IMPACT OF BRANDING ON CONSUMERS PREFERENCE FOR DISTILLED LIQUOR IN ABEOKUTA

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ABSTRACT: *Expansion in the Nigerian liquor market gives consumers the opportunity to choose from among competing brands. In spite of this freedom, consumers buy at least a brand while firm work assiduously to ensure their brand is preferred over competitors'.The research investigated the impact of branding on preference for distilled liquor products in Abeokuta metropolis. The aim is to determine how brand name and image affect consumers' choice of a brand of distilled liquor. The research is a descriptive survey. It obtained a sample of 200 consumers of distilled liquor across twenty (20) alcoholic consuming spots in Abeokuta. A multistage sampling was adopted in the selection of respondents and Ordinary Least Square Regression as the analytical technique. It is found that demographic factors such as age, educational qualifications and occupation are statistically significant to determine consumption of alcoholic liquor (p-value < 0.05). It is also found that brand name and image significantly enhance consumer preference for distilled liquors in Abeokuta (p-value < 0.05). Brand name is however considered to be a paramount reason for consumption of these liquors. The study then recommends that since consumer cannot measure the differences among variety of liquors in term of value, distilling firms should build its strength around the name of the product to suit consumer orientation.*

KEYWORDS: brand name, brand image, consumer preference, distilled products

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has made it possible for a variety of new products to be developed into non-existent and already present market to improve the quality life of society and meet varying needs (Bulus & Grange, 2013). Distilled liquor market in recent times is facing intense competition that has gone beyond measure. A survey by Marketing Initiative Network (2017) revealed that none of the distilled liquor firms in Nigeria has been able to maintain a brand beyond five months. This has made many alcoholic distilled firms manufacture different brand with differentiated ingredients to suit the taste, perception and preferences of the consumer. However, a lot of product strategies have been injected to have high sales turnover. In addition, sales promotion is also inculcated to make consumer buy, but in spite of all these, the market still remain unstable and as a result, there are variety of alcoholic distilled products which a consumer can choose from. Mescon (2016) suggested that there is a need to examine if there is a relationship between sales promotion and consumer preference for distilled alcoholic products. Although there have been several works on the impact of branding on products patronage but a little has been done in the distilled liquor industry. Durrani, Godil, Baig and Sajid (2007) examined brand image and buying behaviour among teenagers. Douglas (2010) explored the relationship between branding and consumers preference for pharmaceutical products. Fisher (2007) carried out a related research in the automobile industry in Malaysia. Moleeq (2012) also conducted a similar research in the agro-sector. This is why the research is focused on distilled liquor sector.

Objectives of the paper

The main objective of this paper is to examine the impact of branding on preference for distilled liquor products in Abeokuta metropolis. Other objectives include:

i.   investigating the impact of brand name and brand image on patronage for distilled alcoholic liquor.

ii.   examining if other factors such as advertisement and branding can influence consumers preference for the non-alcoholic drink.

Hypotheses and Rationale

H$_{01}$: Brand name does not significantly enhance consumer preference for distilled liquors.

Brand name is one of the major marketing tools for popularizing a product and establishing constant relationships between the firm's product and the consumer. (Preddy, 2016). Olukotun and Donaldson (2017) established a positive and significant relationship between brand name and consumer preference. The work of Moleeq (2012) also found a significant a relationship between brand name and demand for pesticide in Israel. Fisher (2017) argued that brand name create an image that drive continuous patronage for automobiles in the Malaysia. On the contrary, Paulo (2014) found product branding to be statistically insignificant in determining demand for specialty goods with a negative correlation. In line with these justifications, the hypothesis test whether brand name significantly enhances consumer preference for distilled liquor.

H$_{02}$: Brand image does not significantly enhance consumer preference for distilled liquors.

Keller (2003) asserts that a positive brand image is created when a customer get acquainted to a particular brand of a product with unique association and that such customer could recommend that brand to another customer and hold a positive attitude towards that brand. Nasar (2012) found that brand image has a direct impact on the purchase behaviour of the consumer. Osipitan (2014) found that brand image has a direct relationship on customers' loyalty for specialty product. However, the works of Rajh (2010) and Bekon (2013) established non statistical significance between brand image and patronage for kitchen utensils.

Scope of the paper

The paper focused on the impact of brand name and brand image as an element of branding that influence preference and patronage for distilled liquor in Abeokuta metropolis.
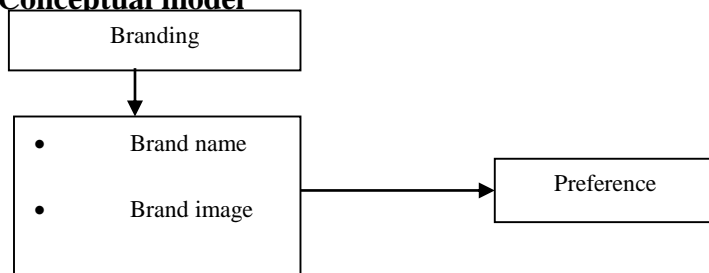
Definition of terms

Distilled product: this is used to describe alcoholic local herbs (alcoholic beverage) manufactured and packaged for consumption.

Preference: It means accepting a product over another.

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>**Conceptual model**</u>

Source: Author's developed model, 2019

Conceptual Framework

Product Branding

A brand tries to establish a coherent perception of the company for its different stakeholders and reflects a good corporate reputation in the eyes of the general public (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Obete (2016) viewed product branding as an act of personifying a product. Oworo (2016) perceived product branding as the act of exposing the competency, and potency of a product. A brand personality may help communicate a product's attributes and thus contribute to a functional benefit. Similarly, it can help create a self expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality (Ogbuji, 2015). Businessdictionary (2016) defined branding is the process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding is aimed at establishing a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retain loyal customers. Trump (2016) posits product branding in the market is influenced by firm's ability to assess how consumers interpret the image of brands as well as manage the strategy of brand positioning, adequately revealing brand's equity to a consumer. 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).

Brand Name

A brand name is the name of a distinctive product, service, or concept (Akata, 2016). Brand names provide potential customers with information about the product and form an immediate impression about the company. Osipitan (2014) claimed that a well-chosen brand name can set a small business's product apart from those of competitors and communicate a message regarding the firm's marketing position or corporate personality. In order to create a brand name for a product, market and product evaluation should be made paramount.

Brand Image

Brand image can be defined as the reasoned or emotional perception a consumer attaches to specific brands (Enoch 2016). Cannon (2017) sees brand image as the totality of consumer perceptions about the brand which may not coincide with the brand identity. It includes symbolic brand beliefs. Brunks (2016) defined brand image as consumers' perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand association held in consumer memory. These associations however refer to any brand aspect within the consumer's memory (Aaker, 1996). Brand image is the current view of the customers about a brand. It can be defined as a unique bundle of associations within the minds of target customers. It signifies what the brand presently stands for. It is a set of beliefs held about a specific brand. In short, it is nothing but the consumers' perception about the product. It is the manner in which a specific brand is positioned in the market. Brand image conveys emotional value and not just a mental image. Brand image is nothing but an organization's character. It is an accumulation of contact and observation by people external to an organization.

Wemtol (2017) claimed that brand image can be studied from the company's and consumer's perspectives. The company's perspective is focused on developing and improvement of strategies of positioning and retaining a positive brand image. The consumer's perspective on the other hand is based on consumer's perception of brand image and brand equity. Benson (2016) described brand image as consumer's conception, thoughts and feelings towards the brand. In other words, brand image is the overall mental image that consumers have of a brand, and its uniqueness in comparison to the other brands (Quili, 2015).
Twylor (2015) opined that when consumers have a favorable brand image, the brand's messages have a stronger influence in comparison to competitor brand messages therefore; brand image is an important determinant of a buyer's behaviour (Burmann et al., 2008).

Consumers' preference

Akata (2016) defined consumer preference as the subjective tastes of individual consumers, measured by their satisfaction with those items purchase. Quili (2015) described satisfaction as utility. Quili (2015) however asserted that consumer value can be determined by how consumer utility compares between different items. Consumer preferences can be measured by their satisfaction with a specific item, compared to the opportunity cost of that item since whenever consumers buy an item; they forfeit the opportunity to buy a competing item. Consumer preferences are dictated by personal taste, culture, education and many other factors such as social pressure from friends and neighbours (Cannon, 2017).

Durrani *et al* (2007) opined that while consumer preference is an indicator of consumer demand. The however noted that consumer choices are not always determined by preference alone.

Empirical Review

There have been countless studies on the relationship between branding and consumers preference. Nasar (2012) found that brand image has a direct impact on the purchase behaviour of the consumer. Osipitan (2014) found that brand image has a direct effect on customers' loyalty for specialty product. However, the works of Rajh (2010) and Bekon (2013) established non statistical significance between brand image and patronage for kitchen utensils.

Olukotun and Donaldson (2017) established a positive and significant relationship between brand name and consumer preference. The work of Moleeq (2012) also found a significant a relationship between brand name and demand for pesticide in Israel. Fisher (2017) argued that brand name create an image that drive continuous patronage for automobiles in the Malaysia. On the contrary, Paulo (2014) found product branding to be statistically insignificant in determining demand for specialty goods with a negative correlation. Mistilio and Pentol (2014) found that the pressing reasons for effective branding is to achieve customer loyalty and support a premium price because purchasers rely on experience and their long held attitudes about a brand; and that successful brands are often focused on one specific market segment. Bagamor (2015) claimed that color is a critical element in developing a branding strategy. He however asserted that colour does not only enhance the appearance of a product, they also influence customer behavior. He further posited that color of a brand make or mar firms' branding strategy while pointing out that effect of colors differs; from culture to culture.

The traditional logic behind having a portfolio of brands rather than a single brand has been possible diversification and risk minimization (Owelle, 2016).

A comparative analysis by Okpara (2008) on the Attitudinal Dimensions to Home brands of shoes as compared to foreign brands discovered the presence of Consumption Complex Syndrome (CCS) as being responsible for local consumers' preference for foreign branded shoes over the local branded counterparts. The model suggests that once consumers are exposed to the awareness and knowledge of a brand of product, they either like or dislike it. Allusion to Consumption Complex Syndrome suggests that when a consumer asserts preference for a particular brand of shoe (foreign) and cannot in a blind brand experiment clearly pick out that brand, then he possesses the syndrome. This simply suggests that what consumers buy most times is name and not quality. This, one believes may equally be true of consumers of regulated bottled water who cannot determine in a blind brand experiment their choice brand.

Table 2.2 Common names attached to the products and meaning

Name of product	Implied meaning
Agbara	Power
Alomo bitters	Defeat a lady (on bed)
Action bitters	Enhancement of action (on bed)
Koboko	(whip) Discipline a tough lady (on bed)
Babyoku	Girl, you are dead! (on bed)
Ogidiga	Real power
Hammer	Energy breaker (Nailer)
The Rock	Strong as rock
Kerewa	Sexual intercourse

Source: Author's extracts from existing distilled products in Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a descriptive survey method with the use of primary data. A self-developed questionnaire and personal interviews were use to sample the opinion of 200 consumers of distilled liquor products across 20 popular distilled products consuming joints in Abeokuta through a multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage is purposive selection of major popular joint in the metropolis. The second stage is the stratification of the centres to ensure that respondents in all the centres are sampled; the third stage is random sampling which ensures respondents are randomly selected from each. Lastly, since the arrival pattern is non-static, the respondents were conveniently selected. Ordinary Least Square regression was carried out to measure the impact of the impendent variable on the dependent variable. It is however computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Model specification
$Y = \alpha + \beta X + \mu$
Y_1= Brand name= BRDNM
Y_2= Brand image=BRDIM
X=Preference= PRFC
BRDNM = $\alpha + \beta$ PRFC + μ…………1
BRDIM = $\alpha + \beta$ PRFC + μ……… …,2
α_0 = Fixed factor
β_1= Intercept/slope
μ = Error term

Analysis of Research Data
Table 4.1: Demographic factors

Age	No	Percentage
Less than 18	12	6%
18 – 30	88	44%
31 and above	100	50%
Marital Status	**No**	**Percentage**
Single	92	46%
Married	108	54%
Education	**No**	**Percentage**
Pre-primary/ Primary	56	28%

Post primary	124	62%
Post secondary	20	10%
Occupation	**No**	**Percentage**
Artisan	88	44%
Civil servant/Public servant	50	25%
Trading/Manufacturing	62	31%

Source: Survey, 2018

From table 4.1, there are more respondents who are above 31 years of age more than other categories of respondents. 6% are less than 18 years, 445 are between 18 and 30 years while 50% are 31 years upward. The table further revealed that 54% of the respondents are married while the remaining 46% are single. This implied that more married respondents converge at the liquor consuming spot than the single.

The survey also revealed that majority of the respondents who had post primary education represent 62% of the population while those who had primary/pre-primary and post secondary education are 28% and 10% respectively. The above table also shows that 44% are artisans, 25% are public/civil servants while 31% engage in trading and manufacturing. This implied that more artisans are more represented in the survey.

Table 4.2: Mode of consumption of distilled alcoholic herbs by consumers

Mode	**No**	**Percentage**
Often	153	76.5%
Less often	32	16%
Prefer non-alcoholic bitters	15	7.5%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: Survey, 2018

The above table shows that 76.5% of the consumer take it often, 16% take it less often while the remaining 7.5% prefer non-alcoholic brands. This implied that most of the consumers take distilled alcoholic herbs frequently.

Table 4.3: Reason for consumption of distilled alcoholic herbs

Reason	**No**	**Percentage**
Sexual power	145	72.5%
Energy to work	15	7.5%
Love for alcoholics	40	20%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: Survey, 2018

The above table shows that 72.5% of those who prefer distilled alcoholic drinks to enhance their sexual power, 7.2% prefer them in boosting their energy at work while the remaining 20% prefer them for the love of alcoholics. This implied that majority of the consumer in the metropolis prefer distilled alcoholic drinks to enhance their sexual power.

Table 4.4: Where does consumer prefer to consume distilled alcoholic herbs

Place	**No**	**Percentage**
Joint (Vendor's place)	153	76.5%
Home/workplace	32	16%
Anywhere	15	7.5%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: Survey, 2018

The above table shows that 76.5% of the consumer prefer to take at vendor's place (joint), 16% take it less often while the remaining 7.5% prefer non-alcoholic brands. This implied that most of the consumers take distilled alcoholic herbs frequently.

Table 4.5: Preference for a brand of distilled alcoholic drinks

Preference influence	No	Percentage
Taste	24	12%
Name of brand	129	64.5%
Quality	20	10%
Brand image	27	13.5%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: Survey, 2018

The above table shows that majority of the consumers of the distilled alcoholic products purchase them based on the digested meaning of the brand name as this represent 64.5% of the entire sampled consumers

Test of Hypothesis

Table 4.6 Model Summary (b)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.819(a)	.671	.651	.68348	2.336

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand name, Brand image
b. Dependent Variable: Preference for distilled liquor

Table 4.7 ANOVA (b)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	223.822	14	15.987	34.224	.000(a)
	Residual	109.778	195	.467		
	Total	333.600	199			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand name, Brand image
b. Dependent Variable: Preference for distilled liquor

Table 4.8 Coefficients (a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Tolerance	VIF	B	Std. Error
1 (Constant)	-1.663	.409		-4.062	.000		
Age	-.727	.121	-.571	-6.031	.000*	.156	6.393
Marital status	.121	.159	.055	.765	.445	.267	3.751
Educational Qualifications	.334	.076	.266	4.411	.000*	.386	2.590
Occupation	-.325	.099	-.235	-3.293	.001*	.276	3.625

a. Dependent Variable: Preference for distilled liquor
*statistical significant variables

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

From table 4.8 (coefficient table) it can be seen that age, educational qualifications and occupation are found to be statistically significant to determine preference for distilled liquor in the study area at 0.00, 0.00 and 0.01 respectively. Only the marital status is found to be statistically insignificant at 0.445. For age, educational qualification and occupation, p-value < 0.05.

From table 4.6 (model summary table), the r^2 is 0.671. This implies that the independent variables (i.e. brand name and brand image) account for 67% of the dependent variable, while the remaining 33% can be accounted for, by other exogenous factor outside this model. This also means that the independent variable has good representation of its data. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 significant levels. This result indicated that we reject the null hypothesis which states that Brand name does not significantly enhance consumer preference for distilled liquors and brand image does not significantly enhance consumer preference for distilled liquors. F-statistic which share overall result 32.442 and p-value of 0.00 is also in line with the t-statistic. There is no problem of auto correlation in the model.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main reasons why distilled liquor products are consumed in to enhance sexual power as other reasons such as courage/confidence are secondary. Larger percentage of those who prefer them, consume them frequently. Larger percentage of those who consume them frequently, take them in vendor's spot.The major determinant of brand preference is the name and image attached to the product. Others are secondary. The finding is in line with the work of Moleeq (2012) who found a significant a relationship between brand name and demand for pesticide in Israel and Fisher (2017) who also established that brand name create an image that drive continuous patronage for automobiles in the Malaysia.

Since the research established that there is a great impact of brand name and image on preference for a brand of alcoholic distilled products, as consumer cannot measure the differences in term of value. It is recommended that manufacturing firms should build its strength around the name of the product to suit consumer orientation and preference. For example, a brand could be named "German machine" i.e. having sex without getting tired, etc.

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