

The Fall And Resurgence Of Uro Cola: A Strategic Roadmap

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Abstract

This research focuses on a beverage product, “URO COLA, which was once highly popular in the market but gradually lost market share and disappeared from the beverage industry. The primary objective is to identify the causes of this decline and propose strategies for recapturing market share. This Chittagong-based regional study uses survey interviews from the retailers and secondary data analysis. The findings indicate weaknesses in the supply chain, insufficient marketing activities relative to competitors, and less interaction with the customer and retailers. Pricing strategy, promotional strategy, and customer relationship management are key recommendations given. The outcome of this study is to regain its glory in the beverage industry and establish a brand that leaves a mark in consumers’ hearts through its taste.

Keywords: *Uro, Cola, market, beverage, brand*

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I. Introduction

Consumer preference and marketing are the keys to the success of a brand. Globe Soft Drinks & AST beverage limited company was the first local soft drinks brand to introduce URO COLA, URO ORANGE, and URO LEMON in 2002 in the Bangladeshi market. The sales of Uro Cola declined a few years ago . However, to reintroduce the product, we will create an eye-catching and vibrant redesign, reposition it to capture at least 20% market share, and rejuvenate consumer interest through a unique taste and brand experience. Primarily, we will collect data from different areas of Chittagong; hotels, restaurants, cooling corners, station side shops are the main destinations.

Research Questions

- 1 Why is this downfall?
- 2 Which player was defeated in terms of quality and availability?
- 3 What do retailers think about Uro Cola?
- 4 How can Uro Cola regain its glory through pricing strategy, promotional strategy, and other marketing tactics?

II. Literature Review

Bangladesh's beverage industry is growing rapidly due to population growth, higher disposable income, and changing consumer preferences. Bangladesh was first introduced to soft drinks by Coca-Cola in 1963, and Pepsi began operations in 1976. Different flavors of Coca-Cola, Sprite, and 7-Up are popular this time. Abdul Monem Ltd. (AML) is the sole authorized bottler of Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta Orange, and Fanta Lemon in Bangladesh, as designated by the Coca-Cola International headquarters located in Atlanta, USA (*Coca-Cola Bangladesh Distributor: Abdul Monem Ltd & F&B Industry, n.d.*). Pepsi is also a well-established brand worldwide. Transcom Beverage Ltd (TBL) is the exclusive PepsiCo Franchisee for Bangladesh. It manufactures soft drinks such as Pepsi, 7UP, Mirinda, Slice, and Mountain Dew, among others.

In 2006, Akij Food & Beverage Limited (AFBL) introduced Mojo as Bangladesh’s second local beverage brand. Mojo attracted consumers through vibrant packaging and engaging video advertisements. Despite these efforts, Coca-Cola maintained market leadership due to its global recognition, extensive production, and comprehensive marketing and promotional campaigns. In 2023, following Israeli attacks on Palestine, many countries, including Bangladesh, initiated boycotts of Israeli products. As a result, Coca-Cola’s market share in Bangladesh declined, and consumers increasingly supported domestic brands. During this period, Mojo launched the campaign “WE SUPPORT PALESTINE,” pledging to donate 1 taka to Gaza for each bottle sold (BD, 2024). This emotionally resonant campaign significantly increased Mojo’s sales. Later that Mojo was recognized as the

#1 beverage brand in Bangladesh at the Bangladesh Brand Forum's Best Brand Award 2024. The brand is now exported to around 47 countries worldwide.

The National NuGrape Company launched the Sun Crest in 1938. The Bangladeshi sun crest was brought by the national beverage industry. Suncrest offers various flavors, among them Suncrest Cola, Suncrest Orange, and Kickapoo Joy Juice, which are the most popular drinks among consumers (Arafat, 2011) .

RC Cola has become a popular soft drink brand over time. It was first introduced in Bangladesh in 1997. After its launch, flavors such as RC Cola, RC Lemon, RC Orange, and Upper 10 gained popularity. The company achieved significant profits with this product lineup. They began offering bottles in all sizes, with 250 ml and 300 ml becoming particularly popular PET sizes. Notably, RC Cola was the first in the beverage market to introduce 1.5L PET bottles. (*RC Cola Re-Launch (In Bangladesh)*, n.d.)

Virgin Cola became the leading cola brand in the United Kingdom during the 1990s, primarily as a result of aggressive marketing strategies. This achievement motivated Richard Branson to pursue global expansion for the brand. Following successful launches in several Asian and European markets, Virgin Cola entered the United States (Business, 2024). In 1999, Global Beverage Limited introduced Virgin Cola to Bangladesh, where it briefly became the top-selling cola. However, Virgin Cola's market presence was short-lived. The brand faced significant challenges, including direct competition with Coca-Cola, which benefited from strong retailer support. Coca-Cola leveraged this advantage by providing retailers with attractive promotional incentives, leading to a decline in Virgin Cola's global market share. Ultimately, in 2012, the Virgin Group discontinued all Virgin Cola production.

There are some local brands that started their journey. Uro Cola is becoming the first Bangladeshi cola in the market. Uro cola, Uro orange, Uro lemon, Fizz up, and Tiger are three key products of Globe Soft Drink Limited. Globe started the export in 2007. With the leading position in the Bangladesh market Royal Tiger Energy Drinks, Uro Cola, Uro Lemon, Uro Orange, and Fizz Up have also gained a great market share in the Asian Subcontinent, the Middle East, and African regions of the world (*History*, n.d.).

Data collection and analysis

We conducted a survey interview about Uro Cola in various hotels, cooling corners, rail stations, and department stores in the Chittagong district. We found some insightful data about Uro Cola. Data are shown below.

Bagerhat Cooling Corner, Road NO 01, B- Block, Halishahar, Chittagong

Available Beverages: Mojo, Clemon, Rc cola, Maxx cola, Tiger, Speed, Fruto, Bruvana, 7 Up

Data: They last sold Uro Cola in 2019. They said several things about the absence of Uro Cola in the market. First of all, it is less tasty than other similar drinks. Secondly, there are no promotional offerings from the company. Thirdly, when a product's shelf life expires, the company does not replace it. However, the sales representative of Uro Cola does not come now.

Shah Jalal Store, Masjid Goli, 2 NO Gate, Chittagong

Available Beverages: Mojo, Rc Orange, Jeera Pani, Frutika

Data: The manager said that, in 2014, they sold it in huge quantities. The company also gave a fridge for promotion.

Ohab Brothers, Road NO 02, B- Block, Halishahar , Chittagong

Available Beverages: Mojo, Clemon, Tiger, Speed, Frutika

Data: The manager said that they cannot provide the ordered quantity because their production is limited. Also, there are insufficient sales representatives in this area.

Sunrise Departmental Store, Beside Southland Centre, Agrabad, Chittagong

Available Beverages: Maxx cola, Mojo, Speed, Tiger, Brave, Clemon, 7up

Data: The manager said that the marketing line of Uro Cola is weak. They don't provide any promotional offerings, whereas other similar brands provide offers such as 2 pieces free with 1 case, a T-shirt, etc. However, they last sold Uro Cola in 2018.

To sum up the data, the majority of the shopkeepers said about Uro Cola that it is less tasty, insufficient sales representatives in the particular area, and no promotional offer.

Downfall reasons and retailers thought about it

The beverage market has experienced the emergence of numerous local brands over time. Currently, both international and domestic brands dominate this sector. Notably, Coca-Cola, an international brand, and Mojo, a domestic brand, possess the largest market shares. Their dominance is attributed to continuous enhancements in packaging, taste, marketing strategies, distribution channels, and responsiveness to customer

feedback. Conversely, Uro has not introduced significant changes, which has led to a substantial decline in its market share.

A survey interview conducted in key areas of Chittagong, such as restaurants, hotels, departmental stores, and cooling corners, revealed an absence of Uro Cola in refrigerators. Retailers reported that the last sales of Uro Cola occurred in 2018, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some retailers recognized the brand, they had not sold it, and many were unfamiliar with it.

Retailers indicate that Uro Cola requires substantial improvements in taste, as consumers consistently prefer Mojo and Coca-Cola for their superior flavor profiles. Additionally, Uro Cola's supply chain is considered weak, characterized by slow delivery and an inability to fulfill orders, which has led to retailer dissatisfaction. The packaging design is also problematic, as children and young consumers are more attracted to beverages with colorful bottles. Furthermore, Uro Cola has not engaged in visible marketing activities or offered promotional incentives, unlike its competitors. Consequently, shopkeepers have been reluctant to stock Uro Cola, contributing to its disappearance from the beverage market.

Pricing strategy

Mojo, Maxx Cola, and Fresh Cola each offer a 250ml bottle for 20 tk, while Coca-Cola and Pepsi price their 250ml bottles at 30 tk and 25 tk, respectively. Coca-Cola's 1-litre bottle is priced at 85 tk, and the 1.75-litre bottle at 130 tk. Mojo's 1-litre and 2-litre bottles are priced at 60 tk and 110 tk, respectively. Based on current market conditions, the recommended prices for Uro Cola are 20 tk for a 250ml bottle, 60 tk for a 1-litre bottle, and 100 tk for a 2-litre bottle. A price skimming strategy is not advisable due to the presence of established competitors. Promotional pricing can be implemented during major festivals, such as Eid and Puja, when demand for family-sized beverages increases. During these periods, 1-litre and 2-litre bottles of Uro Cola may be offered at discounted rates. Price discrimination is another effective approach. In winter, when beverage demand typically declines, retail shops may be unable to lower prices without negatively affecting consumer perception. To solve the problem, set up Vending machines which can be programmed to adjust prices automatically in response to weather conditions. For instance, a 250ml Uro Cola bottle could be sold for 18 tk instead of 20 tk during winter or periods of heavy rainfall. This can create competitive smartness. Placement of vending machines in educational institution hostels would allow students convenient access to the product at any time, including late at night.

Promotional strategy

Promotional campaigns are essential for increasing public awareness. One effective approach is to initiate a free Uro Cola serving campaign, which can facilitate both feedback collection and widespread brand exposure. Including nostalgic Uro Cola advertisements in the campaign can help audiences recall the original uro cola. Additionally, organizing engaging activities at educational events, such as 'Hit The Target And Win Uro Cola,' can further enhance participation. Collaborating with university clubs to host an online video commercial (OVC) competition featuring Uro Cola is also recommended to generate substantial brand awareness.

First, participate in various events and sponsorship programmes to gain exposure. Next, collaborate with social media influencers to create a campaign promoting Uro Cola, encouraging people to drink for a chance to meet a celebrity. A secret code will be hidden under the cap. Once the campaign concludes, the company will select a winner through a lottery.

Satisfying the retailer is also important because if they keep the beverage in the shop it will be sold. So promotional offerings to them are mandatory. Globe company can provide 2 pieces free for 250ml 1 cases and 1 piece free with 1 litre 1 cases. Launch gate, railway stations are places where companies can place their product for better sales. Normally in this area all beverages are not available so it's a placement opportunity for the company. Giving the signboard of uro cola along with the shop name will also be a good approach with the retailer, sometimes old signboards are broken and letters are not clearly visible, this time it is a good approach.

III. Conclusion

Uro Cola was once the leading brand in the beverage industry in Bangladesh, but it eventually lost its market position. Several factors contributed to this decline, including a failure to update its flavor profile, insufficient marketing activities to reach a broad consumer base, and packaging that lacked visual appeal. Data were collected from interviews with local vendors and restaurants to identify the reasons for this decline and to develop recommendations for improvement. The study proposes pricing and promotional strategies aimed at restoring Uro Cola's market presence and recapturing market share. This research focuses on the Chittagong region and highlights opportunities for further study.

IV. Recommendations

The findings indicate that the supply chain is currently weak, and product availability remains insufficient in key regions. Additionally, sales representatives often delay product deliveries. It is recommended

to strengthen the entire supply chain to improve product availability. Management should also prioritize customer engagement. Initiatives such as organizing online quizzes for various customer segments and collecting their feedback are suggested. Participation in trade fairs and collaboration with partners can enhance brand visibility. Conducting a design contest for a new Uro Cola product may also increase customer interest. Providing superior offers compared to competitors is essential for customer satisfaction. To foster long-term relationships, consistent communication with retailers is necessary. Customer involvement can also be enhanced by launching particular campaigns for religious (Eid, Puja), cultural (Pohela Boishakh), and festival (seasonal fruit festival, pitha uthsob, etc.) events.

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