

EFFECT OF BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR AMONG SOFT DRINKS PROCESSING FIRMS IN TANZANIA; A CASE OF AZAM SOFT DRINKS COMPANY

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Abstract: Identifying the consumer target is important because different consumers may have different brand knowledge structures and thus different perceptions and preferences for the brand. Without this understanding, it may be difficult for marketers to say which brand associations should be strongly held, favorable, and unique. The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of brand image on consumer buying behavior among soft drinks processing firms in Tanzania using a case study of Azam Soft Drinks Company. Azam Soft Drink Company was selected for this study because it is one of the largest soft drinks processing company in Tanzania with the highest consumer base. The research design used was descripto-explanatory which allowed a detailed description and analysis of the variables under study; describing and presenting their characteristics and explaining their relationships without manipulation. The target population comprised of 384 respondents from Dar-es-Salaam region. The study adopted questionnaires as the primary data collection method. The collected data was coded as per the study objectives. Data was analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, mean, standard deviation and correlation. According to the study findings, brand image influenced consumer buying behavior at Azam Soft Drink Company. Brand loyalty had weak correlation with consumer buying behavior. The study further revealed that brand awareness, perceived quality and association had positive influence on consumer buying behavior. The study concludes that to a great extent brand image positively affects consumer buying behavior at Azam Soft Drinks Company. The study recommends that, Azam Soft Drink Company needs to ensure that they consistently maintain and improve their brand identity so it can be easily for a consumer to recognize and opt to use it. Furthermore, despite the subjective nature of perceived quality, soft drinks companies still need to ensure they conduct adequate research on product development so as to discover new features and add value to their products so as not only sustain but exceed the expectations of what their consumers deem to be of a high quality in order to influence more purchasing decision among customers in every corner of the country.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association, Perceived Product Quality, Consumer Buying Behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty first century age represents key changes in the marketing strategies employed by organizations and institutions in order to help them be very competitive and be sustainable in the turbulent market that they find themselves. Today's consumers live in a world where the purchase of products and services is enormous and continuous (Rindell, 2008). The survival or success of companies is now dependent on the amount of information that is carefully gathered by the former with regards to the purchasing habits displayed by consumers. In order to survive in the market, companies are

keenly interested in developing strong brands that leads to long term and customer relationships (Hess, Story and Danes, 2011). Companies inject heavy resources and time into the study of behavioral and sociological factors in order to gain much insight and to understand consumer purchasing patterns. Thus brands represent key assets to companies (Rindell, 2008). Branding has emerged as part and parcel of modern day marketing strategies and now considered a key organizational asset (Kotler, 2000).

In Tanzania context, the study undertaken by Mageni (2015) at Nyanza Bottling Company revealed that; nature of branding at NBCL is done or created basing on two things. At NBCL local products like juices (Fruitree) they have been branded locally while those products which were fallen under Coca-Cola brand, the need for brand was proposed first to Core brand owner (Coca-Cola International) for approval. In most cases the approved brand should be in association with the existing brands under the core brand. Also, buying decisions of consumers on NBCL's soft drinks were influenced by factors like brand loyalty, products' packaging, promotion, wide distribution coverage, reliability in quality of the products, standards which carter for health security and safety and weaknesses available in other brands.

Today, the conditions under which Soft Drink Company is working are constantly changing. The customers demand more than simply the core product. They want a wide range of values, attitudes and experiences. To what extent a company is able to deliver such an expanded product will essentially depend on whether the company employs staff with the right competencies, motivation and commitment. These factors vary from one country to another, thus there is a need to assess the effects of brand image as an influence of consumer buying decision in developing countries such as Tanzania specifically to Azam Soft Drink Company.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of brand image on consumer buying behaviour among soft drinks processing firms in Tanzania using Azam Soft Drinks Company as a case for the study. Specifically the study sought to assess the brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived product quality influence on consumer buying behaviour.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed descripto-explanatory research design; using both descriptive and explanatory research designs. The design allowed a detailed description and analysis of the variables under study; describing and presenting their characteristics and explaining their relationships without manipulation as supported by Saunders *et al.* (2009). The study covered a target population of 4,000,000 consumers from five districts within Dar-es-Salaam region which are Kinondoni, Ilala, Ubungo, Temeke and Kigamboni.

The study employed both primary and secondary data. Before administration, the questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure collection of valid and reliable data. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires, whereas secondary data were obtained through reports obtained from the company and other Government reports. This was supplemented by the primary data received from questionnaires.

Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used in the data analysis. Descriptive statistical tools included frequencies, percentages and mean while inferential statistical tool included multivariate regression analysis. Whereas descriptive statistics were used to determine and describe the status of the variables under study, inferential statistics were used to compute the correlation between independent variables i.e brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived product quality and dependent variable which is consumer buying behaviour of Azam soft drinks products.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of Brand Image on Consumer Buying Behaviour

The study considered brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality as the four major variables of brand image which influence consumer buying behaviour. The range was "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The scores of disagreeing have been taken to represent a variable which had a mean score of 0 to 2.5 on the continuous Likert scale; ($0 \leq S.D \leq 2.4$). The scores of "moderately agree" have been taken to represent a variable with a mean score of 2.5 to 3.4 on the continuous Likert scale: ($2.5 \leq M.E \leq 3.4$) and the score of both agree and strongly agree

have been taken to represent a variable which had a mean score of 3.5 to 5.0 on a continuous Likert scale; ($3.5 \leq S.A. < 5.0$). A standard deviation of > 0.9 implies a significant difference on the impact of the variable among respondents.

Influence of Brand Loyalty on Consumer Buying Behaviour

This section of the questionnaire sought to get from the respondents the influence of brand loyalty on consumer buying behaviour of Azam soft drinks products. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Brand Loyalty

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand loyalty motivate to Purchase alternative packages	3.92	0.641
Brand loyalty Motivate to recommend the brand that I use to others	3.71	0.622
Brand loyalty enhance me to continue to use Azam brand even at high Usage Rate	3.54	0.694
Brand loyalty Motivates to switch to other competitive brand	2.26	0.738

From the results it is clear that majority of respondents agree that brand loyalty motivate to purchase alternative packages by a mean of 3.92. Also the results shows that brand loyalty motivate the consumers to recommend the brand that they use to others with a mean of 3.71. Brand loyalty enhances me to continue to use Azam brand even at high Usage Rate as San, (2015) concludes that teenagers buying behaviour is correlated and influenced brand loyalty and brand image. There is a practical relation between brand image and teenager consumer's buying behaviour. Brand loyalty enhances the consumers' tendency to use Azam brands at high rate by a mean of 3.54 and lastly most of the Azam products consumers disagreed that brand loyalty motivates to switch to other competitive brand with a mean of 2.26 as Ndubisi, (2004) explains that brand loyalty to be the tendency of customers to continuously purchase one brands product over another. Consumer behavior patterns demonstrate that consumers will continue to buy products from a company that has fosterer a trusting relationship.

Correlation between Brand Loyalty and Consumer Buying Behaviour

The study revealed weak positive but weak correlation between brand loyalty and consumer buying behaviour as shown by correlation coefficient of 0.017, the significant value was 0.021 which is less than 0.05.

Table 2: Correlation between brand loyalty and consumer buying behaviour

		Buying Behaviour
Brand Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.017*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
	N	95

Influence of Brand Awareness and Consumer Buying Behaviour

This section of the questionnaire sought to get respondents' perceptions on the influence of brand awareness on consumer buying behaviour of Azam soft drinks products. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Brand Awareness

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can easily Recall this brand during any purchase Power	4.23	0.641
I consider Point of Difference among brands before deciding	4.21	0.619
I have adequate Knowledge about this Brand	4.19	0.607
My Position of Choice Set is high toward the brand	4.17	0.615
I can Recall of competitive Brands easily	2.52	0.713

According to the findings, consumers strongly acknowledged that brands can be recalled easily by the consumers while making purchasing decisions with a mean of 4.23 as Keller (2013) conceptualized brand awareness as comprising of brand recall and brand recognition, he argues that brand recognition may be more important when product decisions are made in the store and no one buys what they do not know and Keller also stated that the brand awareness relates to consumers' capacity to verify previous exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cure. In addition he indicates that the brand recall relates to consumers' capability to recover brand when given the product category and the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of search as an indication.

The consumers consider point of difference among existing brands before making a purchasing decision by a mean of 4.21. Consumers possess adequate knowledge on Azam soft drink products with a mean of 4.19, the findings support the study conducted by Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2010) who concluded that customer gathers information about the business organization, through the promotional activities of the business and this information gathering, improves the customer awareness of the business activities, which confirms the recognition of the business as well as increase consumer's knowledge on that particular brand. Also the consumer's position of choice set towards Azam's soft drinks is high with a mean of 4.17 as (Aaker, 2010) propounds that brand awareness is the capability of the customer to be able to point out and note a brand in its product category. Finally consumers cannot easily recall on other competitive brand as the substitute products with a mean of 2.52. These findings concur with those of a study undertaken by Esch *et al.* (2006) who states that brand awareness is essential in influencing consumer buying intention, because when a brand is well established in the memory it is easier for associations to be created and attached. Esch *et al* further claim that there is a prominent correlation between brand awareness and consumer buying decision. Furthermore, Bowie & Buttle (2014) agree on this contention and have created a matrix to display the relationship between brand awareness and consumer buying behavior.

Correlation between Brand Awareness and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Further, the study sought to determine the influence of brand awareness on consumer buying behavior using correlation analysis. As shown in Table 4, the study found positive correlation between brand awareness and consumer buying behaviour as demonstrated by correlation coefficient of 0.621, the significant value was 0.001 which is less than 0.05.

Table 4: Correlation between brand awareness and consumer buying behaviour

		Buying Behaviour
Brand Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.621
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	95

Influence of Perceived Product Quality on Consumer Buying Behaviour

This section of the questionnaire sought to solicit from the respondents the influence of perceived quality on consumer buying behaviour of Azam soft drinks products. As presented in Table 5, a consumer would purchase Azam soft drinks products based on the product's performance by a mean score of 4.15. The consumers are willing to purchasing to purchase brand with value added features with a mean of 4.09 and willing to purchase a brand with high service quality with a mean of 3.83. The results are consistent to the findings of Masika (2013) who refers perceived quality as the perception of superiority of a brand when compared to alternative brands in the competitive set. Masika further states that it is considered the consumer's subjective assessment of the whole product's superiority or excellence, like brand association; perceived quality provides consumers with value and gives them reason to differentiate one brand from another.

Quality perception influences consumer's brand decision by a mean of 3.96 as Schiffman, Kanuk and Wisenblit (2010) point out that perceived quality is not the actual quality of the brands or products, rather, it is the consumers' judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority. Perceived quality has direct impact on consumers' purchase decision and brand loyalty, especially during the time customers have little or no information of the products that they are going to purchase, and is neither motivated nor able to conduct a detailed analysis (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014). Finally innovation is the key in consumer's choice of Azam soft drinks products with a mean of 3.87.

Table 5: Perceived Quality

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
I will purchase brand with Product Performance	4.15	0.673
I will purchase brand with Value added features	4.09	0.698
I will purchase a brand with high Service Quality	3.83	0.721
Quality perception influences my brand decision	3.96	0.736
Innovation is key in my choice for Azam brand	3.87	0.747

Correlation between Perceived Product Quality and Consumer Buying Behaviour

From the findings in Table 6, the study found positive correlation between perceived quality and consumer buying behaviour as shown by correlation coefficient of 0.568, the significant value was 0.024 which is less than 0.05.

Table 6: Correlation between perceived product quality and consumer buying behaviour

		Buying Behaviour
Perceived Quality	Pearson Correlation	.568*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024
	N	95

Influence of Brand Association on Consumer Buying Behaviour

This section of the questionnaire sought to get from the respondents the influence of brand association on consumer buying behaviour of Azam soft drinks products. As presented in Table 7, the consumer will support the brand with closeness to life by a mean of 4.22. Consumers like brands with high social image by a mean of 4.20 Keller (2013) suggests that brand association can be created by linking the brand to a node or information in memory that conveys meaning to consumers. The results are also consistent to the findings of Keller *et al.*, (2008) who conclude that brand can generate consumer interest, patronage and loyalty as consumers learn to expect certain brands and products that help create an image and establish positioning such as luxury brand goods.

Personality feelings is key in consumer brand decision with a mean of 3.98 and finally sing value or recognition influence consumer's brand decision with a mean of 3.95 as Mohan, (2014) asserts that consumers associate the brand with attributes such as dynamism, high technology, innovativeness, sophistication, distinctiveness, excellence and prestige. The combination of tangible and intangible attributes creates a brand identity, that is, a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain, which drives brand associations (Aaker, 2010).

Table 7: Brand Association

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
I will patronize in brand with Closeness to Life	4.22	0.572
I like brand with high Social Image	4.20	0.559
Personality feelings is key in my brand decision	3.98	0.629
Sing Value or recognition influence my brand decision	3.95	0.711

Correlation between Brand Association and Consumer Buying Behaviour

As shown in Table 8, the study found positive correlation between brand association and consumer buying behaviour as shown by correlation coefficient of 0.592, the significant value was 0.022 which is less than 0.05.

Table 8: Correlation between brand association and consumer buying behaviour

		Buying Behaviour
Brand Association	Pearson Correlation	.592*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
	N	95

Consumer Buying Behaviour

On consumer buying behavior, the findings in Table 9 indicate that most of the respondents are willing to pay a premium price for Azam soft drink products with a mean of 3.78. The consumers are willing to recommend others to use Azam soft drinks products by a mean of 3.74 as Keshwarani *et al.*, (2012) state that consumer behavior is a branch which deals with various stages a consumer goes through before purchasing products or services for his use; it is a decision making process of buyers both individually and in group; it studies characteristics of individual consumers such as the demographic factors and behavioral variables in an attempt to understand peoples want. It also studies to assess the influences on the consumer from groups such as family; friends and society loyal customers have the potential to turn into open advocates and ambassador for a company.

The price of Azam's products is reasonable which makes the consumer very satisfied by a mean of 3.67 again consumer are willing and able to purchase Azam soft drinks because their genuine products with a mean of 3.47 as Lamb *et al.*,(2004) defines consumer buying behaviour as an art whereby the consumers show their interest on the product and react on it by buying. The performance of the consumer mostly is done by informing and sometimes persuading by telling the advantages of using the product. Consumers believe that Azam soft drink products are convenient for use compared to competitor's products with a mean of 3.59 as Solomon (2011) stated that people consume things and also consume and buy these products according to their needs, preferences and buying power and these can be consumable goods, durable goods, specialty goods or, industrial goods. Lastly consumer they purchase Azam soft drinks that have attractive influence for them to buy with a mean of 3.44. It is therefore clear that the consumer buying behavior among consumers of Azam soft drink products is high.

Table 9: Consumer Buying Behaviour

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
I would be willing to pay a premium price for Azam soft drinks brands	3.78	0.699
I would be willing to recommend to others a Azam soft drinks brands	3.74	0.712
The prices of products at Azam is reasonable, which makes me very satisfied	3.67	0.731
I believe Azam soft drink products are convenient for use compared to competitors products	3.59	0.728
I would be willing to buy Azam soft drink product because are genuine for consumer	3.47	0.719
Azam soft drinks products have attractive influence to the customers to buy	3.44	0.718

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

Brand loyalty can be seen to be formed through brand trust, commitment, satisfaction, perceived value, image, association and quality. Therefore, when a firm succeeds in establishing loyalty amongst its customers it adds value to the brand and creates strong brand affiliation, reduces marketing expenditure and influences other potential customers through positive word-of-mouth. Furthermore, brand awareness it has been shown that consumers adopt a decision rule to buy familiar brands. Brand awareness can therefore be seen to affect decisions about brands in the consideration set. Fundamentally, high levels of brand awareness increase the probability of brand choice among millennial, produce greater consumer.

Perceived quality has a significant influence to the purchase of Azam soft drink among customers due to its superiority at the market compared to its competitors. Consumers, more specifically Azam consumers associate Azam soft drinks with attributes such as high technology, innovativeness, sophistication, distinctiveness, excellence and prestige. The combination of tangible and intangible attributes creates a brand identity, that is, a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain, which drives brand associations. Therefore, brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand association play a significant role toward consumer buying behavior at Azam Soft Drink Company.

The study established that brand image has a significant positive effect toward consumer buying behavior of Azam soft drinks. From the findings of this study, it is recommended that; Azam Soft Drink Company need to ensure that they not only sustain brand recognition and brand recall levels of brand awareness, but also strive to ultimately achieve top of mind awareness in the minds of their consumers by developing and implementing efficient marketing strategies such as advertising, promotion and publicity.

Azam Soft Drink Company needs to ensure that they consistently maintain and improve their brand identity so it can be easily for a consumer to recognize and opt to use it. Furthermore, despite the subjective nature of perceived quality, soft drinks companies still need to ensure they conduct adequate research on product development so as to discover new features and add value to their products so as not only sustain but exceed the expectations of what their consumers deem to be of a high quality in order to influence more purchasing decision among customers in every corner of the country.

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