

A STUDY ON THE PRIORITY CATEGORY OF CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS BRAND IMAGE

A SUSAIRAJ*

ABSTRACT

Consumer brand preference is an essential step to understand consumer choice behavior, and has therefore always received great attention from marketers. Brand preferences reveal the type of attributes a brand possesses, to strengthen its position and increase its market share. Moreover, it forms a critical input in developing a company's successful brand strategy, and gives insight for product development. The, consumers cannot shape their preferences among brands using rational attributes only. They seek the brand that creates experience; intrigue them in a sensorial, emotional, and creative way. Companies' competitiveness in such market has, therefore become increasingly difficult. Their survival requires building their competitive advantage by delivering memorable experiences, which would influence consumers' brand preferences, and consequently stimulate consumers' purchase decisions.

Most of prior studies are partial and focusing on one or two antecedents of brand preferences. In addition to these drawbacks, the studies also ignore consequences determining the consumer purchase decisions. Based on these limitations in the literature, a lack of understanding of how consumers develop their brand preferences was identified.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to develop a model that provides an understanding of how brand knowledge and brand image determine brand preferences and to investigate ways on how local products can be promoted.

KEYWORDS: Brand Preference, Customer Satisfaction, Brand Preference Mix etc.

INTRODUCTION

Brand image is the key driver of brand equity, which refers to consumer's general perception and feeling about a brand and has an influence on the consumer preference .for marketers whatever the companies' marketing strategies are, the main purpose of their marketing

activities is to influence consumer's perception and attitude towards a brand. Establish the brand image in consumer's mind, and stimulate consumer's actual purchasing behavior of the brand, that will lead to increase of sales, maximization of market share and development

* Assistant Lecturer, DMI St Eugene University, Zambia.

Correspondence E-mail Id: editor@eurekajournals.com

of the brand equity. Brand equity is the focus of both academics and practitioners; however, there is no paradigm among the brand equity studies by now. Most studies measure brand equity from perspective of consumer priority towards brand image or from the company itself. The company's brand image plays a vital role on the consumers' priority preference towards buying behavior. On one hand, some researchers believe that consumer's subjective perception (e.g. attitude assessment, satisfaction) of brand image is the key to brand image. Although the consumption decision will be influenced by brand features and attributes, it is determined by consumer perception about the brand image in a deeper sense. Despite the change of consumer's life style and the way of information processing, brand image remains the dominant impact factor of consumption decisions.

BACK GROUND OF SYNGENTA

The term branding comes from the Old Norse "Brand" which means burn. Cattle, slaves, timber and crockery were burnt or branded with marketing or symbols of the owner using a hot iron rod. The concept of branding was essentially to depict ownership, in particular things which had value, this practice dating back to 20000BC. Today most brands have settled or rebranded. Logos are abundant and companies with products are plentiful and the brand still remains. As a strong simple repetitive message. However our attention spans are now incredibly short as we have become incredibly impatient due to living in the age of information and internet. Brands live and die by the will of the consumer in an instant. The internet which units early days was seen merely as a trendy fad is now accessible from almost everywhere. Even the biggest advertising company in the world just happens to be the world's number one search engine. In terms of the look and feel of newer brands they did start out as anti-brand, but likes the likes of EBay and Google have since modified their brand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A brand differentiates a product in several forms and it can be broadly divided into two categories- The tangibles (rational), and the intangibles (emotional and symbolic). Either way, while the product performs its basic functions, the brand contributes to the differentiation of a product (Keller, 2003). These dimensions "distinguish a brand from its unbranded commodity counterpart and gives it equity which is the sum total of consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes and how they perform, about the brand name and what it stands for, and about the company associated with the brand" (Achenbaum, 1993).

Significant parameters in brand building literature have experienced a dramatic shift in the last decade. Branding and the role of brands, as traditionally understood, have been subject to constant review and redefinition. A traditional definition of a typical brand was: "the name, associated with one or more items in the product line, which is used to identify the source of character of the item(s)" (Kotler, 2000).

The American Marketing Association's (AMA) definition of a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". Within this view, whenever a marketer creates a new name, logo, or symbol for a new product, he or she has created a brand, (Keller, 2003). He recognizes, however, that brands today are much more than that. As can be seen, according to these definitions brands had a simple and clear function as identifiers. Before the shift in focus towards brands and the brand building process, brands were just another step in the whole process of marketing to sell products. For a long time, the brand has been treated in an off-hand fashion as a part of the product, (Urde, 1999). Branding is a major issue in product strategy (Kotler, 2000). As

the brand was only part of the product, the communication strategy worked towards exposing the brand and creating a brand image.

In marketing literature great attention is focused on brand image which is studied from two: companies and consumer's perspectives. The approach of a company is directed towards the improvement of marketing activity, connected with strategies of positioning and retaining of a positive brand image. Consumer's approach is based on consumer's attitude towards the interpretation of brand image and brand equity. The importance of brand in the market is influenced by company's ability to evaluate the fact how consumers interpret the image of brands and company's ability to manage the strategy of brand positioning, adequately revealing brand's equity to a consumer (Kotler, 2001).

OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the strategies that is put in place to maintain brand image of a company.
2. To ascertain consumer behavior and attitude to a product or service in relation to brand image.
3. To analyses the challenges faced by consumers and companies in relation to products and branding.

METHODOLOGY

A research method is a systematic plan for conducting a research. In this chapter the researcher has discussed the methodology that was used to conduct this study. This chapter describes also the research design, it describes the sample size, describes the sampling area and how it was selected. Other sections of this chapter describe the data and data collection instruments and analysis of data collected.

Random sampling method was used in this report, a number of consumers from different areas in Lusaka. The researcher targeted consumers related to the phenomena. Questionnaires were distributed randomly A research design is a strategy for a study and the plan by which a study is to be carried out.

It specifies the methods and procedures for collection and analysis of data. This study adopted a descriptive research design. The main purpose of this design was to describe the relevance of the study. This design enabled respondents to give information freely. The research was conducted in Lusaka. The researcher chose this area because that is where there were a lot of consumers who went to shop from Zambeef and Pic 'n' Pay which were the targeted brands of the researcher. This research arose due to the observation that the foreign brands in Zambia have higher consumer preference as compared to local brands and the research questions are as follows.

1. Which brand has the highest preference between the two and why
2. What is the contributing factor this observation?
3. How the upcoming local brands can market themselves with local products?
4. What strategies and ways of adverting used to attract customers to promote local brands?

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Analysis and interpretation of data is the process by which sense and meaning are made of the data gathered in qualitative research, and by which the emerged knowledge is applied to client's problems. However, this chapter presents the data collected, the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Table 1. Gender of the Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
Male	20	40
Female	30	60
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

During this survey, there were 50 (100%) subjects that were randomly selected to participate in the study. Further having this sample at hand and the unbiased method of selection it conceived 20 participants representing the female folk which

was interpreted as 40%, on the other hand the 30 subjects represented the male respondents who were also randomly chosen and were representative of the remaining 60%.

Table 2. Age of the Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
20 And Below	6	12
21-30	21	42
31-40	11	22
41 And Above	12	24
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the sample that was collected the subjects had different age ranges the age range of below 20 comprised of 12 % of the entire sample, This

clearly indicates that the majority of the people that are involved in the purchasing lies amid 21-30 years of age.

Table 3. Where the Population Got their Meat Product From

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
Zambeef	19	38
Pic n Pay	9	18
None of the above	11	22
Others	11	22
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the respondents were asked on where they got their meat products from and from the responses that were gotten it was indicated that 38% was obtained from those that got their

products from zambeef, with 18% was retrieved from Pic n' Pay company and the non and other responses recorded 22% each indicating equality in response.

Table 4. The Basis on which Consumers Purchase the Products

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
Brand name	4	8
Price	12	24
Quality	25	50
Packaging	4	8
None of the above	5	10
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the responses given with reference to question seven it is clear that the people that bought based on quality were half of the sample

and the rest share with regard to the percentages shown above.

Table 5. How Often the Population Make their Shopping

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
Monthly	21	42
Weekly	9	18
Daily	3	6
Not very often	17	34
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the information gathered it is clear that the number of people purchase meat on a monthly basis which could be lined to those involved in

employment, on the other hand the other percentages purchase on irregular periods.

Table 6. Consumer's Preferred Brand

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
Zambeef	23	46
Pic n' Pay	10	20
None of the above	17	34
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

The population that was under study proved that 34% of the total population do not get their products from the suppliers that were selected, furthermore, zambeef has more customers from the population under study. Nevertheless, the

rest of the 20% of the population get their meat products from pic and pay. Additionally zambeef appears to be the favorite outlet for most of the meat products that is purchased by the population.

Table 7. The Loyalty of Consumers towards their Meat Suppliers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
Definitely will continue	28	56
Probably will continue	21	42
Probably will not continue	0	0
Definitely will not continue	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

With reference to question 16, 56% of the population are almost permanent and royal customers to the company brands they think is the best and are likely to continue buying for an average of six months as indicated in the questionnaires, these 56% of the population are

definitely going to continue supporting the purchase. On the other hand the second highest population with 42% who will probably continue buying the products from the companies that they buy from.

Table 8.Challenges Faced By Consumers When Purchasing Meat Products.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage Rate of Responses
High Prices	32	64
Low Quality	13	26
Expired Products	4	8
Non response	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

Customers reviewed that among other challenges that they face high prices of the meat products is the largest as if that is not enough companies charge high prices on the products and end up supplying low quality meat products, customers complained bitterly on this perspective. Additionally, customers also suffer problems of getting expired products from the companies that charge them high prices with low quality meat. There is a large challenge, never the less only 8% of the studied population suffered the problem of expired products. Further, only 25 recorded non response to the question.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TO A PRODUCT OR SERVICE IN RELATION TO BRAND IMAGE

The responses given on the basis on which consumer purchase their products, it was very clear that the consumers purchased based on quality (64% of the population) as observed from the previous chapter and the study showed that the consumer purchasing behavior is influenced by the brand image which was presented by 66% of the population and only 34 % of the population said the brand image plays no importance in their purchasing behaviors. Consumers purchase their products from well-known brands because they are assured of quality products and better customer services.

CHALLENGES FACED BY CONSUMERS IN RELATION TO PURCHASING PRODUCTS

Further on the study perceived that the consumer face challenges of high prices, as

though not enough further on the survey reviewed that the customers also face a challenge of low quality products and challenge of expired products.

The recommendation encompass various views that were given by the respondents and the observations from the researcher. The recommendations are as follows:

- It was suggested that the packaging need to be improved in order to attract the consumers.
- It was recommended by the respondents that the prices for local products need to be reduced so as to attract many consumers and that high tariffs should be imposed on imported products.
- The researcher based on the responses given by the respondents observed that foreign products have higher preference compared to local products and this is due to the observation that foreign products are welly branded, packaged and they create customer impression, therefore, there is a need to take this problem into consideration.
- The local products are not advertised enough especially the exported products, you find that most of the local products are advertised in the local languages ,however , the foreign countries may not really get the full meaning or rather the benefits of the products being advertised. However, the researcher recommended more advertisement should be done for local products.
- It was also suggested by the researcher that most of the local products are poorly

branded because of the high cost when it comes to product branding and therefore the researcher recommended that local manufacturers need to find funders to improve the products quality and branding.

- From the observation by the researcher, a recommendation was given that, the local products have the potential to obtain high preference in the market if only they can be advertised well, packaged well and sensitized well. Additionally the prices need to be adjusted and the quality of products need to be improved.
- It was recommended that new strategies of advertising local products should be done.
- According to the opinions of the respondents and the findings of this research the brand image plays an important role in the consumer preference towards their buying behavior. On the other hand the companies have different strategies that are put in place to maintain their brand image such as customer services, promoting quality products e.tc. Further on it was concluded from the study that bill boards and radio advertisement is mostly used by the companies. Additionally, the customers face challenges of high prices and expired products, on the other hand the companies face a challenge of high cost when it comes to branding and processing of products which could be the reason for high prices for the commodities. However, the research was successful as it was able to meet all the objectives under study and a further research on the topic was recommended by the researcher.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Aacker, D. A, 2010. Building strong brands 2nd ed. Simon & Schuster UK Ltd. London.

- [2]. Armstrong, G., & Kotler. P, 2007. Marketing, An introduction. 9th ed. Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River. New Jersey.
- [3]. Askegaard, S., Bamossy. G., & Solomon, M. R., 2002. Consumer behavior. A European perspective 2nd ed. Pearson education limited, Essex.
- [4]. Barletta, M., 2006. Marketing to women. How to understand, reach and increase your share of the world's largest market segment, 2nd ed. Dearborn trade.
- [5]. Barnes, B. Marshall, G. W., Mitchell, V., Solomon, M. R. & Stuart, E. W, 2009, marketing, real people, real decisions, European edition, Pearson education limited, Essex.
- [6]. Bulsho cooperative interview with marketing manager, 1/3/2012.
- [7]. Burns, A. C. & Bush R. F. 2006. Marketing research 6th Ed. Pearson education Inc. New Jersey.
- [8]. Cohen, N. & Dibb, S. 2004. Religious Influences on shopping behavior. An exploratory study, journal of marketing management, 20, pp. 638-712.
- [9]. De Chernatony L., Mcdonald M. & Wallace, E., 2003. Creating powerful brands, 3rd ed. Butterworth-Heinemann. Oxford.
- [10]. Jobber D., 2004. Principles and Practice of marketing, 4th ed. Mc Graw-Hill. London.
- [11]. Keller, K. & Kotler, P., 2009. Marketing management 13th ed. Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River. New Jersey.
- [12]. Keller, K. L., 2002. Branding and brand equity. Marketing science institute. Cambridge, MA.
- [13]. Kunde, J. 2002. Unique now or never. The brand is the company driver in the new value economy. Pearson Education limited. Edinburgh gate. England. 54.