Thai Consumers’ Brand Preference towards Pepsi Max and Coke Zero
A Qualitative Study

Ms. Warintorn Phanickul

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Business Administration in Marketing
Graduate School of Business
Assumption University
Academic Year 2008
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A QUALITATIVE STUDY

By

WARINTORN PHANICHKUL

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

Brand positioning is being increasingly used by marketers to influence consumers to change their preferences toward their brands. Brand positioning is an attempt to create a customer-focused value proposition that gives consumers a convincing reason to buy the focal brand. However, the use of certain positioning strategies (e.g. attribute positioning) may not be adequate or appropriate to all types of circumstances (i.e. different product categories). (Christoph Fuchs and Adamantios Diamantopoulos, 2007)

Therefore the purpose of this research aims to explore as well as to extend the actual positioning (consumers form their perception based on the positioning information actually presented to them), which is considered as the main tool for building brand’s position. The chosen topic is consumers’ perception toward two diet cola brands (Pepsi Max and Coke Zero). The research used real TVCs (TV commercials), posters, packaging and other kind of communications i.e. print ads, posters, POS (point of sales materials) as stimuli in our study.

On the independent variables are product class specific, advertisement specific and socio demographic. While for the dependent variables are conceptualizing positioning effectiveness (brand favorability, differentiation and credibility). The researcher feels that the measurement for dependent variables are still too generalized and thus attempts to further investigate by using a qualitative research – focused groups method to derived at the outcome.

Qualitative focus group has been used in this study as it allows the researcher to have a deeper dive into the consumers’ mind in order to determine their source, feeling, and perception.

The difference has been found based on user profiles, i.e. heavy CSD users, NCB users and Diet-cola users. This research focuses on how each profile views each category and whether it is relevant to them or not. Consumers also view that there are differences on brand positioning for Pepsi Max and Coke Zero. Thus other attributes in measuring positioning has been added to the based protocol.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My journey has ended beautifully after a very long waiting period.

I wish to acknowledge the great guidance and commitment of my thesis advisor, Dr. Charnchai Athichitskul, who has helped me to achieve at this very high note. I also greatly appreciate the thesis committee who has provided me in valuable comments and suggestions, namely Dr. Sirion Chaipourirutana, Dr. Chittipa Ngamkroekjoti, and Dr. Ismail Ali Siad.

I would like to express my appreciation to Vitamins Consulting & Research Ltd. colleagues for their emotional support and to those who provide hands-on assistance and have their interest in the topic.

Last but not the least, to my dad, mom and my sister who have always supported me through the tough times I had in getting it complete. The wait is over. Now I can sing “I'm free..... free falling” at the top of my lungs!

Warintorn Phanichkul
August 2010
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CHAPTER I

GENERALITIES OF THE STUDY

This chapter consists of seven sections. There are introduction of the study, statement of the problems, research objectives, scope of the research, limitations of the research, significance of the study, definition of terms, and abbreviation.

1.1 Introduction of the Study

Consumers’ brand preference is very important to marketers because consumers are face with so many choices in the market everyday thus marketers always have to be updated with the changes in consumer trends and lifestyles in order to maintain existing consumers as well as recruiting new ones. This does not only apply in Thai market, it applies to all over the world.

Brand Preference is a big term it involves attributes such as self concept, personal values, symbolic meaning, brand personality, demographic factors and psychographic factors. Arora and Stoner, (2009) says brand personality recognizes the symbolic and emotional meaning that taps consumer appeal and affects purchase decisions. An ever-growing and diverse range of entities has centered attention on brand personality as a means to distinguish products and services.

Advertising and promotions provide the introduction and familiarity of a product and brand to the consumers. Building brand preference and loyalty is another step for marketers as it is being considered as another hard step for consumers to prefer a brand over another when they are faced with so many choices on a daily basis. Several researches found that consumers buyer almost always approach the
marketplace with a well-established set of tastes and preferences (Alreck and Settle, 1999). Only very rarely do they make completely spontaneous impulse purchases.

Jamal and Goode (2001) says products are not consumed only for product attributes that yield particular benefits but also how it signifies the symbolic meaning to consumers. This was confirmed by a study of Bhat and Reddy (1998) who reported that brands have both functional as well as symbolic significance for consumers.

Salciuviene, Ghauri, Mockaitis and Matto (2009) says companies that match their brand image to consumer values will more easily attain a competitive advantage over those that do not. They also further explain that a brand’s image creates associations with a consumer’s culture and his/her daily surroundings; managers need to know and understand those particular brand associations that best appeal to their consumers with respect to their values.

People make choices everyday from a very basic thing, such as just to pick a bottle of water from the chilled refrigerator at a convenient store, consumers are face with price promotion, packaging design, and the benefit from drinking from a particular brand, and size. These are always operating at consumers’ sub-conscious level. Many times consumers cannot describe their thorough feelings of why they picked up a particular brand and not the other. It is very interesting to see what actually influences people’s choice and how one brand became a preferred brand of choice over another.

This research use Thailand as a context to elaborate how consumers’ brand preference towards Pepsi Max and Coke Zero.

Thus, the researcher would like to take into account demographic factors, psychographic factors, brand image and self concept as the starting point. The
researcher is keen to determine how these attributes may have influenced the brand preference of a consumer.

This research focuses on Thai consumers’ brand preference towards Pepsi Max and Coke Zero. The following section will explain how Pepsi Max and Coke Zero came to Thailand market.

1.1.1 How Pepsi Max came from Global to Thailand?

Since 1994, Pepsi Max was launched in Thailand to capture the share in the segment of no-sugar cola. At the time there was only Coke Light, who was considered to be a small player. Pepsi used its mother brand in creating the name for Pepsi Max. The strategies at the time were ‘o calorie, Max Taste’. Very quickly Pepsi Max was the only leader in the segment where competitors could not compete. Many years from then Pepsi Max still holds the number one share in this segment however in 2007 the number one rank was being shake hard by its competitor.

In 2007, Carbonated Soft Drinks (CSDs) all over the world has experienced a decrease in sales as resulted from the trend of healthy lifestyle. Consumers are shifting themselves away from carbonated soft drinks to something that is perceived to be more nutritious. According to Pepsi Co.’s 2007 Annual Report, “In Asia, new marketing drove double-digit growth in non-sugar colas in virtually all markets… particularly in China and Thailand” (Michael D. White, Vice Chairman, PepsiCo, 2008) (www.pepsico.com/HTML/Annual-Reports/2007/index.html accessed on Sep 23, 2008).

Pepsi already has its alternative CSD in non-sugar cola in the market which is Pepsi Max, launched in 1994, while Coke has Coke Light or sometimes being referred
1.1.2 How Coke Zero came from Global to Thailand?

Coke Zero was Coca-Cola's biggest product launch in 22 years. It is primarily marketed towards young adult male and has even been nicknamed "Bloke Coke". The launch started in Norway, in October 2006. In U.S., advertising has been tailored to its targeted market by describing the drink as "calorie-free" rather than "diet", since young adult males are said to associate diet drinks with women. U.S marketing has also emphasized its similarity in taste to sugared Coca-Cola through a 2007 U.S. viral marketing campaign that suggested the company's executives were so angry over the drinks' similarities they were considering suing their coworkers for "taste infringement".

According to the "health trend", Coca-Cola in Thailand without a doubt launched its Coke Zero in May 2007 in order to gain share from the non-sugar cola category which there are no other players except Pepsi Max. Since the launch of Coke Zero in Thailand, the non-sugar colas market has become more dynamic. We can see that both Coke Zero and Pepsi Max have done full scale marketing campaign competing against each other in order to gain the market share and to become the leader in the non-sugar colas category (www.positioningmag.com/magazine/Details.aspx?id=61719 accessed on Oct 27, 2008).
Thai Market Situations

Many businesses have stiffer competition worldwide because of changes in consumer’s new brand preference. Therefore, international businesses especially in the beverage industry create greater competitive advantage in terms of communication technology strategy and research & development activities. A good example of this was when Coke Zero launched in Thailand. They came up with a very big campaign idea of ‘Real Coke Taste, 0 Sugar’. The marketing strategy was ‘Lifestyle Experiential Activation’. This is another new way in marketing, a break from all the traditional marketing that has been done in the past.

Focusing on lifestyle activities and lifestyle products to tap into its target market. Sponsoring what so called ‘in trend’ events. Sampling troops in Khaosan Area was all dressed in black and was on a motorcycle giving out free samples to passerby.

Among the Cola brands in Thailand, there are only two brands to focus on, which are Pepsi Max and Coke Zero. The sources of domestic market are shared from PEPSICO Beverages International and from Manager On-line (www.gotomanager.com/news/details.aspx?id=71963 and 71444 accessed on Oct 27, 2008). The current situation of the market is summarized in the table below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pepsi Max</th>
<th>Coke Zero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Launched</strong></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>May 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td>0 calorie, Max Taste</td>
<td>Real Coke Taste, 0 Sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peak Sales period</strong></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Sep 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30% increase in sales volume</td>
<td>Top 5 selling product in Modern Trade channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Re-launched</strong></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td>Pepsi Max 0 calorie, Fullest Sensory</td>
<td>Gen Zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market Share</strong></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Business Year 2007)</td>
<td></td>
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**Table 1.1** Pepsi Max and Coke Zero Market Summary


Figure 1.1 (Page 7) describes the 2007 market share of no-sugar category carbonated soft drinks (CSD) segmented by cola brands in Thailand. The 80% highest market share is captured by the two biggest brands, 43% belongs to Coke Zero while 37% to Pepsi Max.
**Figure 1.1** Market share of no-sugar carbonated beverage business year 2007, segmented by brand in Thailand

![Market share chart](chart.png)

**Source:** Marketeer Magazine, September 2008, page 58

This research presents the importance of substantial value of no-sugar carbonated beverage. Such value is very impressively high in comparison with other values like sugar carbonated, ready-to-drink tea, and various types of fruit juice. Table 1.2 describes two most recent years of value of no-sugar carbonated beverage. In 2007, the value of no-sugar carbonated beverage is THB 1,000 billion while in 2008 THB 2,000 billion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of operation</th>
<th>Value of no-sugar carbonated beverage (THB billion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.2** Value of no sugar carbonated beverage

**Source:** Marketeer Magazine, September 2008, page 58
1.2 Statement of the Problems

Studies on measuring preference from customers’ perspective are very useful because the main source of understanding positioning is through consumers’ perspective. Positioning is “the way a firm’s product, brand or organization is viewed relative to the competition by current and prospective customers” (Etzel et al., 2004). Due to this reason, it is important for managers to be able to measure and track it at customer level. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to measure positioning and compare consumers’ perception of diet cola brands thus lead to consumers’ brand preference.

This study focuses on investigating the factors that influences consumers’ perception towards diet cola brands and access how consumers’ mind works.

Previous conference related to the topic has been organized by CMMU (College of Management Mahidol University, Thailand) students under Strategic Marketing Management course in August 2008. The topic was raised by student (Otakanon, 2008) and posted on the web board under e-learning. The questions that have been raised were:

1. Will Pepsi Max be able to become market leader in no-sugar category over Coke Zero after it is launched? or its launch?

2. If you were a Marketing Manager of Coke Zero, what would you do in maintaining the competitive edge over Pepsi Max in no-sugar category?

There were thirty participants on the topic, provided different responses. The responses were mixed. Some said that Pepsi Max will not be able to win back their market leader position in the no-sugar category, but some said the opposite. Most
comments were based on their perceived image of the brand from the communications they saw via above the line and below the line marketing campaign. However, this alone is not enough to justify whether Pepsi Max can re-gain its leader position in the no-sugar category. In regard to the second question, this would have to be studied further as there are many other factors that have to be taken into consideration before an appropriate strategy can be pointed out.

Therefore the researcher would like to take this study further in order to diagnose the questions that have been raised from the conference topic on Pepsi Max VS. Coke Zero. This conference has a limited use for marketers since brand positioning is not broken down into minor components that can be used for developing brand strategies.

Thus, the researcher examines the no-sugar carbonated drink business in Thailand based for better understanding the consumers’ perspective. In conclusion, the statement of problem is “Can Pepsi Max rebound their market share in non-sugar cola category?” or “Can Coke Zero really becomes the leader in the non-sugar cola category?”

1.3 Research Objectives

(1) To understand key triggers and barriers of diet cola from both users and non users of the category (refer to 1.7 for definitions)

(2) To identify perceptions towards Pepsi Max and Coke Zero, the strengths and weaknesses from each profile point-of-view

(3) To understand the drivers of perception towards Pepsi Max and Coke Zero
1.4 Scope of the Research

This research was carried out using qualitative approach by means of focus groups interview method.

The sample composition in the form of focus groups are:

- Male and Female
- 20-29 years old (Junior and Senior University students and young working adults)
  - Followed Pepsi Max target market consumers
- Social Economic Status (SES): household income of at least Baht 25,000-60,000 per month
- Users and decision makers to purchase their beverages
- Consume their specified beverage at least 3-4 times a week
- Users of the no-sugar cola category:
  - users (have been consuming no-sugar cola for the last 3-6 months, mix of Pepsi Max and Coke Light)
  - recently converted users (have recently converted into no-sugar cola from either normal carbonated soft drinks (CSDs) or non carbonated beverages (NCBs))
- Non Users of the no-sugar cola category:
  - carbonated soft drinks users (have been consuming Cola for the last 3-6 months, mix of Pepsi and Coke users)
  - non carbonated beverages users (have been consuming NCBs for the last 3-6 months, mix of juices)
- Non rejecter of no-sugar cola category
1.5 Limitations of the Research

This study was done before the re-launch of Pepsi Max in 2008 therefore further study should be done again after the re-launch (post launch study) to measure the shift in preference toward the brand.

1.6 Significance of the Study

For Pepsi: This study could help assist brand manager in laying out the brand’s strategy. Serve as a guideline in understanding the target consumers’ interests and lifestyles.

For Coca-Cola: This study is beneficial to the Coca-Cola brand as it act as the post launch study for Coke Zero campaign. The information provided will assist the brand manager for the next step action of where they should take the brand to and what they could have emphasized more on.

For Consumers: This study is beneficial in understanding what actually goes through our minds when making purchases. Some of the sub-conscious attributes are playing a big role in us all.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Brand Image: In this study Brand Image means how consumers perceived the brand to be. Consumers might interpret feelings according to what they have seen in the market. It can either be from advertising, slogan, logo of the brand and etc.

Brand Positioning: In this study Brand Positioning means an attempt to create a customer-focused value proposition that gives consumers a persuasive reason to buy
the focal brand, is regarded as one of the cornerstones of successful marketing strategy (Kotler 2003).

**Brand Preference:** In this study Brand Preference means how consumers will choose a particular brand in presence of competing brands. Consumers always approach the market place with a well-established set of tastes and preferences (Christopher, 1996; Hoyer and Brown, 1990).

**Brand Value:** The heart of branding is in adding value especially psychological value in the form of intangible benefits, which include the emotional associations, beliefs, values and feelings that people relate to the brand (Temporal, 2000).

**Carbonated Soft Drink (CSD):** made from purified water, flavoring, and a mixture of sugar (or artificial sweetener for a low calorie drink). The last process is to add Carbonate Dioxide for fizziness/bubbles (www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-carbonat-bev.html accessed on Oct 27, 2008).

**Expectation:** In this study Expectation means an individual’s subjective belief in the probability that a given state either does or will exist (cf., Woodman & Tolchinsky, 1985)

**Focus Group:** Focus group interviewing is a qualitative research technique. Use to gain insight of the consumers, attitudes, opinions, motivations, concerns, and problems concerning current and project human activity (Asquith, 1997)
**No-sugar carbonated beverage:** made from purified water and add Carbonate Dioxide for fizziness/bubbles (Created by Author).

**No-sugar cola drink category:** made from purified water, flavoring and add Carbonate Dioxide for fizziness/bubbles (Created by Author).

**Non Carbonated Beverage (NCB):** made from purified water and concentrated fruit flavor base, artificial color and mixture of sugar. (http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-carbonat-bev.html accessed on Oct 27, 2008).

**Non user of Diet Cola Category:** In this study Non user of Diet Cola Category means those who do not consume any diet cola. However, they may consume a regular cola and or diet drinks in other categories i.e. fruit juice.

**Non user of Pepsi Max:** In this study Non user of Pepsi Max means those who do not consume Pepsi Max regularly. They may have tried the product but did not adapt it into their everyday life. They are non rejecter of Pepsi Max and Pepsi brand.

**Perception:** In this study Perception means interpreting sensations and giving meaning to stimuli. This process occurs because people constantly strive to make sense of the world and, when faced with new sensations or data, seek patterns or concepts that may relate new bits of information to each other and to past experience. Perception is the interpretation of reality, and each of us views reality from a different perspective (Zikmund & d’Amico, 1996).
**Positioning Effectiveness:** In this study Positioning Effectiveness means how consumers perceive a brand/object in relation to competitor brands (Hooley, Saunders, and Piercy 1998). Consumers form their perceptions based on the positioning information actually presented to them rather than on how marketers want the product to be positioned in the consumers’ minds.

**Qualitative Analysis:** In this study Qualitative Analysis means a nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme (Strauss & Corbin, 2005).

**Qualitative Research:** In this study Qualitative Research means a type of research that produces findings not arrived by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings (Strauss & Corbin, 2005).

1.8 **Abbreviation**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSD</td>
<td>Carbonated Soft Drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCB</td>
<td>Non Carbonated Beverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Social Economic Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THB</td>
<td>Thai Baht</td>
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CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter reviews the literature and research work to explain the difference in consumers’ perception of brand positioning between two diet cola brands (Pepsi Max and Coke Zero).

2.1 Brand Preference

A marketer’s ultimate objective is to build a durable relationship between a specific brand and a particular customer group to create a strong bond between brand and customer. Marketing and promotions these days play a big role in the mind of the consumers as often times in an unplanned purchase, consumers are likely to be influenced by a pre-existing taste and preferences. The concept of Brand Preference can be explained clearer through the following approach: Need Association, Mood Association, Subconscious Motivation, Behavior Modification, Cognitive Processing, and Model Emulation (Alreck L., 1999).

2.1.1 Need Association

Linked closely to what is commonly called “classical conditioning” a theory that was first demonstrated by Pavlov, Russian Physiologist. In this study, need association simply means to present the product or brand name and a particular need, simultaneously and repeatedly. Constant repetition is the key. Applying to this study would mean that if consumers are constantly being present with the brand either through any kind of stimuli, eventually they will learn to associates the brand with the need (de Chernatony and McWilliams, 1990).
2.1.2 Mood Association

Tied closely with Need Association, as consumers are being presented with the brand frequently, a mood is being developed on how they view the brand. The brand requires to associates itself with a particular form of pleasant images. It can either be recreation, companionship, sense of achievement or some other conditions depending on what and how you want consumers to perceive your brand. Not only images alone that will help with mood associations, wordings also help. In and all, the images and wordings will have to work in the same way as both act as a primary creation of mood association.

2.1.3 Subconscious Motivation

Deep within the subconscious mind, consumer drives that underlie preferences reside in the mind. Thus they cannot express their true motives. The only way to build consumer preferences was to stimulate subconscious drives. This could be done via an advertising message but it is very important that marketers understand initially the two basic things. First, words and symbols had to be included to excite hidden drives and desires. Second, product has to act as a substitute for the actions that were inhibited by the consumer’s super ego. Since consumers cannot express their inner most feelings/behaviors-desires directly, they could express them symbolically through the purchase and consumption of goods and services.

2.1.4 Behavior Modification

Especially for consumable products containing substantial amounts of sugar, alcohol, caffeine, or nicotine not only have a strong reward value, but in a short period they tend to regenerate the drive state, leading to the next conditioning cycle. For
example, a sip of cola results in the sudden burst of thirst quenching and follow closely by a slump. The slump feeling encourages the user to return for another sip. Skinner, the psychologist, stated that there are four main elements of a behavior modification program which are: drive, cue, response and reinforcement. These four combines as a behaviorist model, this can be easily described as: a thirsty (drive) consumer notice a package (cue) of a can of drink, buy and drink (response) and find it to be satisfying (reinforcement). Therefore the probability that this particular consumer will re-purchase the drink is definite. Each time it happens, the probability of purchase will increase until the individual has developed a strong brand preference.

2.1.5 Cognitive Processing

The more important the purchase is to the consumer, the more likely the buyer’s preferences will result from cognitive processing (Blythe, 1997).

Knowledge is created by an informative message. However it has to overcome some strong communications barriers:

- Selective Exposure – consumers choose the media they are exposed
- Selective Attention – consumers decide whether or not they want to pay attention to the message
- Selective Perception – consumers choose to pay attention to some elements and make an implication on it
- Selective Retention – consumers choose what they want to remember
- Selective Recollection – though consumers choose to remember but over time they might not be able to recall
- Selective Application – consumers may ignore the recollection and act differently
Throughout this process, you will be able to see that only a small part of the information actually gets through. Thus it is very crucial to marketers that they know their target well so that they know what they have to say and portray and how often the message will have to be exposed to the consumers in order to create a brand preference.

2.1.6 Model Emulation

In the marketing world, Model Emulation usually comes in the form of an advertisement. Advertisement implicitly combines the behavior that they would want the consumers to feel and act thus this is very effective because consumers find it to be simple and an easy way to make a choice. However, as the market is more diverse it is rather difficult for marketers to find the right model for the consumers to imitate the feelings or behaviors. The solution is however simple marketers as well as advertisers should also look into the consumer role dynamics. This simply means not just only look from a single perspective of the consumers but rather look also from other angles that the lives of the consumers are involve with, Because at each and every little step the consumer is likely to develop new preferences.

Each strategy outlined here is based on product or service characteristics. It is very important for marketers to apply the right strategy in order to develop the brand preference.
2.2 Segmenting customer brand preference: demographic or psychographic

Smith (1956) first introduced the concept of market segments, which has become an integral part of modern marketing. A market segment is a group within a market that is clearly identifiable based on certain criteria (Lin and Chin-Feng, 2002). An effective market segmentation technique depends largely on selecting the relevant segmenting bases and descriptors (Wind, 1978). Researchers (Becker et al., 1985; Becker and Conner, 1981) have tried to divide consumer markets by looking at a consumer’s “personality”. Kotler (1997) has proposed that consumer markets should divided according to geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral variables.

2.2.1 Demographic

Demographics variables such as gender, age, income and education cannot identify the complete characteristics of the sub markets because consumers in the same demographic group have very different psychographic makeup (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999). Pride and Ferrell (1983) devised the market segmentation process of dividing a market into several market groups. Each group requires a different set of marketing strategies to satisfy its consumers. The purposes of market segmentation are first to divide a market into many homogeneous groups and second to formulate a proper marketing mix for the sub market (McCarthy, 1981).

2.2.2 Psychographic

Psychographic variables are values and lifestyles. Consumers are divided into different groups based on the lifestyle and personality (Kotler, 1997). Consumers in
the same demographic group can have a very different psychographic profile. Therefore, companies making different consumer goods can seek marketing opportunities in lifestyle/personality segmentation (Kim, 1993; Lee and Ferber, 1977).

Consumers define their lifestyles based on the consumption choices that they make in many product categories.

2.2.3 Brand Preference and Segmentation

Single brand preference can be regarded as a measure of loyalty, which also provides valuable information for customer management and market segmentation (Gralpois, 1998). Consumer values give marketers a direction on how best to satisfy their customer needs and increase brand preference (Chudy and Sant, 1993).

Lin (2002) used the psychographic classification and the traditional demographic segmentation to analyze consumer’s preferences within the sub-markets, which can provide marketers new insights into the brand preference of each targeted segment and the preferences of the same product brands. Businesses that want to expand their products or develop new brands can use brand preference as a key factor in allocating resources to develop effective product strategies.

Lin (2002) shows in her research result that demographics and lifestyle should be used together in order to target and segment because there is no one best variable to verify the sub-markets. Demographics variable such as age, gender, location, employment, income and education level provide the basis for segmentation. However, it only tells us something about a person but not enough to know the person. Demographics variable alone is insufficient.

Lin (2002) also suggests that there are two ways to apply lifestyle variables to marketing – one strategic and the other tactical. Tactical level is where lifestyle
variables can be applied to the design and presentation of advertising, the selection of
direct mail targets and the segmentation of large databases. Each of these applications
often use the big ‘lifestyle databases’ which provide a secondary input into strategy
but primarily deliver better targeted marketing communications.

Market segmentation is not just a clever database technique but a means of
establishing the right position and brand communication so as to make the most of
investments in the brand and thereby enhance the brand’s real value.

2.3 Consumers and Brands

Consumers do not “consume products for their material utilities but consume
the symbolic meaning of those products as portrayed in their images” (Elliot, 1997,
p.286). This was confirmed by a recent study by Bhat and Reddy (1998) who
reported that brands have both functional as well as symbolic significance for
consumers.

The symbolic meaning, which is attached to brands, is often communicated
through the use and consumption of brands (Gottdeiner, 1985; McCracken, 1986). In
this context the implication is marketers have to manage the relationship between
their respective brands and the meanings that consumers associate with those brands.

An exploration of self-concept, which is apparently “a cognitive appraisal of
the attributes about oneself” (Hattie, 1992 cited in Abe et al., 1996) can help
marketers to understand the way consumers make choices in the context of symbolic
meanings attached to various brands (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987).

Self-concept is formed in an interaction process between an individual and
others, and that individual will strive for self-enhancement in the interaction process.
The perceptions of self are closely related with the personality in the sense that
individuals tend to buy brands whose personalities closely correspond to individuals’ own self-images (Schiffman and Kanum, 2000). In other words, individuals express themselves by choosing brands whose personalities are perceived to be congruent with their own personalities (Asker, 1999; Kassarjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982).

Individuals are expected to have multiple selves (Markus and Kunda, 1986; Markus and Nurius, 1986) whereby they act differently in different situations and with different individuals. The underlying idea is that different personality traits can be accessed or can become differently notable in different social situations (Aaker, 1999; Markus and Kunda, 1986).

Previous research indicates that the self-image congruity can affect consumers’ product preferences and their purchase intentions (Ericksen, 1996; Mehta, 1999). For example, Ericksen (1996) in her study involving European consumers related to an American automobile, the Ford Escort, found that a relationship did exist between self-image congruity and intention to purchase the automobile. Thus consumers might prefer brands that have images compatible with their perceptions of self (Belk et al., 1982; Ericksen, 1996; Solomon, 1983; Zinkham and Hong, 1991). The congruence between self-image and product image is also positively related to consumers’ product evaluations (Graeff, 1996). That is “the more similar a consumer’s self-image is to the brand’s image, the more favorable their evaluations of that brand should be” (Graeff, 1996, p. 5).

2.4 Consumer Buying Behavior

Definition of Consumer Behavior is as follows:
“It is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Consumers take many forms, ranging from a six-year-old child pleading with her mother for wine gums to an executive in a large corporation deciding on an extremely expensive computer system.” (Solomon et al., 2002)

Understanding consumer behavior is the key to creating successful marketing strategies. This involves understanding consumers’ desired value. Consumer behavior is the mental and physical activities undertaken by household and business customer that result in decisions and actions to pay for, purchase and use the product and service for a variety of activities and roles that people can hold. In a meantime, mental activities have influenced the selection of products and services qualities from advertising information and evaluating actual experiences with product. (www.consumerreports.org)

The types of consumer buying behavior vary according to the type of buying decision. The main influence relates to the differences between the brands available to the consumer and the degree of personal involvement in the decision (Phillips, Doole and Lowe, 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low involvement, Low price, Low risk</th>
<th>High involvement, High price, High risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few differences between brands</td>
<td>Brand loyal repeat purchasing influence and by price and sales promotion offers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant differences between brands</td>
<td>Brand switching but with limited information gathering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Four types of buying behavior:

Source: Adapted from Assael (1985) and Kotler (1988)
From Table 2.1, a trend of buying behavior has been defined. The highest level of loyalty is found where there are fewer differences between brands and that the product is a low-involvement, low-price, and low-risk type. On the other hand, minimum brand loyalty will occur in the case where brands are highly differentiated, and the product is a high-involvement, high-price, high-risk type.

To further elaborate the buying behavior of low-involvement products, it must first be understood that low-involvement products are not very important to consumers. The search for information is rather at minimal. As a result, decisions to buy products such as potato chips or drinks often are made within the store, either impulsively on the basis of brand familiarity, or as a result of comparisons of the brands on shelf. Consumers are less likely to stay with the same brand over time. They have little to lose by switching brands in a search for variety (Mullins et al., 2008).

2.4.1 The factors on personal influences

Perception

Perception is the process by which individuals select, organize and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world (Hawkins et al., 2001). It gives implications for developing marketing strategies because consumers make decisions based on what they perceive, rather than on the basis of objective reality (Statt, 1997).

The perceptual process defined by Kotler (1999) has three stages including selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention. The process indicates that people usually perceive things they need or want and block the perception of unnecessary, unfavorable or painful stimuli (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). As a result,
individuals interpret and retain only the information that supports their attitudes and beliefs (Kotler, 1999). Today, brands represent stimuli that company wants consumers to perceive them from an emotional standpoint (Hanna & Wozniak, 2000). When an individual develops favorable perception towards a certain brand, the trust for the brand is created.

Brands are perceived differently in different markets despite the product being the same. For example, a Vauxhall in the UK, an Opel in Germany and General Motors in the US may be exactly the same except for the branding in order to maximize the goodwill from the consumer in each market in terms of brand recognition, country of origin stereotyping, social status of the brand and perceived performance (Johansson & Thorelli 1985 cited Bradley, 1991). It is therefore difficult to adopt a universal marketing approach in each of these markets as the customer group and the purpose of use vary so greatly. It is also important that the firm understands the differences in the decision-making process between markets (Bradley, 1991).

**Product Positioning and Repositioning**

As discussed earlier in the branding literature that positioning is about managing perceptions, the result of successful positioning is a brand image on which consumers rely on in making product choices. Consequently, consumers choose to buy the brands they perceive as being consistent with their self-image and avoid those that are not (Lindemann). Furthermore, advertisers’ positioning strategies can also affect consumers’ belief in their brand attributes and the prices consumers are willing to pay (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).
Regardless of how well a brand is positioned, repositioning may be required in response to market competition or to changing consumer preferences (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). For example, Weight Watchers repositioned its line of frozen foods from “Dietetic” to “Healthy”, maintaining the diet-thin imagery while responding to a perceived shift in consumers’ health-oriented values.

Needs

Culture influences the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) on at least two levels; one need must be satisfied before the next need can appear; similar kinds of needs may be satisfied by very different products and consumption types. The individual and the environment needs can determine customer. The three personal traits that determine needs are genetics, biogenics and psychogenics.

Nykamp (2001) supported that each customer has unique needs at each stage of the purchase cycle. These needs may relate to information, convenience, efficiency, price, reputation and variety of other issues. The individuals’ needs may relate to the reputation of the product, provider and the support that will be provided with the product.

Personality

Personality can be referred to as personal consistent ways of responding to the environment in which they live. Mittal (2004) noted that the everyday description of people as being innovative or traditional, dogmatic or open-minded, sociable or aloof, aggressive or meek are all reference to those people’s personalities.

Moreover, people with personality hold on to their beliefs while a variety of seeking individuals tend to constantly change their preferences. At the same time,
cross cultural analysis suggests that people in different countries have national
characteristic or a distinct set of personality characteristics among their group or
society. These personality characteristic are revealed in a person’s self-concept which
is the way people see themselves and the way they believe others see them.

**Motivation**

Motivation is what moves people, the driving force for all. The motivation
has two components, drive or arousal and goal-object. A drive is an internal state of
tension that product actions purported to reduce that tension. A goal-object is
something in the external world whose acquisition with reduce the tension (Mittal,
2004). Motivation is the energizing force that causes behavior that satisfies a need.
Basically, people need the basics of life such as water, sex, drugs and foods. At the
same time, they also have other abstract needs such as esteem, achievement and
affection. Psychologists suggest that these needs are hierarchical; once the
physiological needs are met, people seek to satisfy their learned needs (Berkowitz et
al, 2000).

**Semiology**

Semiotics is the study of everything that can be used to explore such meaning
for all norms of communication, together with textures, words, and images; in fact,
anything which can signify something to someone about something else. Consumers
do not “consume products for their material utilities but consume the symbolic
meaning of those products as portrayed in their images” (Elliot, 1997, p.286).

In marketing, it is the study of how marketing environments, products and
advertisements seek to create meaning by playing on people’s sensual awareness of
tastes, sounds, smells, images and words. Products and services are not only consumed as objects. They are consumed as signs of difference, which in turn are linked to signs of status and identity.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH PROTOCOL

The methodology of this study is qualitative and instead of using a framework a protocol is set as a guideline. The protocol in this study is established based on the literature review.

3.1 Research Protocol

The research protocol will show the relation between factors affecting consumer brand preference based on concepts, theories and related research as reviewed from the previous chapter. The model is used as the presentation of theoretical framework in term of variables that has an effect on consumers’ brand preference.

Figure 3.2 Research Protocol

Demographic Factors (Gender, Age, Marital Status, Occupation)  
Psychographic Factors (Values, Lifestyle, Personality)  
Brand Image  
Self Concept

Figure 3.2 describes the research protocol used in this study. It attempts to understand how consumers preferred one brand over another through these attributes.
3.2 Explanation of the concepts

3.2.1 Brand Preference

A marketer’s ultimate purpose is to build a long-lasting relationship between a specific brand and a particular customer group to create a strong bond between brand and customer. Marketing and promotions play a vital role in the mind of the consumers as often times in an unplanned purchase consumers are likely to be influenced by a pre-existing tastes and preferences.

3.2.2 Demographic Factors

Demographic factors such as gender, age, income, and education cannot identify the complete characteristics of the submarkets because consumers in the same demographic group have very different psychographic makeup (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999). Pride and Ferrell (1983) devised the market segmentation process of dividing a market into several market groups. Each group requires a different set of marketing strategies to satisfy its consumers. The purposes of market segmentation are first to divide a market into many homogeneous groups and second to formulate a proper marketing mix for the submarket (McCarthy, 1981).

3.2.3 Psychographic Factors

Psychographic factors are values and lifestyles. Consumers are divided into different groups based on the lifestyle and personality (Kotler, 1997). Consumers in the same demographic group can have a very different psychographic profile. Therefore, companies making different consumer goods can seek marketing opportunities in lifestyle/personality segmentation (Kim, 1993; Lee and Ferber, 1977).
Consumers define their lifestyles based on the consumption choices that they make in many product categories.

3.2.4 Brand Image

Single brand preference can be regarded as a measure of loyalty, which also provides valuable information for customer management and market segmentation (Gralpois, 1998). Consumer values give marketers a direction on how best to satisfy their customer needs and increase brand preference (Chudy and Sant, 1993).

Positioning is about managing perceptions; the result of successful positioning is a brand image on which consumers rely on in making product choices. Consequently, consumers choose to buy the brands they perceive as being consistent with their self-image and avoid those that are not (Lindemann). Furthermore, advertisers’ positioning strategies can also affect consumers’ belief in their brand attributes and the prices consumers are willing to pay (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

Regardless of how well a brand is positioned, repositioning may be required in response to market competition or to changing consumer preferences (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). For example, Weight Watchers repositioned its line of frozen foods from “Dietetic” to “Healthy”, maintaining the diet-thin imagery while responding to a perceived shift in consumers’ health-oriented values.

3.2.5 Self Image

An exploration of self-concept, which is apparently “a cognitive appraisal of the attributes about oneself” (Hattie, 1992 cited in Abe et al., 1996) can help marketers to understand the way consumers make choices in the context of symbolic meanings attached to various brands (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987).
Self-concept is formed in an interaction process between an individual and others, and that individual will strive for self-enhancement in the interaction process. The perceptions of self are closely related with the personality in the sense that individuals tend to buy brands whose personalities closely correspond to individuals’ own self-images (Schiffman and Kanum, 2000). In other words, individuals express themselves by choosing brands whose personalities are perceived to be congruent with their own personalities (Asker, 1999; Kassarjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982).

Individuals are expected to have multiple selves (Markus and Kunda, 1986; Markus and Nurius, 1986) whereby they act differently in different situations and with different individuals. The underlying idea is that different personality traits can be accessed or can become differently notable in different social situations (Aaker, 1999; Markus and Kunda, 1986).

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CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative research in the form of focus groups to explore the insight of the consumers. These cannot be carried out via quantitative research as it is limited by asking only through questionnaire which does not allow the researcher to fully to understand the ‘why’. This chapter aims to explain how the data from the focus groups will be treated.

The focus group process is as follow:

![Focus group processes in this research](source: Made by author)

**Figure 4.1** Focus group processes in this research

Source: Made by author

Figure 4.1 describes the content included in the research method, screening of respondents, focus groups interview sessions, analysis, conclusion and recommendation.

4.1 Qualitative Research

Focus groups have a long history, with their use in the social sciences going back to the 1920s (Morgan, 1977). From 1970s, they were used mainly in the field of
market research and only in the late 1980s did they come to be developed systematically as a qualitative research methodology in the social sciences (Morgan, 1977).

4.1.1 Historical and geographic sources of differences in terminology

Historically US researchers have tended to use the terms Focus Group, Focus Group Interviews or Group Interviews while UK researchers have used the terms Group Discussion or Qualitative Group Discussion. Therelfall (1999) notes that some US researchers use the term focus group while describing the technique as a useful and valuable one when used in a “truly qualitative perspective”. UK researchers (Gordon and Langmaid, 1990) claim that a difference is that group discussions go deeper than the US focus groups do. Similarly the UK based researcher Chrzanowska (2002) talks about the difference between a focus group and a group discussion being that a focus group is much more prescribed in content, with the focus groups providing understanding whereas group discussions provide information.

Thus there are several terms in use in academia and in qualitative market research with no commonly agreed upon definitions, especially in academia. These terms are: Group, Focus Group, Group Discussion, Qualitative group discussion, Group interview, Focus group interview, Nominal group interview and Focus group discussion.

Qualitative groups (Dick, 1999) are generally defined as groups of people brought together to participate in the discussion of an area of interest. In market research this would be for example, to discuss of a product, brand or advertisement for the purposes of clarifying an area of concern for a client.
Groups most often have eight respondents but this can vary between 4 and 12. The group participants are usually recruited via screening questionnaire, to form a homogeneous group to promote equal participation so that the group contains people equal in status, rank, age and often the same sex and social grade (Boddy, 2005).

Groups are moderated (facilitated) by an experienced qualitative researcher. He/She acts as group moderator or facilitator though with the aim to introduce the topic and to guide the discussion around the agreed area on interest. He/She needs to bring the discussion back to the agreed area of interest of the discussions between group members go off-track (Boddy, 2005).

A successful focus group interview is defined as a group of people brought together to participate in a group interview concerning an area of interest. However in a focus group interview the facilitator more closely controls the group interaction and group members are more like respondents than participants in the research. Discussion is mainly directed between the facilitator and the group respondents individually rather than between respondents themselves (Boddy, 2005).

4.2 Characteristics of Qualitative Methodology (Focus Group)

As the objective of the research is to explore and understand the realities of how consumers perceive brands in the marketplace, as well as how the preference is formed, the research approach needs to be exploratory and flexible in its understanding of consumer responses.

In order to maintain that, the data collection and analysis for this research was done so with the intent to explore and explain the respondents’ perceptions of paradigms and brands in depth; qualitative approach was applied. According to what the research has tried answer, it is almost impossible to generate the answers by
quantitative methods. The reason is that the objective is not to verify a specific variable, but to explore and understand possible variables causing a specific phenomenon of brand perception by consumers.

The reasons for choosing a qualitative approach include: being able to explore the meaning and purpose of human choices and behaviors, allowing internal analysis and examination of an individual’s thoughts and beliefs, and being flexible to understand insights behind consumers’ perception and behavior, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

The qualitative design was based on grounded theory. In grounded theory, one begins the data collection with a general set of questions related to the focal topic. The theoretical framework is built and refined from the data. In this sense, it is a theory building tool. The grounded theory approach contains both positivistic elements (based on direction of inquiry) and interpretive elements (based on respondents interviews), (Arora, 2009).

Although qualitative approach does not allow the researcher to validate the respondents’ behaviors across the general population statistically, the purpose of this research is not to validate a behavior but to explore the meaning and purpose behind it (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The researcher has also taken steps to minimize the uncertainty of talking to a selected number of general population by defining the criteria of respondents based on not only demographic information such as age and gender, but also existing behavior such as preferred beverage and brand.
4.3 Sample Selection

4.3.1 Selection and recruitment of the participants

The focus groups discuss consumers’ perception and preference toward two diet cola brands, Pepsi Max and Coke Zero. Participants of the research are recruited from different areas of Bangkok. The target qualifications of the respondents are:

- Male and female living in Bangkok metropolitan area
- All to be in the age range of 20-29
- Household income of at least 30,000 baht per month
- Users and decision maker to purchase their beverage
- Consume their specified beverage at least 3-4 times a week

Category Users:

- Category users (have been consuming Diet Cola’s for the last 3-6 months, mix of Pepsi Max and Coke Light)
- Recently converted users (have recently converted into Diet Cola (from either normal CSD’s or NCB’s).

Non Category Users:

- CSD users (have been consuming Diet Cola’s for the last 3-6 months. Mix of Pepsi and Coke users)
- NCB Users (have been consuming NCB’s for the last 3-6 months). Mix of Orange Juice, Fruit Juice, GT.
- Non rejecter of Diet Cola category
- All must be highly articulate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Group Number</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Group 1          | Female, 20 - 29  
Loyal user of no-sugar cola, Pepsi Max loyalist |
| Group 2          | Male, 20 - 29    
Loyal user of no-sugar cola, Pepsi Max loyalist |
| Group 3          | Female, 20 – 29  
Loyal user of no-sugar cola, Coke Zero loyalist |
| Group 4          | Male, 20 – 29    
Loyal user of no-sugar cola, Coke Zero loyalist |
| Group 5          | Female, 20 - 29  
Heavy CSD users, aware of and does not reject no-sugar cola |
| Group 6          | Male, 20 - 29    
Heavy CSD users, aware of and does not reject no-sugar cola |
| Group 7          | Female, 20 – 29  
Heavy NCB users, aware of and does not reject no-sugar cola |
| Group 8          | Male, 20 - 29    
Heavy NCB users, aware of and does not reject no-sugar cola |

**Table 4.1** Respondents group description

**Source:** Created by author

Table 4.1 shows the number of focus groups carried out in this study as well as how the researcher separated the consumers’ profile in preventing any biased results.

### 4.3.2 Size of the Focus Group

Focus groups usually consist of 6 – 12 respondents. The number of the respondents depends on the nature of the project and the area of discussion. However, focus groups for fast moving consumers’ goods are at best 6 – 8 respondents. The
reason being in getting a good read on the data and everyone has a fair chance in sharing their views.

The discussion is lead by the facilitator or sometimes known as the moderator. The facilitator/moderator led the discussion according to the objective of the study. The duration of the session usually last 2 – 2.5 hours.

This research recruited 8 respondents based on the qualifications and separated into 8 group sessions as stated in the table above.

4.4 Moderator

The moderator is well trained in interpersonal communication skills and professional manners. Moderating the session requires objectivity, self discipline, concentration and careful listening skill (Hair et al., 2000).

The moderator is the key player who controls the group dynamic. At most time they will have to encourage the respondents to willingly share their views and make sure that the discussion is being bounce around in the room. The conclusion cannot be made from one person. It is very important that the moderator hear everybody out. During the session, the moderator may take some short notes as they go along for analytical purpose in the end.

4.4.1 Personality and Leadership styles

Experience and training alone is not sufficient for a successful moderation. Copying the style of successful moderators will not work for everyone. This can be partly explained by the unique combination of behavioral traits displayed by each individual (i.e. their personalities). Moderators who display an intrinsic interest with the research topic, over friendliness, a sense of humor, an insatiable interest in people,
a curiosity and openness to new insights, and a willingness to listen are more likely to encourage participants to share their experiences. Since these qualities are largely innate, training to help overcome personality deficiencies may not be appropriate (Prince and Davies, 2001).

Although moderators are expected to have at least a minimum adequacy of personal traits and training (e.g. Langer, 1978), differences in personalities between moderators will affect their personal moderating styles (Stewart and Shamdasami, 1990). In addition, leadership styles may need to vary according to purpose of the research topic and composition of participants. For example, exploratory new product development or creative work may warrant a less structured approach of leadership, whereas a more structured approach, perhaps using oblique questioning or thematic apperception tests might be needed to uncover consumer embarrassments in using taboo products or ideas. The choice of moderator matched to the research objectives and target participants is critical. Since it is questionable how moderators can adapt to different styles required, it may be necessary to match their styles of leadership (i.e. what naturally suits them best) to particular groups of participants (Stewart and Shamdassami, 1990, p. 73).

4.4.2 Effect of moderator style on content and participation

Moderator style can have a big impact on the effectiveness of focus groups, since they can control both the content of what is said by participants, (Myers, 1998, p. 88) and control of participation (Morgan, 1996). Control can take place to prioritize which topics are discussed and how the group interact (i.e. developing a balanced or imbalanced share of opinions from the group).
Moderators may encourage or discourage participation according to impressions created about them. According to Goffman (1959), individuals seek out information about others by creating impressions of their competence and trustworthiness that helps them define their situation that guides them in what is expected of them.

4.5 Data Collection

The data collection is from the moderator own notes as well as the recording of the groups’ discussion.

There are two key philosophies to be considered in conducting a business or research that attempts to understand the effects of brands on human consciousness, and the competing paradigms of the reality of most preferred brands by different people: critical theory and constructivism.

The critical theory is practiced under the assumption that “realities is assumed to be apprehensible that was once plastic, but that was over time, shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors, and then crystallized (reified) into a series of structures that are now taken as real” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The practice of critical theory requires the researcher to take a dialectical approach to the study with the subjects of the research. This allows the findings of the opinions expressed by the respondents in the study to be analyzed as how it has been constructed by their gender, economic and social backgrounds. This allows the researcher to “…uncover and excavate those forms of historical and subjugated knowledge that point to experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).
The **constructivism** approach, on the other hand, assumes that reality is the result of different ideas and perceptions of reality which is shared by individuals or groups of people (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The researcher is able to understand and differentiate the paradigms and perceptions which different respondent groups may hold towards a certain concept. This will also enable the researcher to reconcile different and sometimes opposing opinions which are encountered when comparing responses to questions across different respondent groups in qualitative study.

Because a brand appeals differently to various elements of consumers in the market, businesses need to be aware that when conducting research about brand perception, there is a possibility of finding consumers, who share similar demographic background but hold different or contradicting opinions. Therefore, the cross paradigm analysis can benefit from the **constructivism** approach in the way that it allows the existence of different perceptions of reality shared by others in similar peer group. This allows the researcher to understand in greater details, the factors which have triggered and generated the perception and opinions held by the members of a specific peer group (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002). In addition, the **critical theory** method of research gives the researcher the discussion framework and guideline when in dialogue with the respondents. The approach makes the most of the discussion setup, as it allows the researcher to understand the respondent group’s individual opinions through discussion, and have the respondents come to a group consensus of the commonly held perception of reality and paradigm, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

### 4.6 Instrument and Discussion Scope

The discussion scope has been decided prior to the groups’ discussion. This is to ensure that the objectives of the research have all been laid out logically. The
discussion scope is also a great use to the moderator during the session as it serves the moderator with the topic of discussions. Below is the discussion scope of this study:

**Figure 4.2** Flow of the discussion scope in a focus group

```
Understanding the consumer
   ↓
Understanding the market
   ↓
Understand triggers and barriers
   ↓
Unaided perception of the brands
   ↓
Understanding the drivers of perception
   ↓
Detailed assessment of advertising campaign
   ↓
Detailed assessment of packaging
   ↓
Detailed assessment of additional marketing mix
```

**Source:** Created by Author

Figure 4.2 describes the flow of the discussion in focus groups. The flow is being broken down from the objective of the study. Thus, in order to arrive at the objectives, the topics that has to be covered in the focus groups are: understanding the consumer, understanding the market, understand triggers and barriers, unaided perception of the brands, understanding the drivers of perception, detailed assessment of advertising campaign, detailed assessment of packaging and detailed assessment of additional marketing mix.
4.7 Analysis Techniques

After each focus group, the moderator sat down to look at the notes they made during the session and add on any other interesting facts that has been picked up but not recorded. After they put down onto paper it is always good to discuss the findings with the group’s observer, client in aligning the understanding. A debriefing is usually expected from the client side as they are not only interested in the facts that consumers’ shared but also the interpretation of the facts and how it can be put to use. As most of the times consumers cannot share what is in their subconscious, they tend to rationalize their reasons. The gem of debriefing is really to read between the lines. The demographic and psychographic of the consumers now comes to play as what has been responded from each profile point of view does always reflect a different insight.

In this study, the researcher always map back the answer of the consumers to their profile as it helps to summarize and maybe to distinguish one group from another.

Analysis of qualitative data can be very time consuming; however the end result can be very gratifying. What is meant by time consuming is that the researcher have to moderate the focus groups, listening to recorded tapes, reading transcripts and notes from focus group sessions, analyzing the data and creating a summary report of findings. Usually the average time spent for a project that has four standard focus groups will take up to 5 – 7 days. This include the moderating the groups as well as time spent in analyzing the data and came up with the report.

Dudley, MPH and Phillips (Focus Group Analysis Guide: A Guide for HIV Community Planning Group Members – year not identified) suggested that the following points are to be taken into consideration when analyzing qualitative data.
4.7.1 Points to note before analyzing the data

Ensure fairness and confidentiality

A good analysis is as free from bias as possible. Researcher will have to be able to identify and recognize their own biases and to push them aside before they start their work. Request that the researcher should let the data guide them and not their own biases.

When to conduct analysis

Beginning the analysis immediately after the focus group session will enhance its quality. Facilitators and note takers should debrief immediately following the session. Additionally, when conducting multiple focus group sessions, analyzing the data immediately after each session will decrease the potential for confusing different sessions with one another.

Getting ready to analyze the data

Gather all of the data that you have for the focus group sessions, topic guide, audio tapes, transcripts of the sessions, observation notes and debriefing notes.

4.7.2 Steps to considered when doing the analysis

Topic Guide Review

Review the topic guide (focus group objectives and specific research questions) before looking through transcripts, listening to tapes or working from the researcher’s own notes. The research questions will be used in the first stage of organizing the data for the analysis process. When reviewing transcripts, note or listening to tapes, remember that you have to look for emerging themes and patterns. The more the researcher look over the material the more familiar you will become
with it and the more obvious various themes and patterns will become. When looking through the material keep in mind the following:

- Several people within a focus group repeated them or made very similar statements
- People from several focus groups repeated them or made very similar statements
- When someone in the group made a statement, a substantial number of people in the group demonstrated agreement either verbally or nonverbally

Create a unique identifier for focus group participants

This will help the researcher in identifying who is saying what and when and further for the researcher to note whether the conversation was dominated by one or more persons and not reflective of the entire group.

Listen to the tapes

Listening to tapes will help the researcher to capture major issues and themes that may have been missed. Compare what you hear with what is written on the transcripts.

Read the transcripts multiple times

Highlighting major issues and identifying emerging themes. This is recommended to do in one seating. Highlight also verbatim of interesting words, sentences from consumers as it will be very beneficial in supporting your report delivery.
Read the focus group notes

To draw out what have not been recorded onto the tapes and transcripts. This note is often notes of non verbal communications. It’s usually the notes researchers make during the focus groups of respondents behaviours and reactions.

Organizing the data

After the researcher have gather the themes, highlight verbatim and reveal through observant notes. It is time to pull the data from each profile point of view regarding the same topic together.

Interpret the data

After the researcher’s arrived at themes, it is now the time to make link of the findings with the research objectives. Look for patterns among participants’ responses and as you review the data:

- What was known and then confirmed or challenged by the focus group data?
- What was suspected and the confirmed or challenged by the focus group data?
- What was new that was not previously suspected?

Report findings

The summary documentation or final report should include the major quotes, key points, and emerging themes identified from the review of tapes, observer notes, the focus group topic guide (objective and questions) and the transcripts of each focus group sessions.
4.8 Reporting Focus Group Results

This requires the researcher to look through all the notes and organized them into themes, categories and or profile. By structuring this way the reporting style will be from an umbrella picture and later on to scope down to specific areas. The reporting outline/structure is per below:

**Figure 4.3 Report Structure**

**Source:** Originally created by Author based on the result of this research

Figure 4.3 describes the way the report is being structured to make it easy for readers who have not attended the focus groups to fully understand from the basics. Verbatims or consumers’ quotes have been added in order to support the researcher’s analysis.
CHAPTER V
PRESENTATION OF DATA AND CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter aims to report the findings of qualitative study, and how consumers’ responses help to explore, describe, and explain their choices of beverage, and the possibilities for Pepsi Max to expand its reach and appeal.

5.1 Research Finding: Drinking Insight and CSD

5.1.1 Drinking Insight and CSD Overall

The research finds 3 groups of different consumer types who pick their preferred CSD drinks differently: Heavy CSD user, Diet Cola user, and Non-Carbonated Beverage (NCB) user. The following section addresses specific traits of each type of consumer based on how they perceive their ideal drinking experiences. The beverage taste and brand imagery that each type of consumer looks for and perceive as the most suitable for the ideal drinking experience helps establish an understanding of the diet cola product category: both in its appeal from current users and how likely/unlikely it is to appeal to current non users (CSD and NCB users).

5.1.2 Heavy CSD User

Heavy CSD users look for lots of fun and enjoyment in their ideal drinking occasion and experience, in which they are with friends, and enjoying their favorite drink, the CSD. They are not concerned about the possibility of health damage caused by drinking CSD. They are focused on having as much fun as they can have when drinking beverages. Some interesting comments are:
• “During a break from class, particularly on hot day, our group hangs out together and always drinks Pepsi because it uplifts our feeling.” (Female, age 20, TU student)

• “With the job that I have, I have to drive around seeing lots of customers per day. Sometimes I got so worn out from the heat and need something refreshing. I usually stop at a gas station to grab a can of Coke.” (Male, age 25, Account Executive)

• “I can’t imagine sitting and chit-chatting with group of friends and not having Pepsi. Without it, I think the conversation we have wouldn’t be so interesting.” (Female, age 22, Marketing Trainee)

Because Heavy CSD users focus on having the most fun and enjoyment out of their beverage of choice, these consumers state that cola brands (Pepsi, Coca-Cola) is the brand of their ideal drinking experience. Consumers explained that cola is the drink which they feel conveys the most fun and enjoyment due to its fizziness/bubbles which they feel that it give them an instant pick-me-up feeling.

The brand image of cola brands are important to Heavy CSD users, which is shown in the way they described and explained the ideal drinking experience. Consumers described the ideal beverage brand image as the brand which focuses on having young presenters, fun-filled and vibrant experiences, with lots of colors and music. Consumers cited the cola brands’ TV commercials as an example of what the brand image they are looking for; they talk about the bright colors and trendy pop music used in the commercials for their mood and tone. Some interesting comments are:
“Can anyone remember a Coke ad that uses cartoon animations? The first time I saw the ad I was stunned. It was something very creative. The graphics are cute, and it made me want to watch to the end.” (Female, age 26, Trade Marketing Executive)

“Pepsi ads always use celebrities, particularly all the popular singers both international and local.” (Female, age 23, Sales)

“Every year there’s Pepsi Football. I always look for its collectibles because they are limited for the particular occasion. The t-shirts are great.” (Male, age 22, ABAC student)

Furthermore, Heavy CSD consumers prefer the fizz and bubbly sensation that they get from carbonated soft drinks. They feel the intense stimulation from such sensation creates more enjoyable drinking experience. These consumers also feel that their ideal beverage needs to have strong, sweet taste, which they feel will help make the drink taste better. They feel that the strong, sweet taste combined with the strong fizz in carbonated drink does not only make drinking experience enjoyable, but also refreshing. They feel that they are getting a refreshing drink by having cold and fizzy drink, and getting enjoyable and tasty product experience from the sweet taste. Some interesting comments are:

“I love the moment when I pour the drink into the glass. You can see the fizz goes up and down and that stimulate my taste buds.” (Male, age 27, Sales Manager)

“When you are very thirsty and you gulp down the drink, the bubbles pop in your mouth and that’s refreshing.” (Male, age 21, CU student)
5.1.3 **Non Carbonated Beverage (NCB) Users**

NCB users look for a beverage which they feel gives the best boost and protection for their physical health as they consume it. Their ideal drinking experience is having a cool, refreshing drink without having to worry about any possible damage or harm to their health. They are focused on having a beverage with sweet taste and enjoyable experience, while being sure that there are no negative effects on their physical health and well being (weight gain, tooth decay, etc.). They are looking for a beverage brand which they feel offers nutritious and healthy beverage products for consumption. Some interesting comments are:

- “Getting up early for work and go to bed late at night is bad enough. I try to drink anything that is healthy such as juice and green tea. I feel that I’m giving myself something nutritious.” (Female, age 28, Brand Manager)

- “I think water is the best but most of the time I need refreshment from a tiring day. I will go for Splash whenever I need to pick myself up.” (Male, age 24, Bank Teller)

NCB users look for healthy drink choices to offer cool and refreshing drinking experiences, which lead to specific product and brand expectations. They are looking for a brand which has healthy associations but still offers an enjoyable drink that can be enjoyed out of home with sweetness and refreshing connotations. As a result of these expectations, NCB users state green tea beverage brands in Thailand (Oishi Green Tea, Kirin Green Tea, Unif Green Tea) as well as 10% juice brands (Tropicana Twister, Splash) as their preferred brands for the ideal drinking experience. Some interesting comments are:
• “I know Tropicana for so long since when I was in the States. To me Tropicana is very natural and pure though here we only have the 10% product, it gives me a good feeling of great orange.” (Female, age 29, Sales Manager)

• “I usually go to JJ market on Sunday to see pets, and the weather is extremely hot. I need something cold and sweet to make my visit to the market more enjoyable.” (Male, age 26, Coffee Shop Owner)

The product expectations of NCB users are similar to those of Heavy CSD users in that they also like sweet and fizzy taste in their drinks. The main difference, however, is presented in their approach to the fizzy sensation or the carbonated element of beverages. Whereas Heavy CSD users feel that the strong fizzy sensation from carbonated drinks are enjoyable and pleasing, NCB users see it as a sign of unhealthy beverage and is bad for their health. Because they feel that having a beverage which is sweet and fizzy is bad for their health, these consumers say that they prefer beverages which are healthier in nature and have brand images that help reinforce the natural, healthy perception. Some interesting comments are:

• “Fizz makes me feel that the drink is not natural. It has gone through the process of adding unnatural gas.” (Female, age 22, MU student)

• “In Splash ad, you can see cut oranges on the screen everywhere, plus there are pop up text emphasizing on added vitamins and calcium, and that’s very persuasive.” (Male, age 23, Sales Executive)

The drink which NCB users prefer in their ideal drinking experience is green tea and fruit juices. The product has sweet taste. So consumers do not feel that it is bitter
or unsavory (unlike traditional tea). Bottled green tea beverages are seen as offering cool and sweet refreshment. They also feel that green tea brands are healthy and natural because they are selling a product which is made from natural tea leaves, unlike CSDs which are about sweet, fizzy drink with no natural connotations.

5.1.4 Diet Cola Users

Diet Cola users look for an ideal drinking experience where they feel trendy and fashionable with the latest beverage on the market. They also would like to have a drink which is not bad for their physical well-being, based on the level of threat to weight gain and how fattening the beverage is. They are different from Heavy CSD users because they are concerned about the negative effects of CSDs on physical welling-being, especially weight gain. They are willing to forego the preferred sweet taste for another beverage which can offer a similar sweet taste with fizzy sensation, but without negative effects on health. There are also some Diet Cola users who feel that the Diet Cola brands (Pepsi Max, Coke Zero) are newer or trendy than the standard cola brands. They feel that Diet Cola brands offer a more exciting and mature brand image than the long-established, youth-oriented cola brands.

The preferred beverage for ideal drinking experience for Diet Cola users is the diet cola because they feel that it offers fizzy and somewhat sweet taste, with brand imagery which is trendy and modern and with less perceived negative effects on health and well-being. Diet colas are able to convey the perception because Diet Cola users feel that the diet cola product, which claims to have no sugar or calories, helps make cola drink less fattening and less prone to weight gain. Some interesting comments are:
• “I love Coke, but as I grow older, I feel that it’s better for me to drink something that would be less harmful to health. I don’t want to give up the fizziness and the pleasure of drinking CSD, so I switched to the alternative no-sugar cola instead.” (Male, age 28, Area Sales Manager)

• “I love the sweetness I get from the original Pepsi, but the alternative sweetener is not bad at all. So why not go for something that’s better.” (Male, age 24, Interior Designer)

• “A couple of years ago, I tried to cut down my baby fat. I couldn’t give up Pepsi because to me it’s addictive. So in order for me to stay in shapes, I switched to Pepsi Max instead.” (Female, age 21, BU student)

• “I have never tried no-sugar CSD before, but when I saw Coke Zero for the first time, I was stunned. The packaging is cool and the black color is very mysterious.” (Male, age 25, Freelance Graphic Designer)

The ideal drinking experience of diet cola users does not consist of healthy and natural imageries and benefits, unlike that of NCB users. It is more enjoyable and trendy, similar to that of CSD user’s experience. However, Diet Cola user’s ideal drinking experience is seen as cool, trendy and more mature, not just for teenagers. Diet cola consumers do not see the experience as extreme fun, but as one of cool and trendy enjoyment. This shows that diet cola consumers do not drink diet colas purely for health benefits, but that they also look for trendy and cool brand imagery.
5.2 Perception of CSD, Diet Cola and NCB Category

5.2.1 Perception of CSD, Diet Cola and NCB Category Overall

In the research the respondents were asked to compare and differentiate between CSD, Diet Cola, and NCB product categories. Consumers discussed about each product category in three main aspects: health, image, and taste. The following section deals with the different responses to the product categories from different users.

5.2.2 CSD Users – CSD Category

CSD users see CSD category as the best beverage product in their usage repertoire. They feel that it offers the best taste experience, with a combination of sweet and fizzy taste and sensation that give them maximum refreshment whenever they drink it. They also feel that the brand imagery of CSD brands such as Pepsi and Coca-Cola helps them feel fun and the beverage tasty because they are focused on being youthful and active. However, the main draw for the CSD users to the CSD category remains the combination of sweet taste and fizzy sensation. These consumers admit that CSD product categories are not healthy and may cause health problems such as weight gain and tooth decay. However, they feel that they can help offset and prevent these negative effects on health by active exercise and other healthy activities. Some interesting comments are:

- “I know that it’s not good for my health if I drink too much, but I think I can exercise and eat healthy food to compensate the negative impacts.” (Female, age 28, Designer and clothes shop owner)
• “CSD is the drink that I can never give up because it’s the most refreshing drink. The bubbles stimulate my sensations. They always promote through appetite.” (Male, age 27, Photographer)

5.2.3 CSD Users – NCB Category

CSD users feel that NCB category, which does not have any fizzy sensation due to lack of carbon dioxide in the beverages, cannot deliver the same level of taste and sensation that they want from their beverages. Therefore, they do not feel that they would choose the products from NCB category as their preferred soft drink. Although they also recognize the product category as having natural and healthy association, CSD users do not feel that these imageries and associations are what they are looking for in the ideal drinking experience. Health benefits that are perceived to be offered by NCB category, especially green tea products, are not important to the CSD users who feel that they have other ways of staying healthy such as exercising. Some interesting comments are:

• “I know that there are lots of other drinks that are better for health than Coke, but being healthy is not only through drinks. It’s from food, getting enough rest, and exercise.” (Female, age 24, Business Owner)

• “Juices are great source for vitamins and green tea has antioxidant, but I don’t think you will get any of that in the drink because it’s also full of sugar and has been processed.” (Male, age 28, Financial Analyst)
5.2.4 CSD Users – Diet Cola Category

CSD users perceive diet colas to have fizzy sensation and sweet taste, similar to CSD products. However, they say that diet colas do not deliver the same level of sweetness or fizzy sensation that CSD users are used to getting from CSD beverages. As a result, they do not consider diet colas as a replacement for CSD category. The respondents whose ages are near late 20s (27+) and are CSD users, however, show increasing concern about the possible negative effects of continuing to consume CSDs. As a result, although they do not yet feel that they are willing to give up the preferred taste and sensation of CSD products for diet colas, they may be considering the switch in the next few years. Most CSD users also feel that they already are offsetting the negative effects of CSD by exercising and other healthy living means. Some interesting comments are:

- “Though they try promoting the same Coke taste with no sugar, but to me, it’s not the same. The fizziness level I feel is lower and the sweet taste is weird.” (Male, age 23, Restaurant manager)
- “I know that as we grow older our health deteriorates naturally. But life is short, and I just want to enjoy every moment of it.” (Female, age 27, Sales)

5.2.5 NCB Users – CSD Category

NCB users used to drink CSD products regularly when they were younger, especially when they were teenagers, and they enjoyed the sweet taste and fizzy sensation from the CSD products. However, they perceive CSD category to have many negative health effects such as fattening, sticky throat from artificial taste, as well as bad nutritional values. These negative perceptions made NCB users to switch
from CSDs to healthier NCB category. They feel that CSD brands are focused on providing fun and fizz, which they are not looking for from beverage brands anymore. Some interesting comments are:

- “I used to drink Pepsi at least 2 cans per day and no matter how hard I try to cut down on food, my weight drops very minimally. I want to have a better shape so I switched to something that I perceived to be healthier than CSD.” (Female, age 26, Tour Guide)
- “Since I use my voice a lot, and lately it’s not so good. I tried to find the reason that caused it, and I feel that maybe it’s the sticky sweet feeling that sticks in my throat.” (Male, age 27, Freelance Band)

5.2.6 NCB Users – NCB Category

NCB users like NCB product category because they feel it provides them with healthy beverage through natural tastes, health-related benefits and brand imageries that feature natural and healthy imageries based on the type of ingredients used in NCB products such as fruits in fruit juice and tea in green tea. NCB users admit that the NCB products do not taste as good as CSDs, especially because they do not have fizzy sensation. However they feel that it can still be enjoyable when they focus on different tastes and flavors such as the light sour and sweet taste in orange juices. Benefits are positive in itself and because consumers believe that they are made from natural ingredients that are good for health, with product claims of vitamins and other health related attributes. Brand imageries of NCB products further reinforce the perception of natural and healthy benefits, as consumers mention imageries of oranges and natural tea leaves. As a result, NCB users feel that they are able to get healthier
beverage with natural taste which is provided by the brand which uses natural and health related imageries. Some interesting comments are:

- “Lime juice from Splash is quite good. Though it lacks the fun feeling of bubbles, but I think it’s better for my health.” (Female, age 27, Employee)
- “Kirin green tea is great. I see the communication images of green tea natural leaves, and I feel that it’s being filled right into the bottle.” (Male, age 29, Employee)

5.2.7 NCB Users – Diet Cola Category

NCB users perceive diet colas as beverages which do not taste as good as CSDs and are not as healthy as NCBs. They feel that it does not have the same level of sweet taste and fizzy sensation that they like about CSD category and do not have health supplementary benefits for the body such as vitamins that NCBs have. As a result, they do not feel that diet colas are appealing beverage products. In addition, they feel that the brand imagery of diet colas does not help convince them that diet cola is a healthier or more enjoyable/tasty beverage compared to the CSD or NCB category. Some interesting comments are:

- “The taste of no-sugar cola sucks, and it doesn’t have any other health connotations to it. It would be interesting to see though if they could add in Vitamins.” (Female, age 25, Business Owner)
5.2.8 Diet Cola Users – CSD Category

Diet Cola users feel that CSD beverages offer the most pleasurable drinking experience; they feel that it has the best taste profile, with sweet taste and fizzy sensation. However, they feel that it does not offer any way to take away the negative health effects of CSD category, and that the CSD brands are focused on fun and youthfulness, which they do not feel excited about. When they compare CSD brands to Diet Cola brands in the study (Pepsi Max, Coke Zero), Diet Cola users feel that CSD brands are focused on being the original colas, while diet cola brands are seen as the ‘new’ and trendy beverage brands. Some interesting comments are:

- “Pepsi and Coke are very original. The image is always about youngsters enjoying lives. Pepsi Max and Coke Zero are being seen as more mature and sophisticated.” (Male, age 28, Financial Consultant)
- “Though both brands try to have so many promotions, but it’s not exciting any more. Everything looks the same.” (Female, age 26, Employee)

5.2.9 Diet Cola Users – NCB Category

Diet Cola users feel that NCB beverages do not fit what they are looking for from beverages. They feel that NCB beverages do not have appealing taste because it neither has fizzy sensation nor trendy, modern brand image. Although Diet Cola users recognize that NCB beverages have vitamins and nutrients, they do not feel that those are health benefits that they are looking for. When compared to diet colas, consumers feel that NCB beverages are inferior because it does not offer fizzy sensation and do not have trendy, modern brand image. Some interesting comments are:
• “Juices and Green Tea are better alternatives, but I don’t want to give up on the fizz as it adds feeling of fun and liveliness while drinking.” (Male, age 24, Sales)

• “The image of green tea and juice drinks are much more mellow than those of Coke and Pepsi.” (Female, age 20, ABAC student)

5.2.10 Diet Cola Users – Diet Colas Category

Diet Cola users feel that diet cola category offers aspirational brand imagery with relevant health benefits, such as no weight gain, while still giving them the fizzy sensation, the sweet taste is not as good as that of CSD. They feel that diet cola beverages do not taste as good as CSDs, especially the sweet taste. However, they perceive diet colas to have less negative health effects, because the beverages use artificial sweeteners for zero sugar or zero calories, which they feel help prevent the problem of weight gains. Additionally, Diet Cola users feel that Diet Cola brands have imagery which encourages the perception of more mature, smart and fashionable brands than CSD brands. As a result, they prefer diet cola category because they feel that it minimizes negative health effects, but keeps the fizzy sensation and some sweet taste they like about CSD beverages. Furthermore, diet cola brands have imageries which are more mature, smart and fashionable, which diet cola users like to be associated with. Some interesting comments are:

• “I have to admit that Coke actually tastes better than Coke Zero. I like the sweetness from Coke more but Coke Zero will not give me any negative impact on health.” (Male, age 25, Accountant)
“Being seen with Coke Zero is cooler than being seen drinking green tea. It’s more sophisticated and mature choice of beverage.” (Male, age 28, Consultant)

5.3 Perception of Diet Cola Brands (Pepsi Max (old), Pepsi Max (new), Coke Zero)

5.3.1 Perception of Diet Cola Brands (Pepsi Max (old), Pepsi Max (new), Coke Zero) Overall

In the focus group interview, the respondents were asked to describe their perception of different diet cola brands (Pepsi Max (old), Pepsi Max (new), Coke Zero), as well as how they are different from the CSD brands (Pepsi, Coca-Cola). The research also attempts to find the elements of marketing mix which help form their perception of different brands.

5.3.2 Perception of Pepsi Max (old)

The respondents perceive Pepsi Max (old) as similar to regular Pepsi. They state that they form this perception based on the packaging (which is blue with a Pepsi logo), which they feel is similar to the packaging of regular Pepsi. They also comment that the name ‘Pepsi Max’ is quite similar to regular Pepsi, which has a marketing slogan in the Thai market of ‘Live life to the fullest’. However, respondents said that Pepsi Max (old) does not taste as good as regular Pepsi because it is less sweet. As a result, they perceive Pepsi Max (old) as an inferior version of regular Pepsi, and that a person would make a better choice if he/she drinks regular Pepsi instead. The comment is:
• “Pepsi Max is not at all different from Pepsi. The color of the can is the same, and they have hardly or never promoted it.” (Female, age 24, Receptionist)

The users of Pepsi Max (old) said that they prefer the brand because they like the decreased sweet taste of the product itself. They feel that it is also similar to regular Pepsi, but they do not like the regular Pepsi’s sweeter taste. The comment is:

• “I only like the taste of it but never like its packaging. Even till today, I don’t understand why it’s being called Pepsi Max.” (Female, age 28, Account Director)

5.3.3 Perception of Coke Zero

Respondents said that they feel Coke Zero is different and unique compared to regular Coca-Cola as a brand. They feel that the difference in brand images is clearly shown in the packaging because Coke Zero is black, which makes it different from Coca-Cola, which is always red. The respondents also like black color because they feel that it makes Coke Zero more mysterious, sophisticated, mature and masculine than regular Coca-Cola. This perception of consumers is generated with the Coke Zero TV commercials, which focus on communicating the ‘0 Sugar’ aspect of Coke Zero. It is also seen as more health conscious and positive because the name Coke Zero shows that it has zero sugar content. As a consequence it is seen to help prevent weight gain, which is a negative aspect of CSD. Although the respondents said that Coke Zero does not taste as good as regular Coca-Cola because it is less sweet, they feel that it is a more attractive beverage brand to be associated with at the image level.
Pepsi Max (old) users feel that Coke Zero is a diet cola because of its claim to have zero sugar. However, they feel that the product still tastes sweeter than Pepsi Max, and they do not like it. The brand image level, on the other hand is acceptable and appreciated by them. Some interesting comments are:

- “I like the idea of using the opposite color for Coke Zero. Plus there’s no beverage can in the market right now that is black.” (Male, age 24, Architect)
- “It communicates clearly on the product of 0 sugar, both on the packaging itself as well as in the advertisements where group of teens cheer out the word zero repetitively.” (Male, age 23, Programmer)
- “All of Coke Zero communications are all under the same theme of black color, and the message is very single minded.” (Female, age 26, Account Manager)
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter aims to provide a summary of the findings in the research, and give the reader an overview of how the findings answer the objectives of this paper.

6.1 Overview

The research finds that there are three main consumer types: Heavy CSD users, NCB users, and Diet Cola users. Each type of users has different ideal drinking experiences, which lead to different expectations from the beverage product, health benefits, and brand imagery.

Overall, diet cola is perceived to be inferior in taste. It is not as sweet as CSD although it still has a similar fizzy sensation. It is also seen as not as healthy as NCB, which offers consumers health supplementary ingredients such as vitamins in natural tea and fruits. However, consumers perceive that new diet cola brands (Pepsi Max (new), Coke Zero) offer differentiated, mature, and more sophisticated beverage brand imagery. It is also more relevant to the 20+ consumers.

6.2 Drinking Insight and CSD Overall

The research findings indicate that there exist distinctly different expectations for ideal drinking experiences of different user groups. Their different expectations are based on their expectations of taste, health benefit, and brand image of the choice of beverage. The differences found in the research indicate that Heavy CSD users look for the best sweet taste and fizzy sensation, while NCB users look for beverages
which give positive health impact, supported by natural/healthy brand imagery and an enjoyable sweet taste, while the fizzy sensation can be ignored. While for Diet Cola users, brand imagery is very important because it has to compliment its taste when being compared to regular cola as well as the health benefit when being compared to NCB.

6.2.1 Heavy CSD Users

Heavy CSD users are focused on having the most enjoyable tasty beverage, with sweetness and fizzy sensation. They are not concerned about the negative effects on health from consuming CSD because they feel that they can offset them with healthy lifestyle activities such as exercise. They feel that the brand imagery helps reinforce the beverage’s perception and ability to provide users with a pleasurable, tasty and refreshing drinking experience. They do not like diet colas because it does not taste as good as CSDs.

6.2.2 NCB Users

NCB users look for beverages which are sweet and have positive impact on health through supplements such as vitamins or natural ingredients (fruits, tea) with similar brand imagery. Although NCB users used to prefer CSDs, they now like NCBs because they feel the beverages give positive health benefits from natural ingredients and supplements (vitamins, etc), and the brands with imageries of natural and healthy ingredients reassure them that they are picking the ‘healthier’ beverage in the market. They do not choose diet colas because they feel it is still a CSD, but does not taste as good and has less health benefits than NCB.
6.2.3 Diet Cola Users

Diet Cola users look for beverages which provide the most appealing brand imagery and help make them look cool and trendy among their peers. As a result, they prefer diet cola brands, which they feel has the most modern and cool brand imagery, especially because of the packaging and advertising using black colors and adult celebrities to convey cool image among consumers’ peers, in their late 20’s. Although they feel the taste of diet colas is not as good as that of CSDs, the benefit of no weight gain and trendy cool brand imagery make diet colas a better choice.

6.3 Perception of CSD, NCB, Diet Cola Product Categories Overall

The research finds that consumers have different expectations from different product categories. As a result, consumers focus on different attributes of the product/brand offered in each category. The study finds that CSD category is led by the taste experience, which is mainly based on the sweet taste and fizzy sensation. NCB category, however, focuses on how well the brand/product can offer positive health benefits and brand imagery, while the sweet taste helps keep the beverage enjoyable. However, fizzy sensation is considered not relevant because it is uniquely fit to CSD category. Diet cola category, on the other hand, does not have superior taste or health benefit when compared to CSD or NCB category. Therefore, consumers focus on the brand imagery of the category. They expect the brand imagery to be more mature and sophisticated than CSD, while having more ‘cool’ factor and is more widely accepted in popular culture than NCB, which is seen as focusing only on good health.
6.4 Perception of Diet Cola Brands (Pepsi Max (old), Coke Zero) Overall

Consumers’ perception of diet cola brands is mainly created by their reaction to the product packaging and accompanying advertisements in the overall market. As a result, Pepsi Max (old) is perceived as an inferior version of regular Pepsi because of the similar colors used in packaging and the name of the brands.

Coke Zero, however, is perceived as different. It is seen as a more mature brand than regular Coca-Cola because of its black packaging.

6.4.1 Pepsi Max (old)

Pepsi Max (old) is perceived negatively by most respondents in the study because they feel it reminds them of regular Pepsi which is due to similar colors on the packaging (red/blue), as well as the similarity of name and slogan (Pepsi Max/’Live life to the fullest’). As the taste of Pepsi Max (old) is not as sweet as regular Pepsi, most consumers reject (except for consumers who actually prefer the less sweet taste) the product and perceive the brand as an inferior beverage.

6.4.2 Coke Zero

Coke Zero is perceived positively by consumers because it is seen as a distinctly different brand from regular Coca-Cola. The respondents said that this is mainly due to the black color used in the packaging, as well as the ads, which focus on the message ‘0 Sugar’. As a result, the brand is seen as a more mature and sophisticated beverage choice than CSD, which is considered as too young.
6.5 Product Blind Test (Pepsi Max VS Coke Zero)

Given all the findings being derived from all eight focus group interviews it is very interesting to note something that the researcher added in the end of each focus group session without having any objectivity in mind but just out of curiosity in determining consumers’ reactions toward unbranded situation.

The researcher brought in eight sets of Pepsi Max and Coke Zero (unbranded) i.e. it was poured into a clear plastic glass and serve to the consumers. The Pepsi Max glass was always the first glass to be tested with consumers and thus label by the researcher as glass no. 1 in discussing with consumers. Plain crackers were given out to consumers to take a bite and follow by a sip of water to clear the taste in their mouth before the consumers were asked to taste the second glass which is Coke Zero and label as glass no. 2. The consumers were asked to taste the product one by one and to tell the researcher the glass they preferred most.

The results were surprising as Pepsi Max has won across all groups in terms of its taste when being compared to Coke Zero. Even among Coke Zero Loyalist.

From this the researcher made an assumption that under branded situations product taste play a very big role for consumers to judge what they prefer over the others. But in reality consumers, just like us are being faced with so many choices on a daily basis, therefore it is very important for marketers to position their brands that appeals and always up to date with their targets.
6.6 Recommendation

The researcher would like to recommend further studies in two areas:

- A qualitative post launch study for Pepsi Max
  
  This will serve best for Pepsi Max brand team. They will know the effectiveness of their launched and what they should do in order to maintain their market share in the diet cola category.

- A quantitative test in determining the preferred diet cola taste (Pepsi Max VS Coke Zero) among target population in Bangkok
  
  This will help to enhance the brand and a very strong claim to be used in the brand’s communications in the future.
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**WEBSITE:**


**Under topic of Market Situations:**


**Under topic of Statement of the Problems:**


1http://elearning.cmmu.mahidol.ac.th/claroline/phpbb/viewtopic.php?topic=147&start =0


APPENDIX
Discussion Guideline (2hrs focus group)

1. INTRODUCTION TO MARKET RESEARCH (10 mins)
   - Introduction of Explorer
   - Explain interview objectives and house rules:
     - An in-depth understanding
     - It’s all about opinion, no right or wrong answers
     - Be yourselves, be relaxed, and most importantly enjoy the discussion
     - Ask respondent to introduce themselves:
       - Name, age, family situation, hobbies, and interests

2. DRINKING INSIGHT AND CSD (15 mins)
   OUTPUT: Understand Key Issue / Insight of each Segment
   - Water/ beverages from the moment you wake up till going to bed?
     - Probe for day part/ in-home VS out-of-home
     - Set occasions and mood during the day
     - Why do you choose to drink x, y and z
     - Identify key entry point; image, brand, taste, familiarity etc
     - Characters and key benefits of selected beverages VS occasions/ mood
   - Role of CSD in the drinking occasions:
     - Why it has to be CSD in this particular occasion?
     - What do you get from drinking CSD (functional and emotional benefits)
     - If CSD is not available, what would it be? What will be missing out?
     - What do you get from drinking CSD that cannot get from any drinks?
     - What do you want from CSD that you have not got?

     - Exhibition Technique (mood and tone): if you have to create exhibition booths based on your drinking experiences
       - The 1st booth, the beverage I cannot live without
• The 2nd booth, my ideal CSD/ cola
  
  o In the past 2-3 years, any drink that you drink more… less…

3. **CHOICES (15 mins)**
   OUTPUT: Understand How Consumers Make Their Choices

- CSD Segmentation (only discussion not segmentation exercise)
  - Can you divide CSD into small groups?
  - What x group has in common that makes it different from y group?
    Vice versa (functional and emotional benefits)
  - When/ occasions to drink this segment?

  **Focus on cola segment and check diet segment if not mentioned spontaneously**

  - Factors considered in segment choice? Understand influencers of choice, i.e. people, TVC, etc.
  - If x segment is not available, which segment is the alternative? Why?
  - Talking about factors you use to judge each segment, can you rank its importance compared to your needs and expectations?

4. **TRIGGERS AND BARRIERS – CATEGORY USERS / RECENTLY CONVERTED (30 mins)**
   OUTPUT: Job to be done for each profile within Diet Category

- When talking about diet cola, what comes to mind?
- When was the 1st time you drink diet cola? (Pathway)
- What triggers and/ or influences you drink diet cola?
- What brands of diet cola’s that you have tried?

**Pepsi Max, Coke Zero**
- Tell me the process of your decision making, know from, why buy….
- What do you want from trying x?
- What you don’t want but it’s there?
- Likes and dislikes?

If tried, check product taste satisfaction – 10 scores

**FOR NON USER GROUPS ONLY**

4.1 Understand Triggers and Barriers (30 mins)
OUTPUT: Job to be done for Non Category Users

- Why don’t you try/ drink diet cola’s?
  - What do you expect from diet cola’s?
  - When would you see yourself drinking it?
  - If not diet cola’s, any drinks that gives you what you want from diet cola’s?
  - If you have to sell diet cola’s, what would you do/ tell consumers who don’t?

5. UNDERSTAND DRIVERS OF PERCEPTION; ROLE OF MIX (30 mins)
OUTPUT: Understand Top of Mind Perception of Diet Cola Brands

- Understand source of awareness of each brand.
- Probe to understand which mix element is recalled.
- Probe to understand importance of each mix element.
- Understand how each element has contributed to perception: Product, Packaging, Pricing, Communication, Activation or In store visibility

Probe for key drivers/ elements that drive such perceptions (TVC, pack, name, etc)

- **Brand World Technique**: Coke Zero and Pepsi Max
- **Brand Personality Exercise**: users of Coke Zero and Pepsi Max

6. ASSESSMENT OF PEPSI MAX AND COKE ZERO BRAND PROPOSITION (20 mins)

- Proposition: ‘Simple But Cool’ versus ‘Live your life to the Max’
  - Understanding and Relevancy
• Implied benefit and Like/ dislike
  – RTB: “0% sugar, but real cola taste” versus “Max taste, 0% calorie”
  • Understanding and Relevancy
  • Implied benefit and Like / Dislike
  • Check low sugar, no sugar, no calorie and low calorie

THANK RESPONDENTS AND CLOSE DISCUSSION