Journal of Studies in Economics and Management
ISSN : 2602-6570
Volume 07 Number 02 – December 2024

Exploratory approach to the positioning of food retail brand: Case of large food retail spaces in the city of Oran

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Date of receipt: 05-09-2024 **Date of acceptation:01-12-2024**

Abstract

This article aims to understand the intended positioning of retail brands in the retail sector in Oran. It highlights the identification and differentiation elements that motivate the target, while emphasizing the development strategies of food retail brand. An exploratory study was carried out based on eight semi-structured interviews. Six of these were conducted with the managers and owner-managers of three food retail brand, while the last two involved experts from the sector. The results reveal that all retail brands position themselves around low prices by offering promotions and events. However, specific differentiation elements have been identified for each retailer, such as the reliability of the information provided, the wide variety of offerings, the quality of customer service, and the high quality of both products and store offering.

Keywords: Positioning, food retail brand, differentiation, Oran.
Jel Classification Codes : M31, L81, M31

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1.Introduction

Mass retailing is seen as a driving force in the economy because of its ability to absorb unemployment and contribute to improving the quality of the products on offer. This is achieved by generating competition and encouraging local production. In addition, its investment in infrastructure helps to increase economic resources. Although mass retailing has attracted considerable attention from researchers in France, this is not the case in Algeria, where research on the subject is limited.

The Algerian retail sector is following a different trajectory to that seen in other emerging countries, due to an unfavourable institutional environment (Nouiri & Ghidouche, 2013,P.28). Although there has been talk for over ten years of an embryonic phase for this sector, the reality is that food hypermarkets are finding it difficult to compete with small outlets and are facing numerous difficulties. Ardis closed its two large hypermarkets, while Uno continues to sell off its space. Carrefour is managing to hold out by concentrating on imported products 'private label brand', targeting the upper middle class and affluent consumers. Finally, Family Shop is enjoying success thanks to a strategy focused on leisure and services.

The causes of the slow development of the retail sector have been studied by a number of researchers (Ghidouche & Nouiri, 2013; Lammali & Hammoui, 2018; Mouhoub & Djedidi, 2021; Guennouche, 2023). Most of them agree on one determining factor: the environmental factor, which highlights informal practices and invoicing, thus contributing to the effect of unfair competition. In contrast, few researchers have examined the importance of managerial strategies based on positioning.

Defining a brand's positioning is an essential tool for establishing its unique identity and differentiating it from its competitors, as it is closely linked to the creation of a competitive advantage. Given the lack of previous research on the subject, we are conducting an exploratory study among the managers, owner-managers and experts of food retail brands in Oran, in order to gain a better understanding of their positioning. This research will enable us to understand *how the major retailers perceive their own positioning in the Oran market?*

The aim of this research is to identify the characteristics and distinctive elements specific to each brand, in order to understand their positioning and to understand and analyse their development strategy based on the results of the interviews. These characteristics must be sufficiently motivating for the target (Benoun & Héliès-Hassid, 2003, p. 246), enabling each brand to occupy an original place in the consumer's mind. Our second objective is to understand the development strategies of each retail brand. In addition, the distinctive elements are seen as attributes of retailing mix variables, also referred to as strategic action variables, which play a key role in the construction and implementation of brand differentiation and attractiveness strategies.

2.Product positioning versus store positioning

Positioning has received a great deal of attention over the last decade and has become a highly influential marketing management paradigm (Saqib, 2021, P.141). It is a key concept in marketing that makes it possible to respond to a crowded market offer. It was not until 1969 that two American researchers, Trout and Ries, addressed the concept of positioning for the first time in the marketing literature (Jara, 2005). (Saqib, 2021, P.143) proposes an encompassing definition of positioning as a strategy aimed at finding the desired consumer perception of the product or brand and to fill an empty space in the minds of target customers by creating and communicating a distinct image that differentiates its unique position from that of its competitors in order to gain a competitive advantage in the market. The positioning strategy was transposed to the retail sector by Tigert in 1983 (Schultz, 2013, P.82) and its strategic formulation is similar to that of the retail sector. However, it has some specific features in terms of competition, image and means of expression (Benoun & Héliès-Hassid, 2003, P.246). While product positioning is considered to be a complex task which requires in-depth reflection (Ostaseviciulé & Sliburyté, 2008,P .101), the positioning of a sales outlet is more complex because it is not limited solely to the product offering, but also focuses on decisions relating to merchandise, decisions concerning the store formats and environment of the sales outlet, decisions concerning customer services and, finally, decisions relating to communication with

customers (Dabija & Abrudan, 2008,P.87), (Devlin et al, 2003, P. 654). However, the specific characteristics of positioning differ between these two contexts. (Levy & Weitz, 2001) define positioning as the design and implementation of a retail mix to create an image of the retailer in the mind of the customer relative to its competitors. The same principle is applied to retail, where positioning is carried out in a decentralised way because the environment of the store is diversified. This key concept is a valuable tool for establishing a unique identity and distinguishing it from its rivals. This differentiation takes place at two levels (Schultz, 2013, P.83): competitors in the same sector and competitors in other sectors. Positioning strategies are reflected and implemented across the company's marketing mix, (Butt, 2010, P.183) argues that the impact of positioning now extends to all elements of the marketing mix, rather than just advertising. Recent work on positioning in the retail sector has shown that in order to capture more market share, it is essential to create a retail concept and differentiated sales models for different customer segments (Smigielska & Stefanska, 2017, PP 376-377). and this cannot be achieved if positioning has not been introduced.

Michael Porter's approach, with its three generic strategies (cost domination, differentiation, focus), is useful for general strategic analysis but has limitations in addressing the positioning of food superstores. This is because mass retailing, particularly food superstores, operates according to specific dynamics that exceed traditional competition models (Smigielska & Stefańska, 2013). Kotler and (Levy & Weitz, 2012) highlight the importance of assortment management, location, pricing, and creating high-value customer experiences, which are crucial for understanding retail positioning. Unlike Porter's strategies, which often emphasize cost-focused competition, retail positioning strategies are more nuanced and must incorporate various elements of the commercial mix, including services, assortment, location, layout, merchandising, price, and communication (Kalboussi, 2014, p. 75). (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004) discuss modern retail approaches that stress differentiation through customer service, shelf layout, and adaptation to local specifics. These factors render Porter's framework inadequate for the complexities of food superstores, where positioning strategies need to focus on

customer satisfaction and value creation through the service offer and customer experience, key factors according to the authors specializing in retailing.

3. Methodological framework

Although there is little research on large-scale distribution in Algeria, no study has been found on positioning, despite its important role in the management of the retailer's marketing programme.

The aim of our study is to examine the trajectory of food retailers in Oran, focusing on their managerial orientation in terms of positioning. More specifically, it attempts to present the identification and differentiation factors, as well as the development strategy of the food retail brand in Oran.

3.1. Data collection method

We have opted for an exploratory approach based on a multiple case study, selecting three food retail brands in order to overcome the constraint linked to the limited number of cases studied. The aim of this decision was to gather the information needed to apply the principle of comparison across the various elements collected. Each case represents a field of exploration, also considered to be a field of research in its own right. We have examined a wide range of cases, and the choice of these case studies is based on several selection criteria: some are linked to the conditions under which supermarkets are established in Algeria[1], while others, which we consider to be significant, are presented as follows:

-A strong retail brand represents a retailer's potential to expand its network of stores (Fleck & Nabec, 2010, p. 19). All the retail brand presented have at least two outlets, with formats varying between supermarkets (500-2500 m²) and convenience store (120-500 m²).

-The age of the store is considered an important piece of information for exploring the positioning of the retail brand. In our case, we have both young and very old chains, which provides a more complete and nuanced analysis

[1] "Executive Decree No. 12.111 of March 6, 2012, Official Journal, March 2012."

of the retail brand's positioning.

-The stores of retail brand are located either close to or in the city centre, which requires more distinct elements of differentiation.

In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the retail brand, each case has been anonymised using a unique code detailed in the table below:

Table 1: Presentation of the case studies

Case studies	Store type	Sales area	Location in relation to the city centre	The age of the store
A	Supermarket 1	600 m^2	5km away	3 years
	Big supermarket 2	2000m^2	8km away	3 years
	Convenience store	< 500m^2	5km away	4 years
B	Supermarket 1	1400 m^2	5km away	20 years
	Supermarket 2	3000m^2	4,5km away	3 years
C	Supermarket 1	1200 m^2	City centre	24 years
	Convenience store	< 500m^2	City centre	/

Source: Created by the author

In order to comply with the established selection criteria, we decided to exclude the fourth case study, as it did not meet the floor area criterion « 450 m^2 », even though it had the characteristics of a supermarket in terms of significant customer flow, generated thanks to its strategy based on its 'town centre' location and attractive prices.

3.2 Characteristics of the participants and presentation of the interviews

Following the selection of cases for analysis, individual semi-structured interviews, based on open-ended questions, were conducted using an unstructured interview guide. The design of each interview was intended to encourage dynamic interaction and promote a natural exchange of conversation without blocking (Thiethard & al, 2014, p. 275). However, the order in which these questions are addressed may vary according to the progress of the interview and the words of the interviewee, who may raise certain subjects on his or her own initiative. Thanks to this freedom granted to respondents, it is possible to adjust the questions according to the answers obtained and to discover new leads. In line with our research objectives, we targeted the owners and managers of the retail brand, with whom we conducted 06 interviews in addition to two other interviews with experts in

the sector from 22 July 2024 until the end of the same month. In all, a sample of 8 informants was selected, representing three food retail brands. The interviews were all conducted face-to-face and lasted between 17 minutes and 61 minutes, with an average duration of 36 minutes. In the interests of confidentiality, we have undertaken not to reveal the identity of the informants, assigning each of them a code corresponding to the case studies mentioned above. Details of the interviewees' profiles are given in this table:

Table 2: Summary of interviewee profiles

Interview code	Occupied post	Gender	Experience in the Field of Commerce	Age	Duration of the interview
A1	Owner-manager	Men	12 years	30 years	27minutes
A2	Owner-manager	Men	> 4years	38 years	37minutes
A3	Manager	Men	20 years	40 years	16minutes
B1	Owner-manager	Men	20 years	47 years	28minutes
C1	Manager	Women	23 years	52 years	30minutes
C2	Manager	Men	8 years	43 years	25minutes
E1	Salesperson	Men	30 years	53 years	37minutes
E2	Wholesaler	Men	10 years	40 years	61minutes

Source: created by the author

The interview guide we developed included questions on the brand's positioning, its future development, its target market and the offer that corresponds to it, based on elements of the retailing mix such as the product offer, prices, services, shop layout, staff and means of communication.

To collect the data, we took notes and wrote down all the information expressed by the participants, with the assistance of someone close to them to avoid forgetting anything. Analysis of the interviews was based on a horizontal thematic approach, in line with the exploratory objective of this qualitative research, which identifies differences and similarities between the cases (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016). We began by transcribing all the interviews in text format. Each transcribed interview was processed and structured independently. We then identified and organised the corpus according to the key elements sought in this study, which made it possible to identify key themes in the participants' responses. This approach enabled us to develop an

in-depth understanding of positioning, particularly with regard to the elements that identify and differentiate retail brands.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The elements of identification and differentiation of food retail brands

The positioning of the brands mentioned above is referred to as desired positioning, which refers to the way in which the company wishes to position itself in the mind of the consumer. It must stand out from rivals and be in line with customer expectations (Schultz, 2013). An analysis of the verbatim comments of the bosses and managers of the three brands reveals the identification criteria for each of them.

4.1.1. Retail brand « A »

This brand only appeared a few years ago, but it is already well known on the market thanks to its reputation: « *Brand A is not old on the market, but it is well known thanks to its three stores in strategic locations* » **E2.** The three brothers are very involved young people, working side by side with the employees, the secret of success in the superstores: « *the Liper brand closed after a brief absence of its owner-managers* » **E2.** The criteria for determining retail brand A are identified in the following table:

Table 3: The elements of identification of retail brand « A »

Identification elements	Verbatim
To be a reference in the market	*"We've worked for years to get people to advertise us", "Outside, if you ask anyone to take you to us, they'll do it easily because we're known by everyone"* ***A2***
High turnover of goods	*"We have a principle: anything on display sells"* ***A2***
Reliability and commitment to the customer	*"We are known for our transparency and our desire to establish a relationship of trust with our customers"* ***A2***
Wide choice of products and plenty of space	*«We have Variety, price and availability », "We have over 25,000 items"* ***A1***
Supporting consumers' economic situation	*"Customers buy products at a low price, often on special offer and with a loyalty card"****A2****"the price is already reduced and our margin is symbolic, sometimes it doesn't exceed 1% or 0.75%»* ***A1***

Advantageous offer	*« If a customer buys in large quantities, he or she benefits from discounts", "We base ourselves on promotions, every day there are promotions" A3 "Every weekend, we propose promotional offers and we require suppliers to take »* ***A2***
Being the first destination for the price	*« When a supplier decides to sell his goods, he comes to us, because he knows that we can sell them easily thanks to our small margins"**A3**"here, every day promotion»* ***A2***
Listening to customers	*« I'm always ready to listen to what customers have to say, and we welcome any comments they may have»* ***A2***

Source: Created by the author

4.1.2. Retail Brand « B »

Case study B has a dual target: the first concerns ordinary wage earners and low-income consumers. The second is aimed at satisfying customers looking for quality products, which are generally imported: « *Wealthy customers do exist in Oran, but they are not all looking for top-of-the-range products; there are wealthy people looking for good deals and bargains »* **E1**.

The criteria for determining brand B are identified in the following table:

Table 4: The elements of identification of the retail brand « B »

Identification elements	Verbatim
Protecting brand equity	*"The image of our shop is our added value"* ***B1***
To be a market leader	*"We always try to be the first, I think we have the best prices "**B1***
A diversified offer for all social classes	*« Our aim is to satisfy all social classes as a target", "We bring back certain shopping bag products to satisfy and develop the loyalty of customers who live in upmarket areas »* ***B1***
Efficient merchandising	*"At the exit in front of the checkouts, we display children's items"*
Building internal and external customer loyalty	*« We also offer vouchers to our employees and our customers » B**1***
Meeting customer expectations	*"Customers are looking for the right offers: promotions »* ***B1***
Respect and recognition for staff	*"I'm not going to tell you that my staff are the best, but we don't have any problems with customers", "I personally work with them", "We're not here to look down on anyone"... "We have employees with over 10 years' experience"* ***B1***
Efficient working method	*It's not to brag, we have a good working method "B1*

Source: Created by the author

4.1.3. Retail brand « C »

Case study 3 is the oldest brand in Oran city centre. This brand has two floors and was the first to be equipped with a lift. At the time, it was much more than a simple sales outlet; it was a real hub of activity, bringing together clothing, electrical goods, crockery, toys, cosmetics and food all under the same roof at reduced prices. This observation has nothing to do with the current situation of hypermarkets located in shopping centres « *which now seem to be perceived as places for strolling around, rather than as places where you can really enjoy a shopping experience, despite the efforts made in terms of merchandising and range »* **E1.** Retail brand **C** is known by the elements shown in the table below:

Table 5: The elements of identification of the retail brand « C »

identification elements	**Verbatim**
Celebrate different events	*"We celebrate the shop's anniversary every year with the participation of our suppliers, we offer gifts to our customers, this year we offered 90 gifts", "We offer crockery at wholesale prices for the whole month before Ramadan", "We offer a sheep for our customers on the occasion of the Eid feast every year "**C1**.*
Against expensive life	*"We offer low prices for people on low incomes"," it's in the interest of poor people to buy from us because we have the right prices " **C2**; "Our sales margin doesn't exceed 10%" **C1***
Build customer loyalty	*"Some customers have had loyalty cards since 2004" **C2***
Reliability and transparency	*"99% of the time we're the best, we're honest with our customers" "We don't lower one price to raise another like competitors do **C1***
Variety of product ranges	*« "Customers come here to buy everything: clothes, crockery, household appliances, cosmetics, toys, food, etc. "**C1***
Adapt to the characteristics of the catchment area	*Here, we target the poor, the working class, whereas in the 2nd shop, our target is customers with an income of> 10,000 Da, " products can work well in this shop but don't work in the other" **C2**, "here, we work until 8.00 pm every day except Friday, but in the 2ème shop, we work every day and close at midnight" **C2***
Customer listening	*"When a customer asks for an item that we don't have in shop, we make a note of it and do our best to get it for them" **C2**.*

Source: Created by the author

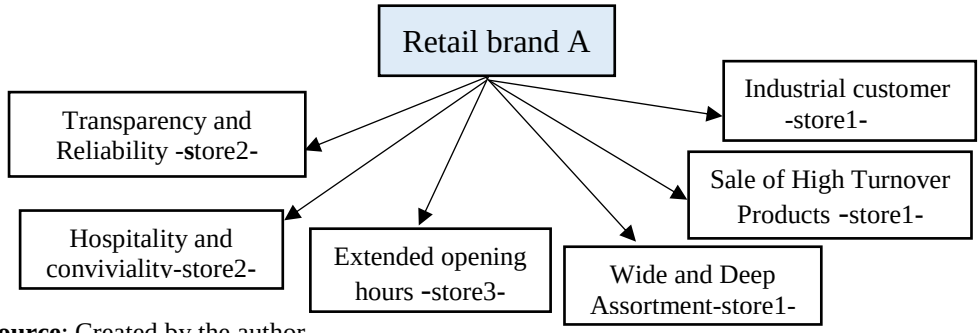
4.2 The elements of differentiation of retail brands:

Pontier explained that to occupy a specific place in the consumer's mind and motivate his target, it is essential to develop a set of distinctive features specific to retail brand, so as to differentiate itself from competitors (Kalboussi, 2014, P 75).

4.2.1. Retail brand « A »

For the first case study, the retailing mix strategy is very different between the three stores. The first store stands out for its wide and deep assortment and the sale of fast-moving products at low prices. However, « *the aesthetic and hygiene aspects are not up to scratch because of the constant flow of customers* » A1. As for the second store, it is based on the principle of satisfying its customers through a warm welcome from its staff, as well as transparency in the messages passed on to consumers, particularly with regard to prices and product availability: « *our motto is price, reliability and a good quality welcome »* **A2.** The figure below details the differentiation criteria of retail brand A.

Figure 1: The differentiating elements of retail brand « A »



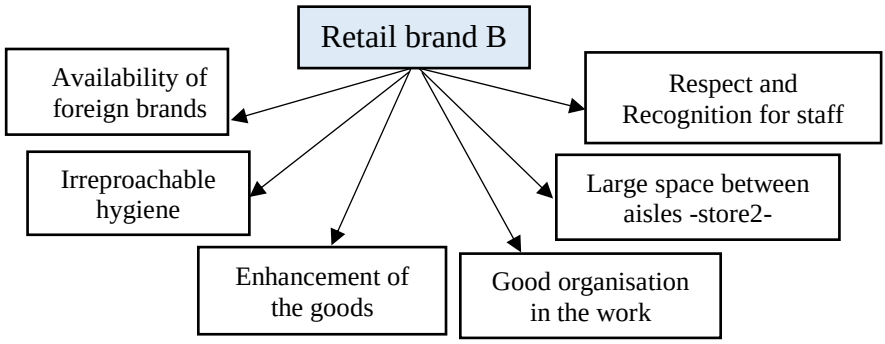
Source: Created by the author

The passage describes the distinctive features of chain A's first large supermarket, which offers a wide variety of fast-moving products, including bulk items for both individual and organizational customers. The second shop differentiates itself through transparency and consistency between its marketing messages and actual offerings, as well as emphasizing the staff's role in providing a welcoming experience. The third shop is notable for its extended opening hours, operating 24/7, which is particularly impressive for a convenience store.

4.2.2. Retail brand «B»

Has two sales stores, the first of which opened 20 years ago, whereas: '*Small shops close after 5 or 6 years*' E2. The second store, which opened recently, is much larger. This configuration enables it to offer a wider range of products while providing more space between the aisles, thus overcoming the main constraint observed in the first store**.** The retail brand is known for its professionalism: « *We have a good strategy and organisation at work* » **B2**. What sets it apart from its competitors, however, is the availability of imported products, which attract the wealthy from Oran: « *We bring back certain products from shopping bags to satisfy and build loyalty among customers who live in upmarket neighbourhoods, despite the small quantities involved* » **B1**. The owner has also realised that the key to success is the staff: « *Customers come to us because they feel comfortable with the staff* » **B1**.
The distinctive features of the brand B are as follows:

Figure 2: The differentiating elements of retail brand « B »



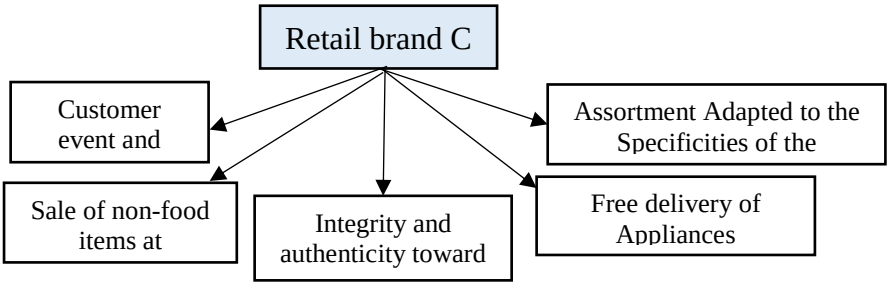
Source: Created by the author

The passage describes the main elements of differentiation in Case Study B, which includes two sales areas. Key aspects include the availability of foreign brands that attract customers seeking diversity and quality. The store emphasizes impeccable hygiene and merchandise presentation for a satisfying shopping experience. Additionally, the respect for staff and effective work organization reflects the brand's commitment to operational efficiency. A notable feature of the second sales area, recently opened at 3,000 m², is the increased space between aisles, designed to enhance customer comfort and facilitate movement within the store.

4.2.3. Retail brand «C»

In its first store, this brand specifically targets working-class employees and consumers, as well as the poor, by offering them a diversified range of products - clothing, school supplies, household appliances and so on - at wholesale prices: « *Our customers benefit from reduced prices thanks to the imports we provide* » **C1**, « *our store offers the best prices on the market* » **C2**. In contrast, the second store recently opened caters to a different customer base, with a different product quality. This new unit therefore seems to target a more affluent category of consumers, offering a range and shopping experience tailored to their specific expectations: « *In the second store, the target is different, as is the quality of the products »* **C2.** This superstore stands out from its competitors through its regular efforts to attract and retain customers. The retail brand has been celebrating the shop's anniversary since its creation, and celebrates religious holidays by organising tombola for the benefit of customers. This is becoming a regular feature, much appreciated and often eagerly awaited by shoppers. The retail brand has a good image and stands out from its competitors through its recurring initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining customers. Every year, they celebrate the anniversary of its shop opening, and regularly organises tombola on the occasion of the main religious holidays, for the benefit of its customers. These events, which are now a regular feature of the store, are much appreciated and often eagerly awaited by shoppers. Thanks to these practices and the family's reputation, the retail superstore has been able to build up a very positive image with its customers, setting itself apart from its rivals on the market : « *The owners of this retail brand are a family that is highly regarded by the people of Oran, as evidenced by the fact that they have been in existence for 25 years "the oldest" and they are in the process of preparing to open a new store, but this time without floors »* E2. The distinctive features of this case are shown in the figure below:

Figure 3: The differentiating elements of retail brand « C »



Source: Created by the author

Case study figure C outlines the brand's key differentiating elements, including organizing events to foster customer loyalty and selling non-food items at wholesale prices to provide economic benefits. It emphasizes the importance of trust in customer relationships, highlighting the integrity and authenticity of customers. Additionally, the brand offers free delivery of appliances, enhancing its service value. Finally, the product assortment is tailored to the local characteristics of the catchment area

4.3 Retail brand development strategy

Several authors have proposed solutions for developing retail brand, Whether in terms of the physical aspect or in terms of product and service offering.

4.3.1. Multiformat and Multiplication

We note that the retail brands studied are all multi-format, comprising large supermarkets, small supermarkets and mini-markets. Retail Brand B has no plans to open new stores, having already expanded recently. On the other hand, the two brothers who own the supermarkets under retail brand A are planning to open new hypermarket-like stores, even though they are only 2500m², in size, despite the fact that they have only recently been opened. Retail Brand C, meanwhile, has plans to open a large supermarket with no upper storey, and these plans are due to come to fruition shortly.

« *We have a desire to multiply the number of shops in the future, with the same strategy as we are adopting now, we can go far* » **A2**, « We have a project to open another superstore without a storey offering several products » **C1**, « *We are going to open another superstore but without storeys* » **C2**. « *Despite the many difficulties imposed by the State, I intend to open other superstores in future* » **A1**.

As far as names are concerned, all the stores use the name of the retail brand followed by the name of the place where they are located, which is known as a single-brand strategy. Unlike the others, the owner of the large supermarket under retail brand name A has chosen to call his store 'hypermarket'.

4.3.2. Adaptation or standardisation

The brands we studied adopt different management strategies:

- The first brand consists of a large supermarket, another medium-sized supermarket and a mini-market. These three outlets are managed by three brothers, each of whom manages his sales area independently, according to his target customer base, his desired positioning, and the specific characteristics of the shop format. They also take into account various elements of the retailing mix, such as price, range and services offered. This brand has acquired the three outlets of the leading local food retailer in Algeria. It should be noted that, to a certain extent, the shop location variable was tolerated rather than actually chosen.

« Our prices are more interesting than those displayed by our second store »" ***A1****.*
« We are open 7 days a week until 10:30 PM, while our convenience store operates 24 hours a day » ***A2****.*

- The second retail brand has been in operation for more than 20 years, while its second large area opened three years ago, with an area of 3000 m^2 (ground floor + 1 floor). Although the two surfaces are directed by the same owner - manager, the second has a wider assortment and more space between the aisle.

- The third retail brand has two sales areas: the first, which exists since 2001 and is located in the city centre, and the second, smaller, opened a few years ago. The management and organization of the two stores differs significantly due to their respective targets and locations. The first area aims to satisfy lower classes and low-income customers by offering common products. However, the second surface is located in an area (LPP) where clients receive a salary of more than 10,000 DA per month as noted by the two verbatim managers:

*« The products offered in our second outlet are of superior quality, we have offered quality products that are slightly more expensive compared to what we sell here »****C2.***

4.3.3. Price and promotion

All retail brands strive to adopt strategies that allow them to offer low prices. Generally, it is by purchasing in large quantities and negotiating with suppliers that these brands manage to reduce prices. Mastery of the supply chain constitutes a competitive advantage that retail giants like Walmart rely on (Benaboud & Abdelmajid, 2022, p. 785). In Algeria, retail brands do not go through a central purchasing office (Nouri & Ghidouche, 2013, p. 25), which forces distribution actors to turn to buying large lots from suppliers to lower both purchase prices and selling prices:

"We negotiate with suppliers the purchase prices" ***A2****, "The secret of these low prices is to buy very large quantities to benefit from the discounts", "We sell the quantity at a small margin: we sell 3 oil strips instead of a pallet with a margin of 3da / unit, it's the discount format, even products with a close expiry date, they are liquidated in the space of 2 days"* ***A3****. "I buy cheaper to sell cheaper"* ***A1****.*
"We import non-food products; school and beach gear, crockery, clothes) and we sell them directly to consumers at wholesale prices", "impossible for another competitor to sell for less than us" C2."There are certain products that we sell with their purchase price to help consumers such as infant milk and adult diapers" B1, "What can satisfy a consumer the most is the price" ***E1.***

Regarding promotions, retail brands use daily postings on their social media pages to announce their new products and highlight items on sale. These promotional offers generate strong interest among customers, who take advantage of attractive prices to fill the baskets, including with impulse purchase:

"Thanks to promotions, we offer everyday low price" ***A2***
"Customers are looking for promotions" B1 "We offer products on a promotion during the weekend and it lasts 3 days" ***C1****. "It's with promotions that we attract customers, once he arrived at the store, he made other purchases"* ***A1***

4.3.4. Service approach and animation

The provision of services in the retail sector is of crucial importance to attract new customers and retain those already acquired. In Algeria, this offer remains limited, especially in the areas of online sales and home delivery. In general, the services offered by the brands studied are considered standard, including acceptance of returns and refunds, subject to

presentation of the receipt within the time allowed by the brand or make available scanners glued to the walls. As an exception, retail brand **A** stands out from the rest by opening a convenience store that is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, while retail brand **C** offers free delivery of its household appliances to customers in downtown Oran**:**

"*The delivery of household appliances is free in the city of Oran*" C2 "*We are open 7 days a week until 10:30 p.m., while our mini-market operates 24 hours a day to meet the needs of customers who prefer to shop at midnight*" A2

➢ **Events:** in all food sales stores, there are animators, generally recruited by suppliers to promote their new products such as tasting. They also present attractive offers, such as packs, freebies or raffles, allowing customers to win gifts or vouchers:

"*The suppliers handle the animations: tastings, raffles to attract customers,"* ***A3.*** *"We have tastings, animations, and raffles every weekend; we require suppliers to run promotions like 'buy 1, get 1 free' for the benefit of the customer,"* ***A2****. "It is under our guidance that suppliers organize their animations in our store and offer gifts to winning customers. We ensure that every customer receives their gift,"* **C1**.

5. Conclusion

Initial analysis of interviews with 08 participants reveals that the strategies of the three distribution brands in Oran are based on:

-An adaptation strategy to the selected target: retail brands A and C (first surface) address the working class and low-income households by offering them a variety of current products at reduced prices. On the other hand, case B offers, within a single area, articles for the wealthy as well as others adapted to the working class. In addition, in its first sales area, Retail brand C offers current products at low prices for employees and people with low incomes, while offering, in its second space, better quality products to meet the needs of its catchment area.

- Retailers adopt a policy of low prices (promotion), known as EDLP "Every Day Low Price », which they strive to maintain on a daily basis. This

approach, implemented by the US giant Walmart, mainly targets middle- and low-income customers, giving it a significant competitive advantage that clearly distinguishes it from its rivals (Benaboud & Abdelmajid, 2022, p. 785). Indeed, all the brands are trying to position themselves first and foremost in relation to prices, which has triggered a price war. Subsequently, they explore other elements of differentiation to stand out from competitors.

Positioning only makes sense if distinctive elements are present. However, it is noteworthy that it is implemented differently within the stores of the same Retail brand. (Pontier,1988, p..) emphasizes that this variation results from the diversity of retail environments and the managers' desire to add their personal touch to the sales space options they oversee, leading to a decentralization of positioning at the local level. This logic is evident in the three brands, which distinguish themselves in the following ways:

The first store of retail brand A is notable for its wide assortment of fast-moving products, while the second store emphasizes the integrity of its social media messages and a welcoming staff. Retail brand B focuses on the quality of its offerings, including "imported" products, store layout, and hygiene, highlighting its visual identity (Bauhain-Roux & Lacoeuilhe, 1999, p. 18). Retail brand C aims to present a variety of products with the slogan "everything under the same roof at a reduced price" for its first store, while the second store seeks to be recognized for offering superior quality products. Several managerial implications may be present:

- Contribution Related to the Pricing Strategy of Retail Brands:

All major retailers first position themselves in relation to price by adopting a strategy based on bulk purchasing, with negotiated rates and services. Retailers could consider solutions to further lower prices by joining forces to create purchasing centres, as well as sourcing directly from producers. This alliance could lead to the production of private label brands (PLB), thereby strengthening the connection with consumers**.**

- Contribution to improving a shopping experience:

Michael Porter, through his generic strategies, has emphasized the importance of focusing on attributes other than price to differentiate oneself

from competitors (Benaboud & Abdelmajid, 2022, P 781). The major distributors choose other elements to stand out. In this case, these are the 'non-price' variables such as hospitality, reliability, variety, product quality and design, as well as services. Although the range of services is limited, in-store entertainment is essential to allow consumers to have pleasant shopping experiences. Animation has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Generally, it is supported by suppliers and can take different forms, such as music, decoration, games, or inviting influencers and content creators, as is done in large retail abroad. With little marketing effort, retailers can also think of different forms of animation to create a beautiful store image.

- Contribution related to spatial development strategy:

« *Oran is an economic and tourist hub that attracts more foreign investors than the capital. Therefore, in a few years, it is estimated that the retail sector will develop through the establishment of large stores »* **B1**. Most retailers plan to open new outlets of less than 2500 m² in peripheral areas in the city-centre of Oran, especially in emerging sectors like AKID Lotfi. The commercial landscape is undergoing significant transformation, in line with the housing programs proposed by the state, such as AADL, LPP, LPA, and social projects. It is therefore imperative to prepare for a business architecture in the coming years**.**

Limits: the results of this exploratory research have led us to recognize the limitations of our study. First limit: Although we conducted a multi-case type survey that generated a wealth of information, we were unable to supplement it with secondary data from internal or external information to improve the speeches resulting from the interviews. Since communication conveys the positioning of the retail brand, it was essential to verify whether the desired positioning corresponded with the messages conveyed by the retail brand to consumers through the different communication channels. Second limit: We have only understood the positioning from one point of view, whereas it is essential that it be deepened by a parallel study:

- A study of the position disseminated (interviews with staff)

-A study of the positioning perceived by consumers (image of the store), thus integrating the different facets of the retailing mix, because the real positioning takes place in the consumer’s mind.

The limitations of this work, along with the results obtained from this research, open up new avenues to explore. This exploratory approach should be followed by the development of a quantitative study with a measurement scale for the image of the brand as perceived by customers, integrating the six facets of the retailing mix.

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