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Meta-Synthesis of Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior in the Strategic Positioning of the Country's Vegetable Oil Industry

Hamid Reza. Izadi[1], Farshid. Namamian[2*]

[1] PhD student, Department of Business Administration, Ha.C., Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran
[2] Department of Business Administration, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: f.namamian@iau.ac.ir

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study was to conduct a meta-synthesis of the factors influencing consumer behavior in the strategic positioning of the country's vegetable oil industry. In the present study, the statistical population consisted of articles and documents related to the research domain published during the period from 2005 to 2018. In terms of purpose, this research is applied; regarding the nature of the data and the method of analysis, it is qualitative; and with respect to data collection, it is based on documentary sources. The research employed a descriptive-analytical approach, and open coding was used for data analysis. All published documents and records within the conceptual scope of the study were examined through reputable domestic and international databases using predefined keywords in order to obtain a sample that would lead to theoretical saturation. In the final research model, two main components—consumer behavior and strategic positioning—were identified and extracted. Each of these principal components comprised several subcategories and thematic content codes. Finally, the findings were discussed and analyzed, and practical recommendations were proposed for relevant stakeholders.

Keywords: *Meta-synthesis, Consumer Behavior, Strategic Positioning, Vegetable Oil Industry.*

1. Introduction

Consumer behavior and strategic positioning have become increasingly interdependent constructs in contemporary management and marketing research, particularly in industries characterized by intense competition, changing consumption patterns, technological transformation, and rising customer expectations. In consumer goods markets, firms can no longer rely only on production capacity, price competition, or traditional distribution channels; rather, sustainable market presence depends on the ability to understand how consumers perceive value, evaluate alternatives, respond to brand signals, and translate preferences into purchasing decisions. This issue is especially important in the vegetable oil industry, where products are relatively similar in their functional purpose, yet consumers differentiate among brands based on perceived quality, health orientation, price fairness, packaging, availability, brand trust, advertising messages, and broader social or cultural meanings. Accordingly, consumer behavior provides the informational foundation for strategic positioning, while positioning determines how firms translate consumer insight into a differentiated market identity. Recent studies in marketing analytics, competitive strategy, and consumer decision-making confirm that firms increasingly use customer insights, big data, artificial intelligence, and predictive analytics to refine positioning strategies and align market offerings with consumer expectations (Aboagye, 2024; Adewusi et al., 2024; Muhajir, 2024; Okorie et al., 2024).

Strategic positioning refers to the deliberate selection of a distinct place in the target market and in the consumer's mind through coordinated decisions about segmentation, target market selection, product attributes, pricing, distribution, communication, and brand identity. In highly competitive sectors, positioning is not merely a communication activity but a comprehensive strategic process through which firms establish competitive advantage, defend market share, and respond to environmental change. Research on competitive strategy shows that firms operating in globalized, turbulent, and digitally transformed markets must continuously revise their positioning logic in response to competitors, technological disruption, consumer mobility, and emerging market opportunities (Ataman et al., 2023; Kurbatska et al., 2024; Obu & Ukpere, 2023; Urbanek, 2023). Studies on corporate and brand strategy also indicate that successful positioning depends on the interaction between external market analysis and internal strategic capabilities, including innovation capacity, marketing capability, supply chain flexibility, corporate reputation, and responsiveness to customer value (Adewumi et al., 2024; Holloway, 2024; Kurdi et al., 2022; Syaifuddin, 2021). Therefore, positioning is a dynamic managerial capability rather than a static market statement.

Consumer behavior, as a core determinant of positioning, includes psychological, social, cultural, situational, and marketing-related factors that influence the consumer's decision process. The literature emphasizes that purchase behavior is shaped by consumer perceptions, attitudes, motivations, satisfaction, trust, lifestyle, social influence, and prior experience with brands and products (Alizadeh & Kashani, 2022; Esha Kaur et al., 2023; Lejiw & Fauzi, 2023; Monfared & Hamidizadeh, 2025). In food-related and fast-moving consumer goods markets, these variables are especially salient because purchasing decisions are often repetitive, routine, price-sensitive, and influenced by perceived health, family consumption habits, store availability, packaging cues, and advertising exposure. Social marketing research further suggests that sustainable consumer behavior can be strengthened when firms align product value propositions with consumer awareness, social responsibility, and meaningful communication (Momenirad et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on advertising messages show that meaning induction in media and television advertising affects consumer interpretation and behavioral response, highlighting the importance of symbolic and communicative dimensions in consumer behavior (Soleimanpour & Norouzi, 2024). Thus, consumer behavior should be treated as a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, affective, social, and behavioral mechanisms.

The vegetable oil industry represents a strategic context in which consumer behavior and positioning intersect in complex ways. Although vegetable oil is a basic household commodity, purchasing decisions are influenced by factors beyond functional utility. Consumers may compare brands according to price, product type, perceived purity, health claims, packaging quality, availability in retail channels, promotional offers, and trust in the producer. In such markets, brand differentiation is difficult but necessary, because similar products compete for visibility and consumer loyalty. Evidence from retail and consumer-market studies indicates that product pricing, packaging, place, customer satisfaction, and visual merchandising can shape purchase behavior and customer engagement (Lejiw & Fauzi, 2023; Saranza et al., 2024). Moreover, brand

equity, willingness to pay a higher price, and brand loyalty are strengthened through social media marketing activities and consumer engagement mechanisms (Pashazadeh & Abdi, 2025). For vegetable oil producers, these findings imply that strategic positioning should not be limited to product availability or price reduction but should incorporate brand trust, perceived quality, value communication, and long-term consumer relationships.

The contemporary transformation of marketing has further complicated the relationship between consumer behavior and strategic positioning. Digitalization, e-commerce, omnichannel integration, artificial intelligence, and data-based decision-making have changed how firms understand markets and interact with consumers. Marketing 4.0 and Industry 4.0 perspectives emphasize that firms must integrate digital tools, analytics, automation, and platform-based engagement into their strategic marketing systems (Johnson et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2022; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2024; Sugiharto, 2024). Omnichannel strategies can improve business performance when integrated marketing communication creates a coherent customer experience across online and offline channels (Siregar & Marsasi, 2024). Similarly, digital trends in customer retention show that telecommunications and service firms increasingly rely on data-based personalization and continuous engagement to maintain customer relationships (N & Neerajakshi, 2024). Although the vegetable oil industry may appear less digitally intensive than telecommunications or online services, consumer goods producers increasingly depend on digital marketing, online retail visibility, social media reputation, and customer data to support positioning decisions.

Artificial intelligence and big data have introduced new opportunities for identifying consumer segments, predicting demand, designing personalized campaigns, and refining competitive positioning. Business intelligence tools help firms convert large-scale market data into strategic knowledge, while AI-enabled marketing frameworks support segmentation, personalization, and customer engagement (Adewusi et al., 2024; E., 2024; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2024). Predictive analytics can contribute to marketing performance by improving market forecasting, customer targeting, and resource allocation (Muhajir, 2024). In addition, behavior-based pricing research suggests that competing firms increasingly use observed consumer behavior and variety-seeking tendencies to design pricing strategies in competitive markets (Zhang et al., 2025). These developments are relevant to the vegetable oil industry because pricing, promotion, assortment, and distribution decisions must be informed by actual consumer behavior rather than managerial assumptions. A strategic position becomes more defensible when it is grounded in systematic knowledge of consumer response patterns.

Market segmentation and target market selection are central to positioning. Firms must identify heterogeneous consumer groups, evaluate their attractiveness, and determine which segments align with organizational resources and strategic objectives. Research on entry decisions under uncertainty emphasizes the importance of multi-criteria decision-making when firms assess market opportunities, competitive risks, and strategic alternatives (Wang & Luong, 2025). Studies on market navigation and international strategic success also demonstrate that firms entering or expanding in competitive markets must adapt positioning to local consumer expectations, competitive structures, and cultural conditions (Du, 2024). In the same vein, the analysis of luxury, cosmetics, prepared foods, and retail industries shows that positioning strategies are shaped by market leadership, sustainability orientation, competitor analysis, and differentiation mechanisms (Pan, 2024; Wang, 2024; Yang et al., 2024; Zhang, 2023). These insights suggest that vegetable oil producers should not apply a homogeneous market approach; rather, they should identify consumer segments based on price sensitivity, health concerns, brand loyalty, household size, income, lifestyle, and preferred shopping channels.

Sustainability and ethical consumption have also become increasingly important in consumer behavior and positioning. Consumers are gradually more attentive to environmental claims, responsible sourcing, health implications, and corporate social responsibility. Studies on sustainability marketing strategies show that sectors such as energy, luxury products, and food-related supply chains increasingly integrate sustainability into positioning and value creation (Pan, 2024; ŞEnyapar, 2024; Vitsentzatou et al., 2022). In the food and beverage service supply chain, digital transformation of the marketing mix affects how firms coordinate product, price, place, and promotion in response to consumer expectations and supply chain realities (Vitsentzatou et al., 2022). For the vegetable oil industry, sustainability-oriented positioning may involve healthier formulations, transparent labeling, responsible sourcing, efficient distribution, and credible communication. However, sustainability positioning must be supported by operational credibility; otherwise, it may not translate into consumer trust or loyalty.

Supply chain and distribution factors are also inseparable from consumer behavior in product-based industries. Availability, delivery reliability, retail presence, channel coverage, and logistics performance directly affect purchase convenience and brand preference. Strategic logistics research on halal products, for example, highlights the role of logistics systems in maintaining product credibility, market access, and consumer confidence (Maemunah & Syakbani, 2021). Supply chain strategy research also indicates that push strategies and "just-in-case" approaches influence supply chain performance, particularly under conditions of uncertainty and demand fluctuation (Kurdi et al., 2022). In consumer goods markets, distribution is not only an operational function but also a positioning instrument, because consumers often associate consistent availability and reliable delivery with brand strength. Therefore, for vegetable oil producers, strategic positioning requires alignment between consumer expectations and distribution capabilities.

Brand positioning represents another essential dimension of the relationship between consumer behavior and strategic market identity. Strong brands create recognizable meanings, reduce perceived risk, and encourage repeat purchasing. Brand-consumer relationship research indicates that loyalty is shaped by brand value creation and moderated by brand community characteristics (Alizadeh & Kashani, 2022). Social sharing value in restaurant livestreaming also affects customer attitudes and behaviors, suggesting that interactive and social forms of communication can enhance consumer engagement (Yang, 2024). In markets where product differences may be technically limited, brand image, perceived quality, trust, and consumer interaction become decisive positioning assets. Studies on customer satisfaction and organizational life-cycle conditions also show that internal organizational weaknesses can affect customer satisfaction and, consequently, market performance (Sayad Abdi et al., 2024). Thus, vegetable oil firms must integrate internal quality management, brand communication, and consumer relationship strategies to achieve a coherent position.

Competitive intelligence has become a major requirement for strategic positioning. Firms must monitor competitors, identify environmental threats, evaluate customer preferences, and adapt marketing strategies based on reliable information. Research on online marketing strategies based on competitive intelligence demonstrates that firms can prioritize marketing factors more effectively when they integrate market intelligence into strategic planning (Al-Sahlawi et al., 2024). Studies on competitive challenges in prepared dishes and strategic analysis of specific international brands show that industry competition often depends on the firm's ability to identify differentiation opportunities, adapt to consumer preferences, and respond to changing market structures (Wang, 2024; Yang et al., 2024). Similarly, strategic innovation and disruptive innovation studies emphasize that competitive advantage is increasingly shaped by network dynamics, technology adoption, and the capacity to redesign business models (Adewumi et al., 2024; Ataman et al., 2023). These findings are highly relevant to the vegetable oil industry, where firms must position themselves against domestic and foreign competitors, private labels, substitute products, and changing dietary preferences.

The sharing economy, start-up ecosystems, and digital entrepreneurship literature also provides useful implications for consumer-centered positioning. Although these fields differ from the vegetable oil industry, they show how technology, customer participation, and platform-based interaction reshape value creation and competitive logic (Oyeyemi et al., 2024; Wawas Bangun Tegar Sunaryo et al., 2024). Firms increasingly compete not only through products but also through experiences, access, responsiveness, and the ability to build trust across digital and physical touchpoints. In addition, studies on revitalizing print media strategies under digital disruption show that even traditional sectors must redesign their competitive strategies when consumer attention, information channels, and market structures change (Choliq et al., 2023). This is relevant to traditional manufacturing sectors such as vegetable oil production, where firms may be required to combine conventional distribution strength with digital communication, consumer analytics, and modern brand positioning.

Despite the growing body of research on consumer behavior, marketing mix transformation, competitive strategy, digital marketing, brand loyalty, pricing, supply chain flexibility, and sustainability, the literature remains fragmented. Some studies focus on technological tools and analytics (Adewusi et al., 2024; Okorie et al., 2024); others examine brand-consumer relationships and loyalty (Alizadeh & Kashani, 2022; Pashazadeh & Abdi, 2025); others emphasize competitive strategy, market entry, and strategic positioning (Kurbatska et al., 2024; Wang & Luong, 2025); and still others address supply chain, logistics, and marketing mix transformation (Holloway, 2024; Vitsentzatou et al., 2022). Iranian studies also

highlight consumer behavior, sustainable consumption, advertising meaning, customer satisfaction, and online trust, which are important for contextualizing strategic positioning in domestic markets (Momenirad et al., 2024; Monfared & Hamidizadeh, 2025; Sayad Abdi et al., 2024; Soleimanpour & Norouzi, 2024). However, there is still a need for an integrative framework that synthesizes these dispersed findings and identifies the key factors affecting consumer behavior in the strategic positioning of the vegetable oil industry.

Meta-synthesis is particularly appropriate for addressing this gap because it enables the systematic integration of qualitative findings and conceptual insights from previous studies into a comprehensive interpretive model. Rather than treating consumer behavior and strategic positioning as separate domains, meta-synthesis can reveal how cultural-social factors, psychological-individual factors, situational conditions, marketing mix elements, supply chain variables, segmentation strategy, target market selection, product positioning, brand positioning, and corporate positioning interact in a broader strategic system. Such an approach can help managers in the vegetable oil industry move beyond isolated marketing decisions and develop a coherent positioning architecture based on consumer insight, competitive intelligence, and market realities. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to conduct a meta-synthesis of the factors influencing consumer behavior in the strategic positioning of the country's vegetable oil industry.

2. Methods and Materials

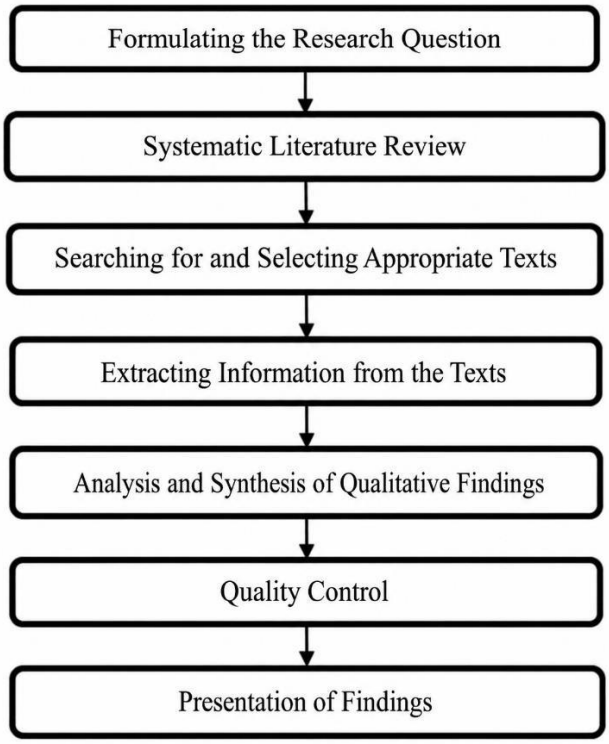
The growth of research and studies across different fields of science and knowledge has led to the increasing development of systematically and scientifically synthesizing previous studies on a specific topic in order to create a deeper understanding of prior research (Azkia & Tavakoli, 2006). Today, the use of synthesis-based studies, which systematically and scientifically present researchers with the essence of studies conducted on a specific subject, has expanded considerably. One of the methods introduced in recent years for reviewing, synthesizing, and critically examining previous research is meta-study. Meta-study is an in-depth analysis of research works conducted in a specific field. In previous years, greater attention was given to meta-analysis. However, it should be noted that meta-study differs from concepts such as meta-analysis, meta-synthesis, meta-theory, and meta-method. Meta-study encompasses all these concepts. Meta-theory may be defined as the analysis of theories used in previous research; meta-method as the analysis of the methodologies of previous research; meta-synthesis as the qualitative analysis of the findings of previous research; and meta-analysis as the quantitative analysis of the findings of previous research.

In the present study, the meta-synthesis method was used. Meta-synthesis is a type of secondary study that conducts a structured review of qualitative studies (Arab et al., 2014). Meta-synthesis examines information and findings extracted from other qualitative studies with related and similar topics. Accordingly, the sample required for meta-synthesis consists of selected qualitative studies based on their relevance to the research question. Meta-synthesis is not merely an integrated review of the qualitative literature on the intended topic, nor is it an analysis of secondary and primary data from selected studies; rather, it is an analysis of the findings of those studies. In other words, meta-synthesis is the synthesis of interpretations of the primary data of selected studies (Ghasemi & Raeitpisheh, 2015).

Therefore, considering the foundations of research methodology, this study is classified as applied research in terms of purpose. It is applied because its findings can practically serve as a basis for decision-making by managers and decision-makers. In terms of implementation, the present study is qualitative, which is among the most important techniques of exploratory research. The variables in this study are also qualitative. In this research, through a systematic review of texts, scientific and legal documents, databases, journals, and various search engines, sources published between 2005 and 2018 were examined. Articles and documents within this time period constituted the research population. Various keywords were used to search for research articles. Sampling continued until the researcher reached theoretical saturation and data adequacy. The meta-synthesis model used in this study was the seven-stage model of Sandelowski and Barroso (2006), which includes the following stages: formulating the question, systematically reviewing the literature, searching and selecting appropriate texts, extracting information from the texts, analyzing and synthesizing qualitative findings, quality control, and presenting the findings. Figure 1 illustrates these stages.

Figure 1

Implementation Stages of Meta-Synthesis Based on Sandelowski and Barroso's Seven-Stage Model, 2007



3. Findings and Results

To formulate the research question, different dimensions such as the study population, what is being investigated, when it is investigated, and how the method is implemented are used. An appropriate question in meta-synthesis can examine a specific phenomenon, its dimensions and consequences, and the factors affecting it. If the research question is too narrow and restrictive, only a limited number of studies will be identified, thereby reducing the generalizability of the findings. If the question is formulated too broadly and without limits, it may become difficult to reach an applicable conclusion for the target population.

The research questions are presented in Table 1 together with their parameters.

Table 1

Questions of the First Step of Meta-Synthesis

Parameters	Research Questions
What: nature of the task	Identifying the components, elements, indicators, and concepts presented in the literature concerning the effect of consumer behavior on strategic positioning.
Who: study population	Various works, including articles, book chapters, and theses, in which greater attention has been given to explaining and identifying the factors and components of consumer behavior and strategic positioning.
When: time limitation	All available works published between 2005 and 2018 up to the time of conducting the study.
How: methodological procedure	Thematic review of the works, identification and note-taking of key points, analysis of concepts, and classification of the identified concepts and categories.

Step Two: Systematic Review of the Literature

At this stage, the researcher systematically searches for articles published in different journals and selects the relevant keywords. The selection of keywords initially begins at a general level and then becomes more specific. Adequate care must be taken in selecting search terms, and combinations of terms should be used (Kamali, 2017). In the systematic review of texts in this study, various databases, journals, and search engines were examined for the period from 2000 to 2018. The diverse keywords used to search for the research articles are presented in Table 2. As a result of searching and reviewing various databases, journals, and search engines using the intended keywords, 751 articles were found.

Table 2

Keywords Used in Searching the Sources

واژههای کلیدي فارسی	English Keywords
رفتار مصرفکننده	Consumer behavior
عوامل مؤثر در فرایند تصمیمگیري خرید	Factors affecting the purchase decision-making process
عوامل فرهنگي – اجتماعي و گروهي	Cultural, social, and group factors
عوامل رواني- فردي	Psychological and individual factors
عوامل موقعیتي	Situational factors
عوامل آمیخته بازاریابي	Marketing mix factors
آمیخته کالا/خدمات	Product/service mix
آمیخته قیمتگذاری	Pricing mix
آمیخته زنجیره تأمین (توزیع)	Supply chain/distribution mix
آمیخته تبلیغات و ترفیع فروش	Advertising and sales promotion mix
موضع یابی	Positioning
موضع یابی استراتژیک	Strategic positioning
جایگاهیابی	Positioning
جایگاهیابی استراتژیک	Strategic positioning
جایگاه سازی	Position creation
مکانیابی	Location selection
مکانیابی استراتژیک	Strategic location selection
موقعیتیابی	Positioning
موقعیتیابی استراتژیک	Strategic positioning
پوزشنینگ	Positioning
موضع یابی محصول	Product positioning
استراتژی های موضع یابی محصول	Product positioning strategies
استراتژیهای جایگاهیابی	Positioning strategies
ایجاد جایگاه در بازار	Creating a position in the market
استراتژیهای بازاریابی	Marketing strategies
استراتژی بخشبندی بازار	Market segmentation strategy
استراتژی انتخاب بازار هدف	Target market selection strategy
استراتژی جایگاهیابی محصول	Product positioning strategy
استراتژی جایگاهیابی برند	Brand positioning strategy
استراتژی جایگاهیابی شرکت	Corporate positioning strategy

These keywords were searched in online information databases, including Google, Emerald, Elsevier, ScienceDirect, Irandoc, the Comprehensive Portal of Humanities, the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research database, Wikipedia, Magiran, Civilica, Noormags, and Elmnet. After searching the sources using the stated keywords and reviewing them stage by stage based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, scientific-research articles, conference papers, and university theses were examined.

Step Three: Searching and Selecting Appropriate Texts

At this stage, in each review round, the researcher excludes a number of articles that will not be examined in the meta-synthesis process. Once the articles consistent with the study parameters have been reviewed, in the next step the researcher must evaluate the methodological quality of the studies. The purpose of this process is to exclude articles whose findings the researcher does not consider trustworthy; therefore, the researcher may remove an article that should not be included in the meta-synthesis. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme is a tool commonly used to assess the quality of primary qualitative research studies. This program includes 10 questions that help the researcher determine the rigor, credibility, and importance of qualitative studies.

These questions focus on the following items: research objectives, methodological rationale, research design, sampling method, data collection, reflexivity, including the relationship between the researcher and participants, ethical considerations, rigor of data analysis, clear statement and presentation of findings, and research value. At this stage, the researcher assigns a quantitative score to each of these questions and then creates a form; thus, the scores given to each article can be summed, allowing the researcher to easily and briefly review the set of articles and observe the evaluation results. Based on Ruber's 50-point scale, the researcher can apply the following scoring system and exclude any article that scores below the "good" level, namely below 30: excellent, 40–50; very good, 31–40; good, 21–30; average, 11–20; and weak, 0–10 (Arab et al., 2014, p. 13). Ultimately, since all selected studies obtained scores higher than 30, none of the studies was excluded from the review process at this research step. Table 3 presents this information.

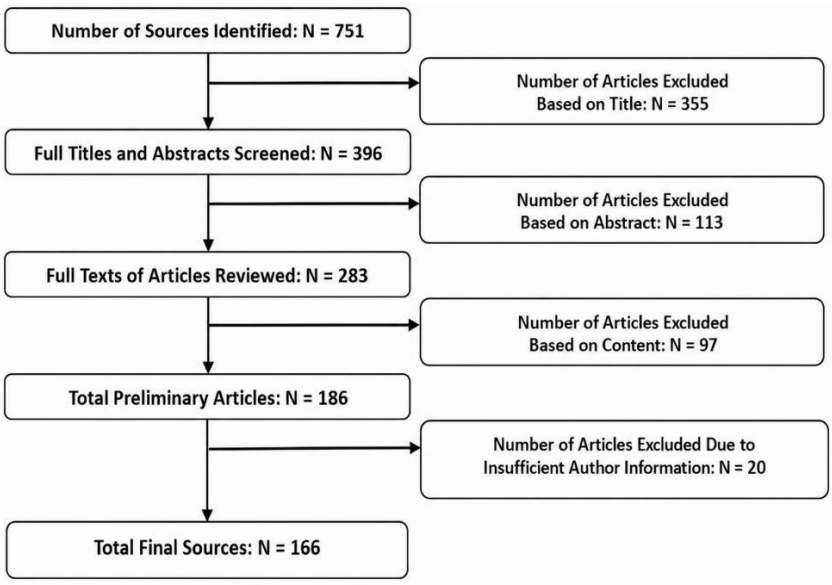
Table 3

Scores Assigned to Selected Leading Articles Based on the CASP Method

No.	Author	Research Objectives	Methodological Rationale	Research Design	Sampling Method	Data Collection	Reflexivity	Ethical Considerations	Rigor of Data Analysis	Clear Statement of Findings	Research Value	Total
1	Latifi, Mohammad Mehdi	3	3	4	5	5	3	5	4	4	4	40
2	Eslami, Niuriulava, and B.	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	41
3	Maryam Mokhtari Rad and Mohammad Jamal Kameli	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	43
4	Sharma and Srinivasan	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	38
5	Gholamhossein Nikookar, Ali Divandari, Abdolhamid Ebrahimi, and Mohammad Rahim Esfidani	5	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	41
6	Soutar and Mazzarol	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	38
7	Blankson	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	46

Figure 2

Algorithm for Selecting Appropriate Documents for Analysis



In Figure 2, a summary of the presented process can be observed together with the results obtained from the present study.

At this step, the studies obtained from the previous stage were examined, and in each review round, a number of studies that were not deemed appropriate for various reasons were rejected. The inclusion and exclusion criteria included factors such as geographical scope, language of the studies, time period of the studies, study methods, study population, study conditions, and type of study. In Table 4, due to limitations in article length, the sources that were approved based on the inclusion criteria and then fully reviewed are briefly presented. This table also functions as a form of literature review and, in addition to the document specifications and the author or authors, includes the main finding of each source.

Table 4

Stages and Number of Sources Reviewed in the Meta-Synthesis

No.	Research Title	Author/Authors	Research Findings
1	Explanation and Evaluation of Porter Company's Strategic Positioning in the Door Manufacturing Industry—Thesis	Latifi, Mohammad Mehdi (2011)	This study examined the relationship between physical and perceptual positioning and Porter's generic strategies in relation to strategic positioning. Its objective was to present a strategic framework for determining the strategic positioning of "Noder" Company in order to achieve competitive advantage. After conducting physical positioning and perceptual positioning, the organizational strategy was selected from among Porter's generic model strategies.
...	...	...	...
112	Investigation of Consumer Behavior, 2018	Jamshid Salar	Segmentation, perception, learning and memory, motivation, involvement and values, self-concept, personality and psychographics, attitude and purchase decision-making, purchase and disposal, reference groups and social class, culture and subculture.
...	...	...	...
166	Explanation of a Target Market Clustering Model, 2014	Habib Zare Ahmadabadi, Mahboubeh Rafiei Emam, and Alireza Naser Sadrabadi	In today's marketing world, market segmentation is highly important for better and more focused planning for customers. In this study, tile market clustering was examined using the ant colony optimization algorithm at the Irana factory.

Step Four: Extracting Information, Analyzing It, and Developing the Final Model

At all stages of meta-synthesis, the researcher continuously reviews the selected and finalized articles several times in order to access their substantive findings. The information of the articles can be categorized as follows: recording the reference related to each article, noting methodological information such as the research objective, method, procedures, and measurement instruments, and finally recording the relevant pages (Kamali, 2017). The next step involved extracting information from the approved documents and sources. At this stage, open and content-based, or axial, coding was used. More than 334 open codes were extracted from the approved corpus in the previous steps, a summary of which is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Open Coding Table (Summarized Due to Article Length Limitations)

Feature	Page	Code	Main Description of Open Code	Open Code	Content Code
1	1	001-1:c	This study examined the relationship between physical and perceptual positioning and Porter's generic strategies in relation to strategic positioning.	1. Intensity of competition, complexity, technological resources	1. Physical strategy
					2. Corporate positioning strategy
					3. Target market selection strategy
				2. Attention to customer needs, perceptual characteristics, communications, effectiveness, subjective criteria	1. Perceptual strategy

					2. Corporate positioning strategy
...	...	...	...	...	...
167		166-1:c	In today's marketing world, market segmentation is highly important for better and more focused planning for customers. In this study, tile market clustering was examined using the ant colony optimization algorithm at the Irana factory.	1. Market segmentation	1. Market segmentation strategy
					2. Target market selection strategy

Step Five: Analyzing and Synthesizing Qualitative Findings

The purpose of meta-synthesis is to create a new and integrated interpretation of findings. This method has been used to clarify concepts, patterns, and results in refining the existing state of knowledge and in the emergence of operational models and theories (Finfgeld, 2003, p. 893). In the analysis stage, the researcher searches for themes that have emerged across the studies included in the meta-synthesis. This action is known as "thematic analysis." Once the theme has been identified and specified, the researcher presents a classification that best describes the theme (Sandelowski, 2003).

Subsequently, the process of classification and axial coding was carried out. After reviewing the open codes and classifying them, 59 axial codes were identified and placed within 59 main categories. These categories were then classified into 13 main themes in the model. Due to limitations in article length, a summarized version is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Categorization, Content Code, and Reference Table

Code	Theme	Category	Content Code	Open Code Reference
1	Cultural, social, and group factors	Culture	Culture	1-4, 1-6, 2-8, 2-24, 3-26, 4-27, 1-28, 1-30, 2-30, 2-31, 1-32, 1-34, 1-38, 1-39, 1-40, 1-41, 3-42, 2-44, 1-46, 1-47, 1-48, 2-51, 2-53, 1-54, 1-56, 1-57, 1-58, 3-62, 2-63, 1-64, 2-65, 1-68, 2-71, 1-72, 1-73, 1-74, 1-75, 1-76, 1-77, 2-79, 1-80, 1-81, 1-83, 1-96, 3-98, 2-104, 1-110, 1-111, 1-112, 2-113, 2-114, 2-115, 2-116, 1-117, 1-118, 1-119, 2-121, 1-124, 1-129, 2-153, 1-154
...	...	...	...	...
80		On-time delivery	On-time delivery	1-1, 2-1, 1-2, 3-6, 4-6, 1-9, 1-10, 1-11, 3-14, 3-15, 1-16, 1-17, 3-17, 1-18, 2-18, 4-19, 1-21, 2-26, 2-27, 3-27, 3-28, 2-32, 1-35, 1-36, 3-36, 2-38, 2-39, 1-42, 2-43, 3-46, 2-47, 1-53, 2-57, 2-62, 1-66, 1-67, 2-70, 3-71, 2-78, 1-79, 1-84, 1-86, 2-93, 1-96, 1-99, 1-100, 1-101, 3-102, 1-104, 1-106, 1-107, 2-108, 2-121, 3-122, 1-128, 2-139, 2-141, 1-146, 1-148, 3-160, 1-162, 2-164, 2-166

Step Six: Quality Control

In the meta-synthesis method, the researcher considers the following procedures to maintain and control the quality of the study:

Throughout the entire research process, the researcher attempts to take the adopted steps by providing clear and precise explanations for the options available in the study.

The researcher uses both electronic and manual search methods to identify relevant studies.

The researcher applies the quality-control methods used in the original studies (Kamali, 2017).

Step Seven: Presentation of Findings

In meta-synthesis, the researcher extracts the answer to the research question based on the results of relevant studies. This answer is the result of synthesizing the findings of different studies and is arranged and organized according to the researcher's orientation and purpose (Kamali, 2017). The results obtained from the previous stages, including source searching, initial review, review of approved sources, data extraction, coding, and categorization, ultimately led to Table 7, which presents the main variables of the study.

Table 7

Model of Extracted Variables Based on the Meta-Synthesis Method

Theme: Macro Variables	Category: Sub-Variables	Content Code	Content Code Reference
Consumer behavior	Cultural, social, and group factors	Culture, social class, reference group, family, and household	1, 2, 3, 4
Consumer behavior	Psychological and individual factors	Motivation, perception, learning, personality and self-image, self-concept, lifestyle, attitude, age and life-cycle stage, occupation, living conditions, beliefs and opinions	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
Consumer behavior	Situational factors	Purchase occasion, purchase location, reason for purchase, purchase conditions	16, 17, 18, 19
Consumer behavior	Product/service mix	Quality, product variety, accessories, design, features, brand name	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
Consumer behavior	Pricing mix	Pricing of new products, price lines, payment methods, discounts, allowances	26, 27, 28, 29, 30
Consumer behavior	Value chain mix: distribution	Which distributor, number of distribution channels, distribution channel cost, product coverage, product assortment	31, 32, 33, 34, 35
Consumer behavior	Advertising and promotion mix	Advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations	36, 37, 38
Positioning, placement, positioning, strategic positioning	Market segmentation strategy	Geographic, demographic, psychographic, behavioral	39, 40, 41, 42
Positioning, placement, positioning, strategic positioning	Target market selection strategy	Target market size, expected market growth, competitors' position, personality and self-image, compatibility of the target market with organizational goals and strategy, fit with the organization's marketing resources and capabilities, assessment of the growth potential of the target market	43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49
Positioning, placement, positioning, strategic positioning	Positioning strategy	Product strategy, pricing strategy, place strategy, promotion strategy	50, 51, 52, 53
Positioning, placement, positioning, strategic positioning	Product positioning strategy	Quality, price, reliability, product size, product design, services, technical support	54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60
Positioning, placement, positioning, strategic positioning	Brand positioning strategy	Global presence, premium price, longevity, perceived quality, recognizable image, market leader, differentiated position, significant share	61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68
Positioning, placement, positioning, strategic positioning	Corporate positioning strategy	Customer orientation, competitor orientation, marketing capability, innovation orientation, environmental dynamism, organizational performance, reputation, scope of offerings, ease of doing business, differentiation, quality management, on-time delivery	69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present meta-synthesis revealed that the factors influencing consumer behavior in the strategic positioning of the vegetable oil industry can be organized into two overarching dimensions: consumer behavior and strategic positioning. The consumer behavior dimension consisted of six major categories, including cultural-social and group factors, psychological-individual factors, situational factors, product/service mix, pricing mix, value-chain distribution mix, and promotional mix. The strategic positioning dimension consisted of six additional categories, including market segmentation strategy, target market selection strategy, positioning strategy, product positioning strategy, brand positioning strategy, and corporate positioning strategy. The results indicate that strategic positioning in the vegetable oil industry cannot be understood independently from consumer behavior because consumers' cultural values, psychological characteristics, purchasing contexts, and responses to marketing activities collectively shape how firms should define and communicate their market positions. The meta-synthesis further demonstrated that effective positioning is the outcome of an integrated system in which consumer perceptions, organizational capabilities, market intelligence, and competitive strategies interact continuously.

One of the most significant findings of the study was the central role of cultural-social and group factors in shaping consumer behavior. The extracted model identified culture, social class, reference groups, family structures, and household characteristics as foundational determinants of purchasing behavior. This finding suggests that consumers

do not make purchasing decisions in isolation; rather, their choices are embedded within broader social and cultural environments. In the context of vegetable oil products, purchasing decisions are often influenced by family consumption habits, collective perceptions of quality, cultural preferences regarding food preparation, and recommendations from social networks. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the role of social sharing value, community influence, and social interactions in shaping customer attitudes and behaviors (Yang, 2024). Similarly, studies on sustainable consumer behavior have demonstrated that social influences and collective norms contribute significantly to consumption patterns and purchasing preferences (Momenirad et al., 2024). The prominence of cultural and social dimensions in the present model indicates that positioning strategies based solely on product characteristics may be insufficient unless they also align with consumers' social identities and cultural expectations.

The findings also highlighted the importance of psychological-individual factors, including motivation, perception, learning, personality, self-concept, lifestyle, attitudes, beliefs, and demographic life-stage variables. These findings support the view that consumers evaluate products not only through objective product attributes but also through subjective interpretations and cognitive processes. In vegetable oil markets, consumers may perceive quality differently based on prior experiences, health beliefs, lifestyle orientations, and trust in specific brands. This finding aligns with studies demonstrating the importance of consumer trust, attitudes, and psychological engagement in influencing purchasing decisions and technology adoption in retail environments (Esha Kaur et al., 2023; Monfared & Hamidizadeh, 2025). Research on customer value creation and brand-consumer relationships similarly suggests that consumer loyalty emerges from psychological attachment and perceived value rather than from functional attributes alone (Alizadeh & Kashani, 2022). Consequently, firms seeking effective positioning must understand the psychological mechanisms underlying consumer choice and integrate them into communication, branding, and product development strategies.

Another important finding concerns situational factors, including purchase occasion, purchase location, purchase motivation, and purchasing conditions. The results suggest that consumer behavior varies according to contextual circumstances and that purchasing decisions are frequently affected by environmental conditions rather than stable preferences alone. This finding supports previous research indicating that customer engagement and purchasing behavior are strongly influenced by contextual retail factors, visual merchandising, and situational marketing stimuli (Saranza et al., 2024). Likewise, omnichannel marketing studies have demonstrated that customer responses differ depending on the purchasing channel and interaction context (Siregar & Marsasi, 2024). In the vegetable oil industry, situational variables such as product availability, shelf placement, seasonal demand patterns, and promotional timing may significantly influence consumer decisions. Therefore, strategic positioning should account for situational variability rather than assuming homogeneous consumer behavior across all purchasing contexts.

The meta-synthesis further revealed that marketing-mix variables constitute a major component of consumer behavior. Product and service characteristics such as quality, variety, accessories, design, features, and brand identity emerged as influential determinants. This finding is highly consistent with contemporary marketing literature emphasizing that product differentiation remains a primary source of competitive advantage even in markets characterized by product similarity (Pan, 2024; Yang et al., 2024). Studies on consumer purchasing behavior have repeatedly demonstrated that packaging, product quality, and perceived value significantly influence buying decisions (Esha Kaur et al., 2023; Lejiw & Fauzi, 2023). In the vegetable oil industry, where functional differentiation may be limited, perceived quality and brand associations become particularly important in shaping consumer preferences. The results therefore suggest that product positioning strategies should emphasize tangible and intangible quality indicators simultaneously.

Pricing factors emerged as another significant category affecting consumer behavior. The model identified product pricing, pricing structures, payment methods, discounts, and allowances as influential elements. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that pricing remains one of the most powerful signals influencing consumer evaluations and purchase intentions. Studies on behavior-based pricing and competitive market strategies have shown that firms increasingly use consumer behavior information to optimize pricing decisions and improve market positioning (Zhang et al., 2025). Similarly, research on consumer purchasing behavior confirms that price perceptions significantly influence customer satisfaction and purchase decisions (Lejiw & Fauzi, 2023). For vegetable oil producers, the findings imply that pricing strategies should be designed not

only from a cost perspective but also from a consumer perception perspective. Consumers frequently interpret price as an indicator of quality, reliability, and brand credibility, making pricing an important positioning tool.

The findings also emphasized the strategic importance of distribution and supply-chain factors. Distribution channels, channel coverage, distribution costs, product availability, and assortment decisions were identified as influential variables affecting consumer behavior. This result highlights the close relationship between operational effectiveness and market positioning. Studies examining supply-chain flexibility and strategic logistics have similarly demonstrated that availability, responsiveness, and distribution performance directly influence customer perceptions and organizational competitiveness (Holloway, 2024; Maemunah & Syakbani, 2021). Research on supply-chain strategies also indicates that efficient distribution systems improve market responsiveness and customer satisfaction (Kurdi et al., 2022). The current findings therefore suggest that positioning strategies in the vegetable oil industry must extend beyond communication and branding efforts to include distribution excellence and supply-chain reliability.

The promotional mix was another major category extracted from the meta-synthesis. Advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations emerged as influential factors affecting consumer behavior. This finding supports studies emphasizing the role of integrated marketing communication in influencing customer attitudes, engagement, and purchasing decisions (Siregar & Marsasi, 2024). Research on advertising message effectiveness also suggests that consumers construct meaning from marketing communications and that this process significantly shapes behavioral responses (Soleimanpour & Norouzi, 2024). Furthermore, digital marketing studies indicate that social media activities and interactive communication platforms contribute to stronger brand equity and customer loyalty (Pashazadeh & Abdi, 2025). Accordingly, vegetable oil companies should adopt integrated communication strategies that coordinate traditional advertising, digital engagement, public relations activities, and promotional campaigns to strengthen positioning outcomes.

Regarding the strategic positioning dimension, the findings identified market segmentation as a foundational strategic activity. Geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral segmentation variables were extracted as key elements of effective positioning. This finding is consistent with strategic marketing literature arguing that successful positioning begins with identifying meaningful consumer differences and grouping customers according to shared characteristics (Aboagye, 2024; Wang & Luong, 2025). The results indicate that vegetable oil firms cannot effectively serve the entire market with a single positioning strategy. Instead, they must identify distinct consumer segments characterized by different preferences, health concerns, income levels, purchasing habits, and brand expectations.

The target market selection category also emerged as highly significant. Variables such as market size, expected growth, competitive position, compatibility with organizational objectives, and alignment with organizational capabilities were identified as influential determinants. This finding corresponds closely with studies emphasizing strategic decision-making under uncertainty and market opportunity assessment (Wang & Luong, 2025). Research on international market entry and competitive strategy similarly demonstrates that successful firms evaluate market attractiveness alongside internal organizational capabilities before selecting target markets (Du, 2024; Kurbatska et al., 2024). Thus, the findings reinforce the notion that target market selection should be based on strategic fit rather than market size alone.

The findings further revealed that product positioning, brand positioning, and corporate positioning represent distinct but interconnected strategic mechanisms. Product positioning variables included quality, price, reliability, design, and technical support. Brand positioning variables included global presence, perceived quality, market leadership, differentiation, and market share. Corporate positioning variables included customer orientation, competitor orientation, innovation capability, reputation, organizational performance, quality management, and timely delivery. These findings are strongly supported by research on sustainable competitive advantage, competitive strategy, and innovation-based differentiation (Adewumi et al., 2024; Ataman et al., 2023; Urbanek, 2023). Studies on corporate communication and reputation management likewise demonstrate that organizational reputation and customer value creation contribute significantly to long-term competitive positioning (Syaifuddin, 2021). Furthermore, investigations into digital transformation and Marketing 4.0 indicate that firms increasingly differentiate themselves through innovation, customer-centricity, and technological capabilities rather than through products alone (Johnson et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2022; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2024). Therefore, the results suggest that strategic positioning in the vegetable oil industry should be approached as a

multidimensional process involving products, brands, and organizational identity simultaneously.

An additional implication of the findings is the growing significance of digitalization, analytics, and technological capabilities in understanding consumer behavior and supporting strategic positioning. Studies on big data, business intelligence, predictive analytics, competitive intelligence, and AI-enabled marketing consistently emphasize the value of data-driven decision-making in contemporary markets (Adewusi et al., 2024; Al-Sahlawi et al., 2024; E., 2024; Muhajir, 2024; Okorie et al., 2024). The findings of the present study support these conclusions by showing that effective positioning depends upon accurate identification of consumer needs, preferences, and behavioral patterns. In increasingly competitive markets, firms that systematically collect and analyze consumer data are more capable of developing responsive positioning strategies and maintaining competitive advantage.

Overall, the meta-synthesis demonstrates that consumer behavior and strategic positioning should be viewed as mutually reinforcing constructs. Consumer behavior provides the informational foundation for segmentation, targeting, positioning, branding, pricing, and communication decisions, while strategic positioning shapes how consumers perceive and evaluate products and organizations. The resulting model suggests that successful positioning in the vegetable oil industry requires simultaneous attention to cultural, psychological, situational, operational, communicative, and strategic dimensions. The integration of these dimensions creates a comprehensive framework through which firms can achieve stronger market differentiation, greater customer loyalty, and more sustainable competitive performance.

The present study has several limitations. First, the findings were derived from previously published studies and therefore depended on the quality, scope, and methodological rigor of existing research. Second, the meta-synthesis focused on studies available within the selected time frame, which may have excluded more recent developments in digital marketing, artificial intelligence, and consumer analytics. Third, differences in research contexts, industries, and geographical settings may have influenced the comparability of findings across studies. Finally, because the study employed a qualitative synthesis approach, the relative strength and statistical significance of the identified factors could not be quantitatively assessed.

Future research could extend the present model through empirical testing in specific sectors of the food industry and particularly within vegetable oil markets. Researchers may also investigate the interactions among consumer behavior dimensions and positioning strategies using structural equation modeling or mixed-method approaches. Comparative studies across countries, cultures, and consumer segments could provide deeper insights into contextual variations in positioning effectiveness. In addition, future investigations may examine the impact of emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and real-time consumer analytics on strategic positioning decisions.

From a practical perspective, managers in the vegetable oil industry should develop positioning strategies that are firmly grounded in consumer insights rather than solely in production or pricing considerations. Organizations should invest in consumer research, market intelligence systems, and customer analytics capabilities to improve decision quality. Managers should also strengthen product quality, brand communication, distribution reliability, and customer engagement simultaneously, recognizing that these dimensions collectively shape consumer perceptions. Finally, firms should adopt an integrated strategic approach that aligns marketing, operations, innovation, and customer relationship activities to establish a distinctive and sustainable market position.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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