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Influence of Branding on Customers Preference of Consumer Goods: A Study of Consumers of Indomie Noodles in Awka, Anambra State

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Abstract: This study examined the influence of branding on customers preference of consumer goods: A study of consumers of indomie noodles in Awka. The study modeled the effect brand identity, brand image, brand culture and brand personality on customers' preference of indomie noodles in Awka on sample of 202 respondents that was determined used multi-staged sampling technique. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency, percentages and chi-square statistics. Findings revealed that brand identity, brand image, brand culture and brand personality have significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made: Enterprises to develop positive and effective strategies to promote innovation. This will have a good impact on brand culture, can make the brand enduring. Enterprises need to innovate brand culture and not blindly follow suit. Innovation includes management innovation, concept innovation, product technology innovation, system innovation and so on. The brand personality can be improved by famous endorsers for low involvement products and by strong positive argument about the brand in case of high involvement products. Practitioners and brand managers to define more emotional strategies based on concepts such as brand personality and brand love thus developing feelings like brand love. This may be the right way to boost the relationships between brands and consumers.

Key words: Branding, Customers Preference, Consumer Goods, Brand Identity, Brand Image, Brand Culture, Brand Personality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, branding has proven to be relevant in the activities of a firm with regards to the ownership and marketing of its products and services. It is also a means of brand loyalty by customers who readily identifying with such brands (Isik & Yasar, 2015). Clearly, as stated in the literature, branding draws attention of consumers who are quick to identify with a product which they are used to and can vouch for. Information concerning the product are registered in customers' memories which they can readily fetch or make use of in taking decisions or even directing and guiding others in making informed decisions about a product. Thus, branding acts as a memory bank that aids customers to retrieve relevant information from past experiences they have had with a product to guide their subsequent decisions about the product (Wang & Wang, 2021; Shehzad, Ahmad, Iqbal, Nawaz & Usman, 2014).). As alluded to earlier, branding equally helps an organization to maintain its market share and to continue to retain customer loyalty which further boosts and sustains future revenue flows. It stabilizes a business, checkmates competitors, strengthens organizational strategy and enables organization to direct its focus on future investments banking on brand image. (Bandaranayake & Wickramasinghe, 2020; Adil, 2012; Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015).

A brand is unique to a business and identified legally as belonging to that business. It ought not to be duplicated or substituted. It is tied to a business and gives it its competitive edge over rival brands. A brand is sustained over time by customer loyalty through the provision of superior customer value as attested to by customers. This invariably leads to a superior financial performance for the company. People's preference for a particular product is often born out of their knowledge and acceptance of that product; thus influencing their categorisation of products (Barros, Rodrigues, Duarte, Shao, Martins, Barandas-Karl, & Yue, 2020).). Brands serve as windows through which customers and the general public identify a company product and view its products and services. Owners of product through such brand image take ownership of a product and the veracity or otherwise of the claims accompanying the product. Customers in turn become use to the products and very well can recon with it. Since the 1930's, business owners have continued to position their products in the minds of customers and seeking customer loyalties using branding. It has remained a means for firms to create that distinctive advantage over their rivals and a veritable tool for sustaining a firm's market share and avoiding value migration (Ashraf, Naeem & Shahzadi, 2017; Oni, Ogundipe, Salako & Babalola, 2021).

Avoiding value migration requires a clearer understanding of the behavior of consumers in making those choices as they relate to a company's products. With a plethora of products, most appearing similar in content, quality and quantity, consumers are faced with the challenge of making informed decisions on the product that best suits their needs. Understanding what influences these decisions is vital in tailoring products towards consumer needs and preferences by business owners. A combination of various factors have been adduced by different authors in the literature about likely reasons which influence consumer attitude and brand purchase decision. Features of the product such as its quality, dimensions and durability may influence consumers preference; consumers purchasing objectives and even use situations have also been identified as likely reasons. Others include brand goodwill, culture or identity (Vongurai, 2020; Isik & Yasar, 2015).

Organizations that have overtime had a brand goodwill or Brand image have often edged out competitors and sustained steady flow of income. Brand image is therefore a major factor in retaining brand loyalty and this is driven by culture. The relationship between culture and brand has been identified in the literature as brand is used by firms to transmit culture; thus brand is influenced by culture which gives it its unique characteristics from rival brands (Maden, 2013). To provide those unique features to better satisfy their consumers, companies are now involved in brand personality which equally aids them to have long-term consumer-brand relationships with the market (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015; Eze & Bello, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Stiff competition for available market share has led to the demise of many businesses as stronger firms continue to introduce unique features in their brands. Branding therefore is a veritable tool for businesses to edge out rival brands especially in the consumer goods sector, where consumers are becoming sophisticated and knowledgeable about products, and so are not easily swayed by any brand. In positioning its products, an organization evolves a brand image, identity, culture and personality which will hit at the very heart of the consumer and sway him/her to make a purchasing decision favorable to the business. Where a business has positive brand image, consumers are inclined to increase their patronage otherwise they would seek rival brands which may lead to the eventual closure or collapse of such a business. In the study of consumer behavior with respect to consumer preference decision making, many researches have been undertaken to understand the challenges facing consumers who have to grapple with making decisions in the face of similarity in product brands not just from rival companies but even from different brands within a company. A number of factors have been identified as playing key roles in influencing consumer preference for a particular brand over others at any given time. Such factors as image of the brand, brand identity, culture and personality have been reported in the literature as critical elements influencing consumers choice of products especially in the consumer goods market (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015; Wu & Chen, 2019; Setyadi1, Ali1 & Imaroh, 2017).). Consumers of noodles in Nigeria especially Awka, Anambra State face serious challenges in deciding which brand out of the many brands in the market to patronize. This challenge is further compounded by the fact that most of them lay claims to similar product features. Many studies have been undertaken in this field of study but from different perspective. This study however undertakes to study Indomie noodles, which is a leading producer of noodles with a view to understanding what influences consumer preference for the product.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to ascertain the influence of branding on customers preference of consumer goods: A study of consumers of indomie noodles in Awka. Specifically the study intends to:

- A. Ascertain the effect of brand identity on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.
- B. Ascertain the effect of brand image on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.
- C. Determine the effect of brand culture on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.
- D. Determine the influence of brand personality on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Hypotheses of the Study

Hypothesis One

H01: Brand identity has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Hypothesis Two

H02: Brand image has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

Hypothesis Three

H03: Brand culture has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Hypothesis Four

H04: brand personality has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design that involves asking questions, collecting and analyzing data from a supposedly representative members of the population at a single point in time with a view to determine the current situation of that population with respect to one or more variable under

investigation (Okeke, Olise & Eze, 2008). Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. Descriptive survey research is research that involves the collection of data from a sample that has been chosen to represent a population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalized. That is why survey design was considered appropriate for the study.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is Awka south local government area Anambra state. Awka south is in Anambra central senatorial zone and it also houses the state capital. Again, it is one of the hubs of economic activities in the state. The area is made up of the following communities: Okpuno, Amawbia, Awka, Isiagu, Ezinato, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise and Umuawulu. Apart from Awka, other communities (Okpuno, Amawbia, Isiagu, Ezinato, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise and Umuawulu) are replete with various forms of agricultural activities. The major occupation of the inhabitants of the area is farming. Although they have other occupational engagements like: trading (especially in Awka municipal), craft, teaching in schools and colleges, civil service etc. Awka South has a land area of 376 square kilometers. It is about 32km away from Onitsha. The inhabitants of Awka South Local Government Area are hospitable people considering the way and manner their visitors come from other local government areas and states. Currently, Anambra State has the lowest poverty rate in Nigeria and the area also has a good number of SMEs.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is made up of Consumers of selected super marts across - Ifite Awka, Umuzocha, Aroma, Okpuno, Ziks Avenu and Quarter in Awka metropolis, Anambra state.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

To determine the sample size, selected super marts across - Ifite Awka, Umuzocha, Aroma, Okpuno, Ziks Avenu and Quarter in Awka metropolis, Anambra state for the purpose of questionnaire distribution; multistage sampling technique was used. This was carried in three stages. According to Chukwuemeka (2002), multi-stage sampling is the combination of the other sampling techniques. The first stage was a judgmental identification of two supermarkets for the study. Judgmental sampling is a non-probability sampling that makes use of typical cases among the population to be studied, which the researcher believes will provide with the necessary data needed (Michael et al, 2012).

The second stage was a sub-sampling also called a two-stage sampling. This was a purposive enumeration of twenty customers indomie noodles from the supermarkets.

In the third stage otherwise called the three-stage sampling, the simple random sampling technique was also used to select 240 respondents from all the from the twelve selected supermarkets that is 20 customers from each supermarket.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher through review of related literature and in relation to the purpose and research questions guiding the study. The instrument consists of two parts; I and 2. Part 1 deals with background information of the respondents while Part 2 contains items that addressed the research questions. Out of 240 questionnaires distributed, only 202 were dully completed and returned. The 202 was therefore used for the study.

Data Collection

The researcher explored mainly the primary data. The primary data were obtained from selected customers from among super marts across - Ifite Awka, Umuzocha, Aroma, Okpuno, Ziks Avenu and Quarter in Awka metropolis, Anambra state. Secondary sources of literature for the study were obtained

from existing literature in the field of study which were available to the researcher; they are: journals, internet materials, unpublished write-ups etc.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) chi-square statistics were used to analyze the data collected in respect of the research questions. The mean was used to give answer to the research questions. Standard deviation was used to establish the harmony in the mean ratings among the respondents.

The rating is as follows:

To a very great extent(VGE) 5 points

To a great extent (GE) 4 points

Undecided(U) 3 points

To some extent (SE) 2 points

To no extent(NE) 1 point

3. PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table 1: Percentage of Questionnaires Distributed and Returned

Economic areas of operation	No Distributed	No Returned	% Returned
Radopin Supermarket	20	20	100
Blue star Supermarket	20	13	65
Bravo Supermarket	20	20	100
1 City Supermarket	20	18	90
Brand New Supermarket	20	16	80
Rose Life Supermarket	20	14	66
Fresh Supermarket	20	20	100
MRS Supermarket	20	13	65
Rapet Supermarket	20	20	100
Godson Supermarket	20	18	90
Edges Supermarket	20	16	80
Oxford Supermarket	20	14	66
Total	240	202	84.2%

Source: Computation from field survey, 2023

Out of the 240 questionnaires distributed only 202 were dully completed and returned. This shows that only 84.2% of the questionnaires were dully completed and returned for the study.

Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%
Age		
18-30	80	39.6
31-40	68	33.7
41-50	22	10.9
Above 50	32	15.8
Total	202	100
Gender		
Male	97	48.0
Female	105	52.0
Total	202	100

Frequency of Consumption		
1-3 times per week	131	64.9
4-6 times per week	67	33.2
7-9 times per week	4	1.9
Above 9 times per week	-	-
TTTTTT Total	202	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

As shown in table 2, 39.6% of the respondents fall within the age 18-30years of age. 33.7% of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 31-40years of age. 10.9% of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 41-50years of age, while 15.8% of the respondents fall within the age bracket of Above 50years of age. With respect to gender, 48.0% of the respondents are males while 52.0% of the respondents are females. With respect to frequency of consumption, 64.9% of the respondents indicated that frequency of 1-3 times per week. 33.2% of the respondents indicated that frequency of 4-6 times per week while 1.9% of the respondents indicated 7-9 times per week.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to effect of brand identity on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	111	55.0
To a great extent	42	20.8
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	32	15.8
To no extent	17	8.4
Total	202	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

As shown in table 3, 55.0% of the respondents indicated that brand identity has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to a very great extent. 20.8% of the respondents indicated that brand identity has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to a great extent. 15.8% of the respondents indicated to some extent. While, 8.4% of the respondents indicated that brand identity has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to no extent.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to effect of brand image on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	118	58.4
To a great extent	36	17.8
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	28	13.8
To no extent	20	9.9
Total	202	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

With respect to brand image, 58.4% of the respondents indicated that brand image has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to a very great extent, followed by 17.8% of the respondents who indicated that brand image has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to a great extent. 13.8% indicated to some extent, while 9.9% indicated that brand image has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to no extent.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to effect of brand culture on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	123	60.9
To a great extent	37	18.3
Undecided	4	2.0
To some extent	31	15.3
To no extent	7	3.5
Total	202	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

As shown in table 5, 60.9% of the respondents indicated that brand culture has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. 18.3% indicated that customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka to a great extent and 2.0% indicated undecided. While 15.3% and 3.5% indicated to some extent and to no extent.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to influence of brand personality on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	123	60.9
To a great extent	69	34.2
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	6	3.0
To no extent	4	2.0
Total	202	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From table 6, respondents to a very great extent indicated that brand personality has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. This is accounted for by 60.9% of the respondents, followed by 34.2% of the respondents that indicated to a great extent. Only about 3.0% & 2.0% indicated to some extent and to no extent.

Test of hypotheses

The responses to the questionnaire analyzed above help us in the decision to accept or reject the hypothesis earlier stated using the chi-square formular.

The chi-square is the test statistics used at 95% confidence interval level or 5% tolerable error. The following chi-square formula is stated as follows.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

Where:

\sum = Summation

O_i = observed frequency

E_i = estimated frequency

X^2 = computed chi-square

The expected value = $100 = \frac{20\%}{5}$

That is, for acceptance at least 20% is expected frequency

Decision Rule

If calculated X^2 is greater than X^2 from the table, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

Hypothesis one

Ho₁: Brand identity has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Table 3: As relevant for this Research

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
To a very great extent	111	55.0
To a great extent	42	20.8
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	32	15.8
To no extent	17	8.4
Total	202	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 7: Chi-square table calculation:

Options	oi	ei	oi-ei	(oi-ei) ²	(oi-ei) ² /ei
To a very great extent	111	20	91	8281	414.05
To a great extent	42	20	22	484	24.2
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-
To some extent	32	20	13	144	7.2
To no extent	17	20	-3	9	0.45

Source: Computation from field survey, 2023

$$\sum X^2 = 414.05 + 24.2 + 0 + 7.2 + 0.45 = 445.9$$

$$= \frac{\sum (oi-ei)^2}{ei}$$

Critical value of X^2 0.05 at 3d.f = 9.35

If calculated X^2 is greater than X^2 from the table, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

Decision

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the critical value of X^2 i.e (445.9 < 9.35) we reject the null hypothesis (Ho). We therefore, conclude that brand identity has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

Hypothesis Two

Ho₂: Brand image has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

To test this hypothesis we used the responses from table 8 as relevant for this research work.

Table 4: As relevant for this Research

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	118	58.4
To a great extent	36	17.8
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	28	13.8
To no extent	20	9.9
Total	202	100

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 8: Chi-square table calculation

Options	oi	ei	oi-ei	(oi-ei) ²	(oi-ei) ² /ei
To a very great extent	118	20	98	9604	480.2
To a great extent	36	20	16	16	0.8
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-
To some extent	28	20	8	64	2.3
To no extent	20	20	0	0	0

Source: Computation from field survey, 2023

$$\sum X^2 = 480.2 + 0.8 + 2.3 + 0 = 483.3$$

$$= X^2 = \frac{\sum (oi-ei)^2}{ei}$$

Critical value of X^2 0.05 at 3d.f = 9.35

Decision Rule

If calculated X^2 is greater than X^2 from the table, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

Decision Rule

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the critical value of X^2 i.e (483.3 > 9.35) the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_1) accepted. We therefore, conclude that brand image has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Brand culture has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Table 5: As relevant for this Research

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	123	60.9
To a great extent	37	18.3
Undecided	4	2.0
To some extent	31	15.3
To no extent	7	3.5
Total	202	100

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 9 Chi-square table calculation

Options	oi	ei	oi-ei	(oi-ei) ²	(oi-ei) ² /ei
To a very great extent	123	20	103	10609	530.45
To a great extent	37	20	17	289	14.45
Undecided	4	20	-16	256	12.8
To some extent	31	20	11	121	6.05
To no extent	7	20	-13	169	8.45

Source: Computation from field survey, 2023

$$\sum X^2 = 530.45 + 14.45 + 12.8 + 6.05 + 8.45 = 572.2$$

$$= X^2 = \frac{\sum (oi-ei)^2}{Ei}$$

Critical value of X^2 0.05 at 3d.f = 9.35

Decision Rule

If calculated X^2 is greater than X^2 from the table, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

Decision Rule

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the critical value of X^2 i.e (572.2>9.35) the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_1) accepted. We therefore, conclude that brand culture has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: Brand personality has no significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka

Table 6: As relevant for this Research

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	123	60.9
To a great extent	69	34.2
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	6	3.0
To no extent	4	2.0
Total	202	100

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 10: Chi-square table calculation:

Options	oi	ei	oi-ei	(oi-ei) ²	(oi-ei) ² /ei
To a very great extent	123	20	103	10609	530.5
To a great extent	69	20	49	2401	120.1
Undecided	-	-	-	-	-
To some extent	6	20	-14	196	9.8
To no extent	4	20	-16	256	12.8

Source: Computation from field survey, 2023

$$\sum X^2 = 530.5 + 120.1 + 9.8 + 12.8 = 673.2$$

$$= \frac{\sum (oi - ei)^2}{ei}$$

Critical value of X^2 0.05 at 3d.f = 9.35

If calculated X^2 is greater than X^2 from the table, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

Decision

Since the computed chi-square is greater than the critical value of X^2 i.e (673.2<9.35) we reject the null hypothesis (H_0). We therefore, conclude that brand personality has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the analysis of the study, the following findings are made:

1. 75.8% of the respondents indicated that brand identity has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. The findings was also supported by the hypothesis that brand identity has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

2. About 76.2% of the respondents indicated that brand image has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. The hypothesis also conclude that brand image has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.
3. As shown in table 4.4, about 79.2% of the respondents indicated that brand culture has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. This is supported that the hypothesis that brand culture has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.
4. Brand personality has significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. From table 4.5, respondents to a very great extent indicated that brand personality has influenced customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. This is accounted for by 60.9% of the respondents, followed by 34.2% of the respondents that indicated to a great extent. Only about 3.0% & 2.0% indicated to some extent and to no extent.

In the final analysis, the study has examined influence of branding on customers preference of consumer goods: A study of consumers of indomie noodles in Awka. The study has modeled the effect brand identity, brand image, brand culture and brand personality on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka. The study concludes that brand identity, brand image, brand culture and brand personality have significant effect on customers preference of indomie noodles in Awka.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made: Enterprises to develop positive and effective strategies to promote innovation. This will have a good impact on brand culture, can make the brand enduring. Enterprises need to innovate brand culture and not blindly follow suit. Innovation includes management innovation, concept innovation, product technology innovation, system innovation and so on. The brand personality can be improved by famous endorsers for low involvement products and by strong positive argument about the brand in case of high involvement products. Practitioners and brand managers to define more emotional strategies based on concepts such as brand personality and brand love thus developing feelings like brand love. This may be the right way to boost the relationships between brands and consumers.

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