree with an arithmetic mean by (03.88) that Ifri products focused on positioning according to the characteristic of the multiplicity of tastes," and the same opinion about its focus on the characteristic of the price agreement with the size" and "appropriate price for the various social groups" with a very simple differences of arithmetic average, as shown in the table.

4.3 Cognitive Map

According to the results obtained from previous answers, we can determine the positioning of soft drinks for marks studied in the minds of customers through the development of a cognitive map as shown in the following figure 1.

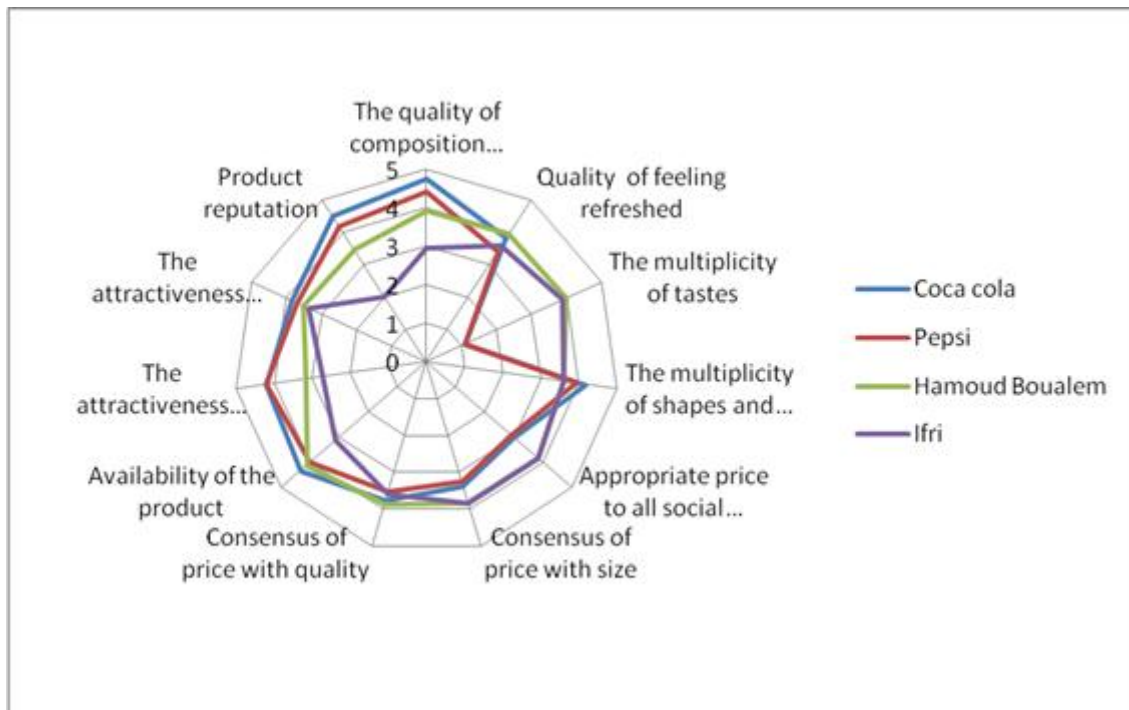


Figure 1. Cognitive map to the positioning of each of the soft drinks: Coca-Cola - Pepsi - Hamoud Boualem - Ifri
 4.4 Comments on the Results

In our analysis of the final study results, we see that, from all drink product properties, such as: "the quality of the drink," "fame", and the price", that the most important features to the Algerian customers are "the quality of the drink" and "brand reputation" where these are considered the most influential properties than "the price" characteristic on the Algerian consumer behavior when he chooses and buys his favorite drink.

By analyzing the cognitive map of the positioning of carbonated drinks under study in the mind of Algerian consumers, we note that the Coca-Cola drink is superior to all other products in focusing on the most important characteristics to the selected its positioning strategy in the consumer's mind, followed by Pepsi products with a very simple difference. It is noticeable through the form that both brands are close to each other in the selection of their positioning in the mind of the Algerian customer, where their maps appear when they are about to congruence in some properties and identical in other.

Also we note that Hamoud Boualem drinks tried to positioning on the basis of the combination of characteristics, as shown in the figure, and did not try to focus on the most important characteristics to the customer, when we can say that the perceived positioning to the Hamoud Boualem products is appeared weak.

Compared to competitors, with regard to the most important dimensions to the Algerian consumers even they are considered, it did not focus on extent required.

While The Ifri drinks has chosen weakest position among all drinks, even if they tried to focus on some of the properties as: "the multiplicity of tastes, the accordance of the price with size", and "acceptable price for the various social groups", they did not overtake them adequately. In addition, these properties are not the most important for the Algerian customer when he buys his favorite drink.

5. Conclusion

Considering that soft drinks represent "the Algerian family fruit", therefore the Algerian consumers care much by accordance of these products with their desires in conditions of "quality" and "celebrity brand" without focusing on the feature of "price" significantly, and foreign products have taken advantage of this feature to their benefit, where it had chosen positioning according to these two properties, which earned her a great success pit high prices compared to local products.

Soft drinks for local institutions are occupying deteriorated competitive position and translates its weak marketing strategy because they do not focus more on the dimensions that have more importance according to the customers, which cause the weakness of its development in competitive markets and the failure of its progress

compared to foreign products that invested in the field, that focus on highlighting their products to comply with the desires and aspirations of the Algerian customer. so as to bring greater share of consumers to ensure the achievement of its largest expansion, and which is we find it absent in local products.

Although Hamoud Boualem institution older than the Coca-Cola Foundation, but it has not reached the same competitive level, and these are because of the weakness of its marketing policy, which is evident through the selection for a positioning strategy that does not focus strongly on the very important dimensions according to customers.

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