



Understanding Brand Positioning for Competitive Advantage in the FMCG Market: Insights from a Case Study

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Abstract

This study investigates the brand positioning strategy and examines the factors influencing consumer perception and product preference in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market of Bangladesh. Using an exploratory research design, primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey of 30 respondents representing different demographic groups. The findings reveal that Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) enjoys strong brand awareness and positive quality perception among consumers. Taste, advertising, and packaging design emerged as the most influential factors shaping purchase decisions, while brands such as Mojo and Speed demonstrate higher consumption levels, particularly among young consumers. The results indicate that effective promotional communication, distinctive packaging, and consistent product quality play a crucial role in strengthening brand positioning and competitive advantage. This study contributes to the understanding of how local FMCG firms utilize branding strategies to enhance market presence and consumer engagement. The findings also offer practical insights for marketers to refine brand communication and product differentiation strategies in increasingly competitive consumer markets.

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1. Introduction

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is one of the most penetratingly competitive industries, where brands compete not only through product quality and price but also through image, distinctiveness, and consumer recall. In such a marketplace, brand positioning becomes a strategic mechanism through which firms create a meaningful and differentiated place in the minds of consumers. Positioning is not merely a promotional slogan or an advertising device; rather, it is a broader strategic exercise that aligns product attributes, value propositions, communication themes, and consumer perceptions to secure competitive advantage (Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Crawford, 1985; Day & Wensley, 1988; Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010; Saqib, 2020) [2, 4, 5, 6, 14]. This issue is especially relevant in the FMCG industry, where product categories are often crowded, switching costs are low, and consumer purchase decisions are strongly shaped by familiarity, packaging, availability, promotional visibility, and perceived quality. Against this backdrop, understanding how firms position their brands in relation to competitors is essential for explaining market success and long-term brand sustainability.

Within the Bangladeshi FMCG landscape, Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) has emerged as a notable local manufacturer with a diversified portfolio that includes carbonated soft drinks, juices, dairy products, snacks, mineral water, and energy drinks. As a concern of Akij Group, AFBL has developed a recognizable presence in the domestic market through a combination of product variety, promotional communication, packaging appeal, and extensive distribution support. The company's official profile highlights a wide product range and a strong commitment to quality-oriented manufacturing, which has helped it become a visible player in Bangladesh's food and beverage market (Akij Food & Beverage Ltd., n.d.). The company's brand portfolio, including Mojo, Speed, Frutika, Clemon, Lemu, Spa, Farm Fresh, and Wild Brew, reflects an effort to target different consumer segments through differentiated communication themes and value propositions.

In a market where both domestic and multinational brands compete aggressively for consumer attention, AFBL's experience provides a meaningful case for examining how a local firm strategically positions its brands to establish relevance, preference, and competitiveness. The literature consistently suggests that positioning is a central driver of both brand performance and competitive advantage. Hooley *et al.* (2001)^[9] argued that competitive positioning is closely linked to market-focused resources and ultimately influences firm performance. Similarly, Day and Wensley (1988)^[5] conceptualized positional advantage as a critical route through which firms transform resources and capabilities into superior marketplace outcomes. From a brand perspective, positioning refers more specifically to the associations, meanings, and comparative value that consumers attach to a particular product or brand (Crawford, 1985; Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010)^[4, 6]. Keller (1993)^[10] further emphasized that strong brand knowledge and favorable associations shape customer-based brand equity, which in turn influences preference and purchase response. Therefore, for FMCG firms, effective brand positioning is not only about being known in the market, but about being known for something specific, valuable, and memorable. This is particularly important in beverage and snack categories where consumer choices are frequent, habitual, and highly responsive to branding stimuli.

Despite the strategic importance of brand positioning, there remains limited context-specific academic evidence on how local FMCG firms in Bangladesh design and operationalize positioning strategies across multiple brands. Much of the extant literature is conceptual, centered on broader marketing strategy, or focused on multinational contexts. Comparatively less attention has been given to how indigenous firms in emerging markets create differentiated brand identities while competing against well-established national and multinational rivals. In the case of AFBL, the available discussion is largely descriptive, practitioner-oriented, or found in reports, repositories, interviews, and company sources rather than in systematically developed scholarly studies. Yet AFBL presents an interesting and relevant setting because its brands appear to rely on distinct thematic appeals, such as fun, freshness, energy, purity, health, or youthfulness, in order to secure consumer attention and preference. Examining these positioning patterns can therefore help clarify how localized branding logic operates in a highly competitive FMCG environment and how consumers respond to such strategies.

Based on this rationale, the present study seeks to explore the brand positioning strategy of the products of Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. with particular emphasis on the factors that influence consumer preference and competitive visibility in the market. More specifically, the study aims to identify the product attributes influencing purchase decisions for carbonated soft drinks and energy drinks, examine the preferred branding strategies associated with AFBL products, understand the motives that compel consumers to consume these products, assess preferred price perceptions and expenditure patterns, and evaluate consumer perceptions toward selected AFBL brands. In broader terms, the study addresses the following research question: How does AFBL position its brands in the FMCG market to build consumer awareness, preference, and competitive advantage? In answering this question, the study also considers whether branding, advertising, availability, taste, packaging, and price

collectively shape the relative attractiveness of AFBL's products in consumers' minds.

The study offers both academic and practical value. Academically, it extends the discussion of brand positioning by applying established positioning logic to a local FMCG case in an emerging market context, thereby connecting theory with a real-world brand portfolio. It also contributes to the understanding of how consumer perceptions of taste, packaging, quality, awareness, and promotional communication interact with positioning outcomes in everyday consumption markets. Practically, the findings may assist AFBL and similar firms in refining their branding decisions, communication themes, and market strategies to strengthen customer connection and competitive differentiation. Since brand positioning is closely tied to how consumers interpret brand value, consistency between communicated image and delivered experience becomes crucial for long-term performance (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010; Hooley *et al.*, 2005)^[6, 8]. Thus, this case-based inquiry is expected to generate actionable insights for managers, marketers, and researchers interested in branding strategy in the FMCG sector.

Finally, the rest of the study is organized as follows: the next section reviews the relevant literature and conceptual foundations of brand positioning; the subsequent section outlines the methodology; this is followed by the presentation of findings and analysis; and the final section concludes with recommendations and implications for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing Brand Positioning in the FMCG Market

Brand positioning is widely recognized as one of the most important strategic instruments through which firms differentiate their offerings and secure competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace. In highly competitive sectors such as fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), consumers are exposed to numerous alternatives with often similar functional attributes. Under such conditions, firms cannot rely solely on product quality or price; rather, they must create a distinctive and meaningful position in the consumer's mind through an integrated combination of product attributes, symbolic associations, communication strategy, and value delivery. In this sense, brand positioning refers to the deliberate managerial effort to create a unique, desirable, and differentiated image of a brand relative to competing alternatives (Crawford, 1985; Kotler & Keller, 2016)^[4, 11].

The literature further suggests that positioning should not be treated as a narrow promotional tool. Instead, it is a broader strategic process that connects marketing decisions with consumer perception and market competition. Hooley *et al.* (2001)^[9] argued that positioning is a central determinant of brand performance and organizational competitiveness because it enables firms to deploy market-focused resources in a way that builds superiority over rivals. Likewise, Day and Wensley (1988)^[5] emphasized that positional advantage emerges when firms effectively combine resources, capabilities, and strategic actions to achieve superior customer value and marketplace standing. Therefore, positioning is not only about how a brand is presented, but also about how it is interpreted, compared, and remembered by consumers.

An important distinction in the literature is the difference

between strategic market positioning and brand positioning. According to Fuchs and Diamantopoulos (2010) ^[6], strategic market positioning refers to a firm's competitive standing in relation to its rivals in the market, while brand positioning is more specifically concerned with the place that a product or brand occupies in the consumer's mind. This distinction is important for the present study because Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) operates in a market where both strategic market rivalry and consumer-level brand perception is simultaneously significant. AFBL competes against powerful local and multinational brands across several categories, yet its success also depends on whether consumers perceive its individual brands such as Mojo, Speed, Clemon, Frutika, and Wild Brew as distinctive, attractive, and relevant.

In consumer goods industries, especially in food and beverage markets, positioning becomes even more crucial because consumer choice is frequent, habitual, and strongly influenced by visible and symbolic cues. Packaging, color, taste, price, advertising recall, availability, and emotional appeal often shape consumer decisions more strongly than technical product specifications. Kotler and Keller (2016) ^[11] noted that strong brands are built when firms successfully identify points of difference and points of parity that matter to the target market. Therefore, effective positioning in FMCG contexts requires not only brand visibility but also consistency between what a brand promises and what it actually delivers. This alignment is particularly relevant for AFBL, whose brand communication repeatedly emphasizes quality, freshness, fun, energy, purity, and lifestyle associations.

2.2. Theoretical Grounds of Competitive Brand Positioning

The conceptual foundation of this study can be understood through two interrelated lenses: competitive positioning theory and consumer perception-based brand positioning. From the competitive perspective, Day and Wensley (1988) ^[5] proposed that firms attain advantage when they develop superior positions through cost leadership, differentiation, and value delivery. In the FMCG industry, where rivalry is intense and switching barriers are low, competitive advantage is often sustained not only by operational strength but also by strategic brand meaning. Hooley *et al.* (2001) ^[9] reinforced this argument by demonstrating that market-focused resources and competitive positioning significantly influence firm performance.

From the consumer perspective, Crawford (1985) ^[4] explained that positioning is essentially about designing and presenting a product in such a manner that consumers assign it a distinctive place in comparison with competing offerings. Fuchs and Diamantopoulos (2010) ^[6] further clarified that the effectiveness of a positioning strategy depends on how consumers evaluate and internalize the brand's intended identity. In other words, a brand is not successfully positioned merely because the firm communicates a message; it is successfully positioned when that message becomes meaningful and favorable in the minds of consumers.

These theoretical insights are highly relevant to AFBL. The company does not market a single undifferentiated identity; rather, it uses separate communicational themes for different brands. For example, Mojo is associated with fun and youthful excitement, Speed with extreme energy, Frutika with purity and truthfulness, Clemon with freshness, Farm

Fresh with health and growth, and Spa with purity and wellness. Such differentiation indicates that AFBL attempts to build distinct consumer associations around each brand while also maintaining an overarching corporate promise of quality. This dual branding logic reflects both market positioning and consumer-oriented brand positioning, making AFBL an appropriate case for examining how a local FMCG company attempts to secure competitive advantage through brand architecture and communication.

2.3. Brand Positioning Strategy and Consumer Perception

A large body of literature suggests that successful brand positioning depends heavily on consumer perception. Consumers do not buy only physical products; they also buy meanings, experiences, and symbolic value. In FMCG categories, where products are often similar in functional terms, perceived differences become especially important. Brand image, packaging design, communication style, slogan, promotional campaigns, and event sponsorship can all contribute to the formation of favorable perceptions that later influence purchase preference and repurchase behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[11].

The draft evidence on AFBL strongly reflects this logic. The company appears to position its products not just through product category attributes, but through experiential and emotional appeals. Mojo is projected as a brand of enjoyment and youthfulness; Speed emphasizes exaggerated energy and excitement; Frutika is positioned around purity with an unconventional and memorable communication concept; Clemon conveys freshness and dreamlike relief; and Farm Fresh appeals to health and child development. This indicates that AFBL adopts a multi-brand positioning strategy, in which each product is associated with a specific symbolic promise designed to connect with a particular target audience. Such an approach is consistent with the marketing literature that stresses the importance of differentiated value propositions for category competition and brand recall (Crawford, 1985; Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[4, 11].

At the same time, product-related functional cues remain important in shaping perception. The draft findings suggest that taste, packaging design, quality, availability, and advertisement all influence AFBL consumer response. Packaging appears particularly important for several AFBL brands, especially the full-silver bottle design used in some beverage products. This observation supports the broader understanding that in FMCG markets, packaging is not merely a protective function; it is also a communication medium and a positioning device. Similarly, availability through strong distribution channels contributes to practical brand preference, especially for products such as bottled water and soft drinks that rely on convenience and routine purchase.

The company's emphasis on quality also plays a central role in its positioning logic. Internal and media-based sources referenced in the draft repeatedly underscore AFBL's concern for quality assurance. For example, Naznin (2017) ^[13] noted that AFBL gained consumer trust by ensuring quality products in a category where safety and health concerns are highly relevant. Likewise, Nazar-E-Zilani highlighted AFBL's adoption of aseptic juice packaging technology, emphasizing quality preservation and germ-free processing as a source of differentiation. Uddin (2016) ^[15] also stressed that uncompromising quality has long been

considered a central force behind the company's success. Collectively, these insights suggest that AFBL's brand positioning strategy is built not only on emotional and symbolic communication but also on a functional quality narrative.

2.4. Competitive Brand Positioning of AFBL in the FMCG Context

The Bangladeshi beverage and snack market is characterized by strong competition from both domestic and multinational firms. AFBL competes with established names such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Sprite, 7UP, Pran, Tiger, Power, and many others across different product lines. In such a setting, a local firm must create distinctive points of difference to survive and grow. AFBL's strategic response, as reflected in the draft, includes extensive product diversification, category-specific communication themes, unique packaging, dual distribution channels, event-based promotions, digital media presence, and trade-focused activation.

This pattern suggests that AFBL does not rely on a single generic positioning formula. Instead, it appears to follow a portfolio-based competitive positioning strategy, where each brand is crafted to occupy a unique perceptual niche. For instance, Speed is positioned as a high-energy lifestyle brand aimed at consumers seeking intensity and excitement, while Mojo is rooted in local cultural engagement, music, fun, and festive identity. Frutika uses a purity-based but creatively reframed proposition, and Spa appeals to health-conscious consumers through purity and mineral-water imagery. Such strategic segmentation reflects an understanding that different product categories and target groups require different positioning narratives.

Another notable aspect of AFBL's positioning logic is the relationship between promotion and recall. The draft shows that AFBL invests in television advertisements, print media, billboards, mobile billboards, road shows, digital platforms, sales promotions, event sponsorship, and social communication. This supports the view that positioning is strengthened when communicated repeatedly through multiple touchpoints. Particularly in FMCG markets, where

purchase decisions may be routine and impulsive, repeated exposure can help create top-of-mind awareness and stronger brand salience. Therefore, AFBL's integrated promotional activities may be understood as a mechanism for translating intended brand identity into actual consumer memory and preference.

2.5. Synthesis of the Literature and Research Direction

The literature (Table 1) indicates that brand positioning is a multidimensional strategic process that combines competitive differentiation, consumer meaning creation, communication effectiveness, and value delivery. The works of Day and Wensley (1988) ^[5], Hooley *et al.* (2001) ^[9], Crawford (1985) ^[4], Fuchs and Diamantopoulos (2010) ^[6], and Kotler and Keller (2016) ^[11] collectively suggest that brands achieve competitive advantage when they are able to secure a favorable, distinct, and relevant place in the market and in the minds of consumers. In the FMCG industry, such positioning is particularly important because product categories are crowded, consumer attention is limited, and purchase decisions are strongly influenced by symbolic and experiential cues.

The reviewed evidence from AFBL indicates that the company employs a differentiated and category-sensitive positioning strategy across its major brands. Its approach appears to integrate product quality, packaging innovation, promotional communication, cultural relevance, and target-group-specific appeals. However, despite these visible strategic efforts, there remains limited scholarly examination of how these positioning themes relate to consumer awareness, preference, and perceived attractiveness in the Bangladeshi FMCG context. This gap justifies the present study. By exploring AFBL as a case, the study seeks to understand how local FMCG brands attempt to construct competitive advantage through positioning strategy and how consumers interpret the resulting brand signals in terms of taste, quality, awareness, advertisement, and overall preference.

Table 1: Summary of the Core Literature Relevant to the Study

Theme	Key scholarly insight	Relevance to AFBL
Brand positioning	Positioning creates a unique place for a brand in the minds of consumers (Crawford, 1985) ^[4] .	AFBL uses distinct themes for Mojo, Speed, Frutika, Clemon, Farm Fresh, and Spa.
Competitive positioning	Firms gain advantage through superior market standing and differentiated value delivery (Day & Wensley, 1988) ^[5] .	AFBL competes with both local and multinational FMCG brands through differentiated communication and product variety.
Market-focused resources	Positioning strengthens firm performance when supported by market-based capabilities (Hooley <i>et al.</i> , 2001) ^[9] .	AFBL uses distribution strength, promotions, packaging, and category expansion as strategic resources.
Consumer-based evaluation	Positioning is effective only when consumers perceive the intended image favorably (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010) ^[6] .	AFBL's success depends on whether consumers associate its brands with fun, energy, freshness, quality, and trust.
Brand differentiation in FMCG	Packaging, quality, availability, image, and promotion influence repeated consumer choice (Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[11] .	AFBL's silver packaging, broad availability, advertising, and quality narrative support category-level differentiation.
Quality as positioning signal	Product trust and perceived safety can strengthen brand acceptance.	AFBL emphasizes aseptic processing, imported machinery, and uncompromising quality.

Source: Developed by the author based on the reviewed literature and draft evidence.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Study Approach

The present study adopts an exploratory research design to examine the brand positioning strategy of Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) within the fast-moving consumer

goods (FMCG) sector in Bangladesh. Exploratory research is particularly appropriate when a research problem has not been extensively investigated or when the researcher aims to gain deeper insights into emerging marketing practices and consumer perceptions (Malhotra & Dash, 2010) ^[12]. Given

the relatively limited academic investigation into the brand positioning strategies of local FMCG firms in Bangladesh, an exploratory approach enables the study to identify patterns of consumer perception, branding effectiveness, and product preference associated with AFBL brands.

The study follows a survey-based empirical approach, which allows the collection of first-hand information from consumers regarding their awareness, perception, and consumption behavior related to AFBL products. Survey research is widely used in marketing and consumer behavior studies because it facilitates the systematic collection of standardized data from a defined population, enabling the identification of trends, preferences, and relationships among variables (Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[11]. In the context of the present study, the survey method provides a structured way to assess consumer attitudes toward different AFBL brands such as Mojo, Speed, Clemon, Frutika, and others. The research focuses primarily on understanding how consumers perceive AFBL's products in terms of taste, packaging, advertisement, price, availability, and overall brand image, which are commonly recognized determinants of brand positioning in FMCG markets. By analyzing these factors, the study aims to evaluate how effectively AFBL's branding strategies influence consumer awareness and purchasing behavior.

3.2. Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire Design

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire, which is considered one of the most reliable tools for gathering standardized consumer responses in marketing research (Malhotra & Dash, 2010) ^[12]. The questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' demographic characteristics, product awareness, brand preference, perceived quality, and factors influencing purchase decisions related to AFBL products. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, education level, and occupation. These variables are important for understanding the consumer profile and identifying which demographic groups are more inclined to consume AFBL products. The second section focused on consumer perception and product evaluation, including questions about product awareness, brand recall, preferred brands, quality perception, reasons for purchase, and consumption patterns.

The survey questions were primarily designed using multiple-choice formats, enabling respondents to select the option that best reflects their perception or experience. Structured questionnaires provide the advantage of reducing response ambiguity and facilitating efficient statistical interpretation of consumer opinions (Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[11]. In addition, the questionnaire was developed in a simple and understandable manner to ensure that respondents could provide accurate and meaningful responses. The measurement items used in the study reflect common attributes associated with brand positioning in the FMCG sector, including taste, packaging design, price attractiveness, advertisement effectiveness, product availability, and perceived quality. These attributes are frequently emphasized in consumer research as key drivers of brand perception and purchasing behavior.

3.3. Sample Selection and Data Collection

The empirical data for this study were collected through a survey of 30 respondents, who were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that allows researchers to collect data from readily accessible respondents when time, cost, and resource constraints are present (Malhotra & Dash, 2010) ^[12]. Although this technique may limit the generalizability of the findings, it is commonly used in exploratory research to generate preliminary insights into consumer behavior.

The respondents were selected from several consumer groups that represent typical FMCG users. These groups included students, service holders, business professionals, and housewives. These categories were chosen because they represent diverse consumer segments that frequently purchase beverage and snack products. Additionally, younger consumers and students were considered particularly relevant because many AFBL brands such as Mojo and Speed target youth-oriented market segments. Data were collected through face-to-face interactions and questionnaire distribution, allowing respondents to express their opinions regarding their experiences with AFBL products. In addition to the primary survey data, informal discussions with AFBL officials and marketing personnel were conducted to gain contextual understanding of the company's branding and marketing practices. Such interactions helped enrich the interpretation of consumer responses and provided insights into the strategic rationale behind AFBL's brand positioning efforts.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, which are widely used to summarize survey responses and identify patterns in consumer behavior. Descriptive analysis allows researchers to present the distribution of responses across different demographic categories and evaluate the frequency of consumer preferences for specific brands or attributes (Malhotra & Dash, 2010) ^[12]. In this study, frequency distributions and percentage analysis were used to examine consumer responses regarding brand awareness, product preference, perceived quality, and factors influencing purchase decisions. These techniques help provide a clear overview of consumer perception toward AFBL products and assist in identifying which brands are most preferred by the respondents. Through this analytical approach, the study aims to derive meaningful insights regarding the effectiveness of AFBL's brand positioning strategies and their influence on consumer preferences in the FMCG market.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Descriptive Profile of Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is essential in consumer behavior research because demographic attributes often influence purchasing patterns, brand perception, and consumption behavior. In the present study, descriptive analysis was conducted to examine respondents' gender, age, educational qualification, and occupation. These variables provide an overview of the consumer segments that are more likely to consume products of AFBL.

4.1.1. Gender

The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents were male consumers (96.7%), whereas female respondents represented only 3.3% of the sample. This distribution suggests that male consumers appear to dominate the consumption pattern of AFBL products within the surveyed sample. Although the imbalance may partly reflect the sampling method, the findings imply that AFBL's beverage and energy drink brands such as Mojo and Speed may currently attract stronger engagement among male consumers.

4.1.2. Age

Age plays a significant role in shaping consumer preferences, especially in the beverage industry where youth-oriented branding is common. The results show that 43.3% of respondents fall within the age group of 22–24 years, making it the largest consumer segment in the survey. This is followed by 30% of respondents aged between 25–27 years. Smaller proportions were found in other categories, including 10% aged 28–30, 6.7% aged above 31, 6.7% aged 19–21, and 3.3% aged 16–18. These findings suggest that AFBL products are particularly popular among young adult consumers, which aligns with the company's branding strategies that often target youth lifestyles, energy, and entertainment-oriented themes.

4.1.3. Educational Background

The analysis of respondents' educational qualifications indicates that 46.7% of respondents were postgraduate students or graduates, while another 46.7% were undergraduate students. Only a small proportion belonged to other educational categories, including 3.3% with a doctorate and 3.3% with Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) qualifications. This distribution suggests that AFBL products are widely consumed among relatively educated consumer groups, particularly university students and young professionals. This pattern may also reflect the urban youth market segment that is highly exposed to modern advertising, digital media, and promotional campaigns.

4.1.4. Occupation

The occupational analysis reveals that students constitute the largest group of consumers (63.3%), followed by service holders (33.3%) and business professionals (3.3%). The dominance of student respondents further supports the earlier observation that AFBL's products are especially popular among younger consumers. The strong presence of student consumers also reflects the lifestyle orientation of several AFBL brands that emphasize excitement, entertainment, and youthful energy.

4.2. Brand Awareness and Consumer Preference

Brand awareness is a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of marketing communication strategies and product visibility in the marketplace. The survey results indicate that 96.7% of respondents were aware of AFBL products, while only 3.3% reported no awareness. This high level of awareness suggests that AFBL has successfully established a visible presence in the Bangladeshi beverage market through its branding, advertising, and distribution activities.

4.2.1. Brand Recall in Malt Beverage Category

When respondents were asked which malt beverage brand first comes to mind, Wild Brew, an AFBL brand, received the highest recall rate at 53.3%, followed by Crown (23.3%), Heineken (10%), and other brands (13.3%). The high recall rate of Wild Brew indicates that AFBL has been able to build a strong cognitive association with consumers in this particular category.

4.2.2. Preferred Malt Beverage Brand

The analysis further shows that 66.7% of respondents prefer Wild Brew, while 10% prefer Crown, 6.7% prefer Heineken, and 16.7% prefer other brands. These findings reinforce the previous observation that Wild Brew occupies a strong perceptual position among consumers within the malt beverage segment.

4.3. Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

Understanding the factors that motivate consumers to purchase a particular brand is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of brand positioning strategies. The survey results show that taste is the most influential factor, cited by 50% of respondents as the primary reason for purchasing AFBL products. The second most influential factor is advertisement (26.7%), indicating that promotional communication plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase decisions. Other factors include price (10%), packaging design (10%), and product availability (3.3%). These findings suggest that AFBL's success in attracting consumers is largely driven by product quality and taste, supported by effective advertising campaigns and appealing packaging design. Although price and availability remain important considerations, they appear to play a comparatively smaller role in influencing purchasing decisions within the surveyed sample.

4.4. Perception of Product Quality

Consumer perception of product quality is a critical determinant of brand loyalty and long-term market success. The survey results show that 43.3% of respondents rated AFBL product quality as "Good," while 16.7% rated it as "Very Good," and 13.3% rated it as "Excellent." Meanwhile, 23.3% of respondents considered the quality "Average," and only 3.3% rated it as "Below Average." These findings indicate that the majority of consumers hold a positive perception of AFBL product quality, which supports the company's brand promise of delivering quality food and beverage products. A favorable perception of quality is particularly important in the FMCG industry, where consumer trust and satisfaction strongly influence repeat purchase behavior.

4.5. Consumption Pattern of AFBL Products

The survey also examined which AFBL products are most frequently consumed by respondents. The results show that Mojo is the most widely consumed product, accounting for 33.33% of total responses. This is followed by Speed (20%) and Clemon (13.33%). Other products, including Spa Rivera mineral water (10%) and Frutika juice (10%), show moderate levels of consumption. Meanwhile, Lemu (6.67%), Wild Brew (3.33%), and Farm Fresh (3.33%) appear to have relatively lower consumption levels among the surveyed

respondents. These findings indicate that carbonated soft drinks and energy drinks represent the strongest product categories for AFBL, particularly brands such as Mojo and Speed. The strong performance of Mojo suggests that the brand's positioning around fun, enjoyment, and youth culture resonates well with consumers. Similarly, Speed's positioning as a high-energy drink appears to appeal strongly to younger market segments.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Discussion of Findings

The present study aimed to explore the brand positioning strategy of Aki Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) and to understand the factors influencing consumer awareness, perception, and consumption behavior in the FMCG market of Bangladesh. The empirical findings offer several insights regarding consumer demographics, brand awareness, perceived quality, purchase drivers, and product preference, which collectively explain how AFBL brands are positioned in the minds of consumers.

5.1.1. Consumer Demographics and Target Market

The descriptive analysis revealed that the majority of respondents were young male consumers, particularly within the 22–24 age group, and most were students or young professionals. This finding is consistent with the strategic positioning of several AFBL brands such as Mojo and Speed, which emphasize youthful energy, entertainment, and lifestyle orientation in their promotional campaigns. Prior marketing research has consistently demonstrated that youth segments represent one of the most active consumer groups in the beverage industry because of their higher consumption frequency and responsiveness to branding activities (Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[11]. Similarly, studies on FMCG consumption patterns suggest that young consumers are particularly sensitive to brand image, advertising communication, and lifestyle symbolism, which significantly influence their purchase decisions (Aaker, 1996) ^[1]. The dominance of students in the sample therefore aligns with the broader understanding that youth-oriented positioning strategies can effectively enhance brand engagement and product trial in competitive beverage markets.

5.1.2. Brand Awareness

One of the most notable findings of the study is the extremely high level of brand awareness of AFBL products (96.7%) among respondents. High brand awareness is often considered the first step in building strong brand equity, as consumers are more likely to consider familiar brands during purchase decisions (Keller, 1993) ^[10]. The results therefore suggest that AFBL's marketing communication strategies—such as advertising campaigns, promotional events, and digital engagement—have been successful in creating strong visibility in the marketplace. This finding supports the argument of Keller (1993) ^[10] that brand awareness plays a critical role in shaping consumer memory structures and influencing brand recall during purchase situations. In the context of AFBL, the strong recall of brands such as Wild Brew in the malt beverage category further confirms that consistent promotional communication can strengthen the cognitive presence of a brand in consumers' minds.

5.1.3. Product Quality Perception

The results indicate that most respondents perceive the quality of AFBL products as good or very good, with only a small proportion rating the quality as below average. This positive perception of quality reflects the importance of product reliability and performance in sustaining brand reputation. In marketing literature, perceived quality is often considered a fundamental component of brand equity because it influences consumer trust and satisfaction (Aaker, 1996) ^[1]. The findings also align with previous observations that AFBL places significant emphasis on quality assurance and modern production technologies. Studies on consumer behavior suggest that when consumers associate a brand with consistent product quality, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes and long-term loyalty toward that brand (Zeithaml, 1988) ^[18]. Therefore, the favorable quality perception observed in this study supports AFBL's positioning strategy centered on reliability and quality assurance.

5.1.4. Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

The analysis identified taste as the most influential factor affecting consumer purchase decisions, followed by advertisement, packaging design, and price. Taste accounted for half of the respondents' purchase motivations, indicating that sensory experience remains a central determinant of beverage consumption. This finding is consistent with FMCG marketing literature, which suggests that product attributes such as taste, aroma, and freshness strongly shape consumer preferences in food and beverage categories (Kotler & Keller, 2016) ^[11]. The influence of advertisement as the second most significant factor further highlights the role of marketing communication in shaping brand perception. Advertising campaigns help build emotional connections with consumers, reinforce brand identity, and stimulate brand recall during purchasing decisions (Aaker, 1996) ^[1]. AFBL's extensive use of media advertising, event sponsorship, and promotional activities therefore appears to contribute meaningfully to consumer awareness and brand preference.

Packaging design also emerged as an important determinant of purchase behavior. In FMCG markets, packaging functions not only as a protective container but also as a powerful visual communication tool that can attract attention and convey brand personality (Underwood, 2003) ^[16]. The distinctive packaging design of AFBL products—such as the silver bottle used for certain beverages—may therefore contribute to stronger product differentiation in retail environments.

5.1.5. Brand Preference and Product Consumption

The consumption analysis showed that Mojo is the most frequently consumed AFBL brand, followed by Speed and Clemon. These findings indicate that AFBL's carbonated soft drink and energy drink categories currently hold stronger market appeal compared to some other product lines. The popularity of Mojo may be attributed to its strong cultural and entertainment-based positioning, which resonates particularly well with younger consumers. Similarly, the strong performance of Speed reflects the effectiveness of its high-energy branding theme targeted toward youth and active lifestyle segments. According to competitive positioning theory, brands that successfully create unique associations in

consumers' minds are more likely to achieve stronger preference and market share (Day & Wensley, 1988) ^[5]. The findings therefore suggest that AFBL's differentiated communication strategies across its brand portfolio have contributed positively to consumer engagement.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on brand positioning and FMCG marketing by providing empirical insights from a developing market context. While most prior studies have focused on multinational brands, this research demonstrates how a local company can successfully build competitive brand positions through differentiated communication strategies, product quality assurance, and targeted promotional campaigns. The study also reinforces the conceptual framework of brand equity theory, which emphasizes the importance of brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations in shaping consumer preferences (Keller, 1993) ^[10]. By demonstrating how these elements interact in the context of AFBL brands, the study extends the application of brand positioning theory to emerging markets and locally developed brands.

5.3. Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings provide several insights for marketing practitioners in the FMCG sector. First, the strong influence of taste and product quality indicates that maintaining consistent product standards should remain a central priority for AFBL. Even the most effective marketing campaigns cannot sustain consumer loyalty if product performance does not meet expectations. Second, the significant role of advertising and promotional activities highlights the importance of maintaining continuous brand communication to reinforce brand recall and consumer engagement. AFBL may benefit from further expanding its digital marketing initiatives and interactive promotional campaigns to strengthen its connection with younger consumers. Third, the study highlights the importance of distinctive packaging and visual identity in influencing consumer purchase decisions. Investing in innovative packaging designs can help brands stand out in crowded retail environments and enhance product appeal. Finally, brands with lower consumption levels such as Farm Fresh and Wild Brew may require more focused positioning strategies and targeted promotional activities to improve market penetration. Methodologically, this study demonstrates the usefulness of survey-based exploratory research in understanding consumer perceptions and brand positioning strategies within FMCG markets.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the present study provides meaningful insights into the brand positioning strategies of Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) and consumer perceptions in the FMCG sector of Bangladesh, several limitations should be acknowledged. Recognizing these limitations not only helps contextualize the findings but also provides direction for future research. First, the study relied on a relatively small sample size of respondents, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader consumer population. The use of convenience sampling, although appropriate for exploratory research, may introduce sampling bias and restrict the representativeness of the results. Future studies could address this limitation by employing larger sample sizes and

probability sampling techniques, which would allow for more robust statistical analysis and stronger generalizability across different consumer segments. Second, the research focused primarily on consumer perceptions and self-reported responses, which may not fully capture actual purchasing behavior. Consumer responses in survey-based research may sometimes be influenced by recall bias or social desirability bias. Future research could incorporate behavioral data, sales data, or experimental approaches to obtain more objective insights into consumer decision-making processes and brand positioning effectiveness. Finally, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design, capturing consumer perceptions at a single point in time. However, brand positioning strategies and consumer preferences evolve continuously due to changes in market competition, consumer lifestyles, and technological innovation. Future research could therefore benefit from longitudinal studies that examine how brand positioning strategies develop over time and how consumer perceptions shift in response to evolving marketing practices. By addressing these limitations, future research can build upon the present findings to develop a more comprehensive understanding of brand positioning strategies and consumer behavior in the FMCG sector, particularly within emerging markets such as Bangladesh.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the brand positioning strategy of Akij Food & Beverage Ltd. (AFBL) and to explore how consumers perceive and respond to the company's products within the competitive FMCG market of Bangladesh. The findings of the study reveal that AFBL has successfully established a strong presence in the market through a combination of product quality, effective promotional communication, distinctive packaging, and extensive distribution networks. The empirical results indicate that AFBL enjoys high levels of brand awareness among consumers, suggesting that the company's marketing activities have effectively increased visibility and recognition in the marketplace. Furthermore, the study highlights that taste, advertising, and packaging design are among the most influential factors shaping consumer purchase decisions. These findings reinforce the importance of aligning product attributes with communication strategies in order to create a strong and favorable brand position.

From a broader perspective, the study contributes to the understanding of how local FMCG companies in emerging economies can leverage branding strategies and consumer-oriented marketing practices to strengthen their competitive position. As the FMCG industry continues to evolve in response to changing consumer preferences and technological advancements, companies like AFBL must continuously innovate their branding strategies to sustain consumer trust and market leadership. In conclusion, the findings suggest that AFBL is well-positioned to expand its market influence by maintaining its focus on quality, innovation, and effective marketing communication. With continued strategic investment in brand development and consumer engagement, the company has the potential to further strengthen its position in both domestic and international markets.

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