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The Effect of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty in the Manufacturing Sector

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of brand image on customer loyalty within the manufacturing sector. Brand image plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward a brand, ultimately affecting their loyalty. Through a comprehensive analysis of the manufacturing industry, this study explores the multifaceted relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. The research findings provide valuable insights into how a positive brand image fosters customer loyalty, trust, and repeat business. By understanding the dynamics at play in the manufacturing sector, organizations can make informed branding decisions to enhance customer loyalty and build enduring relationships. The implications of this study extend to marketing professionals, business leaders, and scholars, offering a deeper understanding of the critical connection between brand image and customer loyalty. Recognizing the impact of brand image empowers organizations to employ effective branding strategies that nurture customer loyalty, thereby promoting long-term success in the manufacturing sector.

Keywords: Brand Image, Customer Loyalty, Manufacturing Sector, Consumer Perceptions, Brand Trust

Introduction

According to Quiston (2004), a fundamental distinction exists between a product, which is a tangible item produced in a factory, and a brand, which represents a unique, purchasable concept. Unlike a product, a brand is not easily replicated by competitors and possesses enduring appeal.

This insight prompts researchers to investigate the profound impact of a brand on consumer purchasing behavior. The strategic significance of branding in a company cannot be overstated, as it plays a vital role in distinguishing one firm's goods or services from those of others. Branding empowers customers to identify and favor a particular firm's offerings over others, ensuring recognition and preference (Boyle, 2007). Throughout history, brands have served as marks of identification, differentiating one producer's goods from another (Alamgir, Nasir, Shamsuddoha, Nedelea, 2010). Today, brands not only serve as differentiators but also justify consumers' purchase decisions (Alamgir et al., 2010). A brand, encompassing its name, symbol, and design, reflects customers' perceptions and opinions regarding a product's performance (Alamgir et al., 2010). A strong brand resides in the consumer's mind, differing in its market influence. De Chernatony and McDonald (2009) highlight the value that a brand adds to a product and emphasize that a brand's success depends on consumers' perceptions of its alignment with their needs in comparison to other brands in the same category. Given changing consumer behaviors and perceptions, the construction of robust brand strategies tailored to the consumer is imperative. Effective brand strategies must consider the consumer's perspective to elicit a favorable response. Brand image, reflecting associations stored in consumers' memories, has been underexplored in the Nigerian context. Research on brand image and its influence on customer loyalty is scarce. Brands grapple with issues such as customer loyalty and brand switching. Consumers may switch brands for various reasons, including better offers, quality, price, and features. Previous research underscores that retaining customer loyalty is more cost-effective than acquiring new customers, emphasizing the need to explore how marketers can influence customer loyalty through the right brand associations.

Literature Review

According to Strizhakova and Price (2008), Srivastava and Gregory (2010) and Kapferer (2008), branding strategies are developed by the organisation, for the product, in order to position and identify the brand with positive product benefits to attract potential customers, create brand awareness and to increase profitability. Knox and Bickerton (2003) continue, "The development of product branding over the past 30 years is characterised by layers of added value built around the core functionality of the product or service to create and maintain distinction in a particular market." In simple terms, brands are used as the communication between a product or service and

its existing and prospective customers, Biel (1997) continues this with the statement "as well as speaking directly to the consumer, it has also been said that brands are self-expressive." "Branding is a significant marketing tool and is used to differentiate an organisation's product(s) in the marketplace." (Graham, Harker, and Tuck, 1994). This is in support of Doyle (1989) who states that "a branded product distinguishes itself from the competition, enabling it to be easily recognised by consumers." Keller (2009) continues, "The brand and what it represents is the most important asset for many companies and is the basis for competitive advantage and profits". From these opinions, it is clear to see the importance and benefits of owning a strong and memorable brand. "Some feel that brands themselves are doomed because of years of inconsistent advertising and agency management, generic marketing, look-alike advertisements, un-distinctive products, and the proliferation of promotions." (Wentz, 1993). However, Wentz and Suchard (1993) disagree with this when they state "brands and branding are not new ideas, and today firms are applying them to more diverse settings where the role of branding is becoming increasingly important."

According to Ries and Ries (2000) a brand is a special word in the mind of consumers: a noun, with the power to influence purchasing behaviour. Keller (2008) takes a wider perspective making a distinction between the brand definition as set by AMA and the industry's concept of branding. Keller (2008) adds tangible and intangible brand elements, rational and emotional brand elements, and symbolic brand elements which differentiate and indentify a brand. Hence, Keller's definition is taken from a more holistic point of view: "A brand is therefore more than a product, because it can have dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same needs" (Keller, 2008). According to Kapferer (2008), the brand is a source of influence; a system of interconnected mental associations (brand image) and relationships. Kapferer (2008) is of the view that a brand as such, exists when it has the power to influence the market acquired by its sources of cumulative brand experience.

Martineau (1957) discovered that building a positive brand image can influence repeat purchase because a strong brand image can lead to customer loyalty. Furthermore, Bullmore (1984) states that customers who are loyal to certain brand will recommend it to other people and not easily influenced by competitors to make purchases. This is in line with the findings of Chang and Tu (2005) which revealed that a positive brand image can influence customer loyalty. This indicates that there is a positive influence of brand association on customer loyalty. According to Cretu and

Brodie (2007), brand image has specific effects on customer loyalty and perceptions of customer value. Hess and Story (2006) also confirmed in their research findings that overall brand image has significant effects on overall customer loyalty intention and that there is positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty intention. The result from the research carried out by Vazquez-Carrasco and Foxall (2006) indicated that the image of a product or particular or social and reliable brand, has positive impact on customer loyalty intentions. It also revealed that the brand image due to customer satisfaction will affect customer loyalty intention.

Brand Function

Brand functions, are associations related to intangible attributes or images added to the product thanks to its brand name, that is, they represent benefits that can only be obtained from products with a brand (Del Rio, Vazquez, and Iglesias, 2001). The functions of a brand will be evaluated from two perspectives; Consumer and Company.

From Consumer Perspective

Brands, according to Kapferer (2008) serve eight functions as highlighted below. The first two are mechanical and concern the essence of the brand: “to function as a recognised symbol in order to facilitate choice and to gain time”; the next three are for reducing the perceived risk; and the final three concern the pleasure side of a brand. He adds that brands perform an economic function in the mind of the consumer, “the value of the brand comes from its ability to gain an exclusive, positive and prominent meaning in the minds of a large number of consumers”. Therefore branding and brand building should focus on developing brand value. Kapferer (2008) addressed several brand functions which justify the attractiveness and value of the brand from a consumer perspective:

1. Identification: Primarily a mechanical function to make sure that the brand is clearly seen and recognized. Identification concerns the essence of the brand and facilitates the purchaser in his/her decision process and consideration set; swift choice and gain time.
2. Practicality: Primarily a mechanical function to allow savings of time and energy through identical repurchasing and loyalty.
3. Guarantee: The base brand guarantee function is to reduce the perceived risk and ensuring same quality irrespective of the place and time of purchase and consumption.

4. **Optimisation:** The base brand optimization function is to reduce the perceived risk by offering the best product against the lowest total cost of ownership, the best solution in its category.
5. **Badge:** The base brand badge function is to reduce the perceived risk by confirmation of self image and/or brand image.
6. **Continuity:** Continuity is an emotional satisfaction function created by brand familiarity and intimacy over a long period of time due to loyalty.
7. **Hedonistic:** Hedonistic is an emotional satisfaction function; pleasure created by brand attractiveness, its logo, its communication and experiential remuneration.
8. **Ethical:** Ethical is an emotional satisfaction function linked to the responsible behaviour of the brand in its relationship towards society.

From Company perspective

Allocation of organisational resources to release brand potential plays an important factor to establish a brand leadership position. Building a strong sustainable brand can improve long term business development tremendously. The effect of brand functions on consumer response constitutes a highly important subject when analyzing the value the brand has for the firm (Del Rio et al. 2001). According to Del Rio et al. (2001) the competitive advantages that result from a positive brand image can be categorized into three general components:

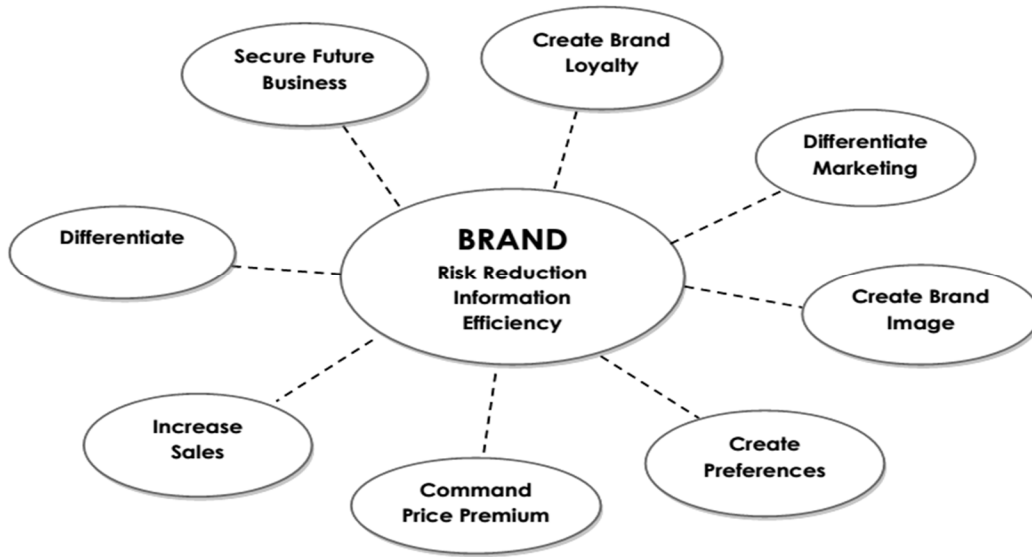
(1) Advantages related to current performance and profitability: the brand's ability to command higher margins and/or volume, more inelastic consumer response to price increases, increased marketing communication effectiveness and greater trade co-operation;

(2) Advantages related to longevity of profits: Brand loyalty, less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions, less vulnerability to marketing crises; and

(3) Advantages related to growth potential: Possible licensing opportunities, generation of positive word-of-mouth, brand's ability to introduce new products as brand extensions.

Furthermore, Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) have outlined eight different roles of the brands from the company perspective to conquer a unique position in the mind of stakeholders.

Figure 1: The role of brands from company perspective.



Source: Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006). *B2B Brand Management*. Berlin: Springer.

The eight brand roles are situated in the outer circle of the brand functions. The core represents the functions and value of the brand for the consumer. The roles are linked to each other; developing one will leverage the others. Effective differentiated marketing strategies will create specific brand preferences and brand image by delivering what is promised. For that, the brand will differentiate itself on the market and develop brand loyalty. The brand has enabled itself to command a premium market price with high margins. As a result of this and loyalty to the brand, it will secure future business and increase brand equity in a sustainable manner (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

Other Functions of a Brand

As stated by Blackston (1993), the other functions of a brand are as follows:

1. It helps in product identification and gives 'distinctiveness' to the product.
2. Indirectly it reflects the quality or standards of a product.
3. It helps in advertising and packaging activities.
4. It helps to create and sustain brand loyalty for particular products.
5. It helps in price differentiations of products.
6. It helps in positioning a product on the minds of consumers.

Dimensions of Brand Functions

According to Del Rio et al (2001), the functions of a brand can be measured through the dimensions of guarantee, personal identification, social identification and status.

1. **Guarantee Function:** The guarantee function, understanding by this the promise or guarantee of quality, is based on the appraisal that the brand is reliable, efficiently carries out its performance qualities and meets the generated expectations (Ambler, 1997). Similarly, it is fitting to associate this function with the perception that the brand is linked to products with a suitable level of performance and is concerned about conveniently satisfying consumer needs, contributing variety and innovation (Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991; Dubois and Duquesne, 1995).
2. **Personal identification function:** The personal identification function is related to the fact that consumers can identify themselves with some brands and develop feelings of affinity towards them (Del Rio et al. 2001).
3. **Social Identification Function:** The social identification function is based on the brand's ability to act as a communication instrument allowing the consumer manifesting the desire to be integrated or, on the contrary, to dissociate himself from the groups of individuals that make up his closest social environment (those people with whom he currently interacts or aspires to do so) (Del Rio et al. 2001). Consumers interested in this function will positively value those brands that enjoy a good reputation among the groups with which they belong to or aspire to form part of (Long and Shiffman, 2000).
4. **Status Function:** The status function expresses the feelings of admiration and prestige that the consumer may experience upon using the brand (Solomon, 1999). According to Vigneron and Johnson (1999), this function is based on five characteristics of the brand:
 - i. Symbol of the individual's power and social status;
 - ii. reflection of social approval;
 - iii. Exclusivity or limitation of the offer to a small number of people;
 - iv. Contribution of emotional experiences; and
 - v. Technical superiority.

Brand Image

Brand image has been discussed as an important concept in consumer purchase behaviour, because consumer's brand and product choices are based on their assessment of brand image (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Dichter (1985) and Newman (1957) defined brand image as the total set of impressions shaped by consumer interactions (e.g., observation and consumption) with a brand. Bullmore (1984) and Gardner and Levy (1955) referred to brand image as beliefs, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes towards a brand. Frazer (1983) and Pohlman and Mudd (1973) argued that brand image is more strongly related to intangible aspects, such as social meanings and symbolic value than physical features of products. Similarly, Keller (2001, 2008) defined brand image as a consumer's perceptions and feelings associated with a brand, its offerings, and imagery attributes, such as user profiles, purchase/usage situations, brand personality, values, history, heritage, and experiences. In other words, it is defined as consumer's perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers' memory (Keller, 1993). Aaker (1991) adds that the connection to a brand in the mind of the consumers will be stronger with associations. These associations can be further divided into subgroups, such as attitudes and benefits (Keller, 1993).

Brand attitudes are said to be consumers overall evaluation of a brand (Chen, 2001) and seen as a silent perspective of benefits and attributes (Keller, 1993). Benefits are the values consumers connect with the product or service and more specifically, it reflects the types of needs the product or service fulfil for the customer. Product or service benefits can be categorized into three types, functional benefits, experiential benefits, and symbolic benefits (Keller, 1998). Functional benefits are related with fairly primary motivations like safety needs or avoidance (Keller, 1998). Experiential benefits are related to how consumers feel when the products or services are being used (Keller, 1998). Symbolic benefits are the extrinsic benefits of products or service usage which are related to the needs for social approval or personal expression such as prestige and exclusivity (Keller, 1993; Keller, 1998).

Individuals perceive the Brand image differently since they individually interpret the message based on their life experiences and specific characteristics as human beings (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). According to Grönroos (2008) and Kapferer (2008) it is impossible to affect an image since it is created in the mind of the consumer, which does not enable the opportunity to influence the perception of a brand. However, according to Faircloth, Capella and Alford (2001) it may be

possible to affect the Brand image since brand associations could be manipulated in order to create the desirable image. Marion and Michel (1986) posited that there are three concepts of image that can be applied to brands or companies:

1. **Desired Image:** It refers to the target image that emerges from the strategic planning process of the company.
2. **Diffused image:** It concerns the execution of plans by such actors as company employees and associated agents (e.g., advertising agencies, retailers), and almost always varies to a greater or lesser degree from the first.
3. **Registered Image:** It refers to the image actually held by consumers and other publics. It is formed on the basis of actions of the company and the actors it controls, but also of inputs from other actors in the general business environment (e.g., governments, trade unions and the media).

Establishing a positive Brand image requires the establishment of a strong, favourable and unique association to the brand. When Brand images are strong, they can be used to enhance a person's self-image, appeal stakeholder, (Keller, 1993) and influence customers' purchase decisions, which in order has an impact on the corporation's financial revenue (Munoz, 2004). Interaction with a brand can also affect consumers' overall attitudes towards the brand where for example individuals can feel a sense of belonging by consuming or buying a certain product. For instance, even if a customer does not belong to the elite class, they can feel a sense of belonging just by wearing a suit from Armani (Graeff, 1996). Products and brands can therefore be perceived to have symbolic meaning, which is part of the environment symbolized by the individual (Kapferer, 2008).

When associations about the brand are combined in a pleasant manner to the customer, the right and strong image can be created (Petrauskaite 2014). Brand image has an effect on customers' perception and purchasing behaviour. Associations about the brand can help to create or improve the value of the brand to the same level as loyal customers. Consumers, when faced with many brands, can forget one brand over another, but associations derived from their memories can help while they make purchasing decisions (Petrauskaite 2014). Also, the customer having associations about a certain brand can distinguish it from other ones and chose the brand which brought most positive or pleasant memories of purchasing experiences (Petrauskaite 2014). These memory

associations serve for well-positioned brands which later would be hard to replace in customers preference activities by other brands.

Effects of branding on consumer purchase behaviour

Based on the significance of this research, the effects of brand strategies on consumer behaviour can be analysed from 4 major perspectives namely: Brand preference, Purchase intention, customer loyalty and perceived quality.

Brand preference; The notion of preference has been considered by different disciplines, such as economists (e.g. Samuels, 1978), psychologists (e.g. Albanese, 1987) and sociologists (e.g. Tomer, 1996). However, there is no commonly-agreed definition of preference among these disciplines. In marketing, the concept of preference means the desirability or choice among alternatives (Oliver and Swan, 1989). While Zajonc and Markus (1982) propose that “a preference is a behavioural tendency that exhibits itself not so much in what the individual thinks or says about the object, but how he acts toward it”, Brand preferences are created from differentiation between alternatives resulting in a biased position toward a certain brand. D’Souza and Rao, (1995) defines brand preference as the consumer’s predispositions toward a brand that varies depending on the salient beliefs that are activated at a given time.

Brand preference refers to a consumer’s inclination to choose a specific brand among alternatives based on the benefit or value it provides (Faure and Natter, 2010). Tomer (1996) differentiates between four types of consumer preferences; the actual preference is the degree to which the consumer appreciates and develops the capacity to use certain goods. Meta-preferences are one’s preferences about actual preferences that reflect the normative judgments of the higher-order self (meta-self). True preferences are a unique set representing what is really and truly the best for the person. Finally, unrestrained preferences are those that satisfy the lower or physical needs. The individual’s preferences are determined by his or her actual preferences that reflect the meta-preferences and unrestrained preferences.

Prior studies on brand preference can be divided into two groups: the first group is for studies that examined the impact of consumer-related factors. They focused on the impact of cultural, social, psychological and personal factors of consumers. The main findings of this group studies revealed that changes in consumers’ life style can cause changes in their brand preferences (Hong and

Zinkhan, 1995; Hughes, 1976; Ross, 1971; Sirgy, 1982). The consumers' personality traits and values are also considered to be important predictors of brand preference. The second group addressed the impact of brand-related factors such as the brand price and other marketing communications tools with particular concern on advertising and promotion. One of the major findings of these studies is that the brand attributes, plus other brand factors such as perceived value have a significant impact on brand preference (Farquhar, 1990; Park and Srinivasan, 1994). In addition, the interaction between the self-image and brand-image; the self-image congruence has shown to be important in brand preference building (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). Multiple studies also provide evidence to support the argument that consumers prefer brands that share similar personality characteristics to their own actual or ideal self-image (Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1982).

Purchase intention; According to Howard (1991), purchase intention is closely related to consumers' plans in making actual purchase in certain period of time. Purchase intention also can be described as the urge or motivation arising from consumers' minds to purchase a certain brand after they evaluate it, before deciding to make any purchase based on their needs, attitudes, and perceptions towards the brands (Mc Carthy, 2002; Durianto and Liana, 2004; Madahi and Sukati, 2012). In marketing a brand, purchase intention is considered as a crucial factor to know and predict the consumer behavior (Durianto and Liana, 2004). It is also proven by some researches (Pi, Liao, Liu and Lee, 2011; Pavlou and Gefen, 2004) that purchase intention acts as an important factor influencing the actual final purchase and may lead to repeat buying in the future. Tariq, Nawaz and Butt, (2013) argued that purchase intention is a multi-step process. First, consumers collect any related information regarding their desired brand. Then, they will start to evaluate it by using its attributes since they have experienced the product and have complete product knowledge about the product. If the product suits them, they will purchase it again in the future.

Purchase intention includes two perspectives, from new consumers and from current consumers. Purchase intention from new consumers is used to form brand choices and to know consumers behavior (Rizwan, Arshad and Hussain, 2001). Purchase intention from current buyers is more to predict consumers' satisfaction and future sales once the consumers find out that the brands suits them and worth buying (Madahi and Sukati, 2012). According to Hosein (2012), consumers purchase intention can be measured by using interest, attending, and information. Interest is

consumers' feelings towards a brand that influences them to purchase. Attending is the attendance of consumers in exhibitions and other supporting events that influence them to purchase. Information is any additional knowledge and facts about the brand gathered by the consumers and make them consider purchasing it.

Customer loyalty; Customer/ Brand loyalty is a measure of the extent to which consumers are loyal to a particular brand over a period of time, which emphasizes a consistent repurchase of the same brand (Sheth and Mittal 2004). Brand loyalty results in an emotional attachment to the brand, which is driven primarily by commitment and affection (Hawkins et al. 2001; Seetharaman, Nadzir and Gunalan 2001). The consumer develops affection for the brand in a manner similar to a friendship (Ball, Coelho and Machas 2004). Brand loyalty can be developed through identification: the consumer believes the brand reflects and reinforces some aspects of the consumer's self-concept (Petromilli, Morrison and Million 2002). It can also be conceptualised from a behavioural dimension and as a function of psychological processes (Tepeci 1999). Consumers exhibit behavioural brand loyalty when a consumer buys a brand simply out of habit or convenience without thinking much about it (Sheth and Mittal 2004). If consumers primarily use the products of a particular company in preference to the products of competing companies, they are absolutely brand loyal (Keller 2008). If they use a product most of the time but occasionally use a competitors' product, they are moderately brand loyal (Allender and Richards 2012). Low brand loyalty exists if brand or product switching occurs regularly with products (Hawkins et al. 2001).

There are three major contributors to brand loyalty, namely perceived brand-performance fit, social and emotional identification with the brand and habit combined with a long history of using the brand (Sheth, Mittal and Newman 1999). If consumers have a positive brand performance experience, they may seek that reward again through repeated usage (McKee 2010). Brands also acquire certain social images through marketing communications or by real-world observations by consumers (Zhang, Gangwar and Seetharaman 2008). In addition, marketers often design emotional communication so that it can create a positive affective response (Cant, Brink and Brijball 2006). Consumers also often enjoy using certain brands in such a way that they psychologically begin to see those brands as part of themselves (Melo and Galan 2011; Sheth and Mittal 2004). Brand loyalty arises from habit and long history of brand usage (Chaudhuri 1995; Neslin 2002). For example, a consumer who used a particular brand five years ago and had a good

experience with it in terms of quality and performance is more likely to use the same brand today and in the future (Briesch, Chintagunta and Fox 2009). Furthermore, if consumers saw a brand being used in their parental home as they were growing up, they are likely to view this long history of use by parents as testimony to the brand's goodness and are likely to maintain its usage (Sheth and Mittal 2004). Positive word-of-mouth communications from a committed customer increases both the probability of the recipient becoming a customer and of the recipient sharing the positive comment with a third person (Hawkins et al. 2001).

Perceived quality; Perceived quality is a critical element for consumer decision making; consequently, consumers will compare the quality of alternatives with regard to price within a category (Jin and Yong, 2005). According to Davis et al. (2003), perceived quality is directly related to the reputation of the firm that manufactures the product. However, National Quality Research Center or NQRC (1995) defined perceived quality as the degree to which a product or service provides key customer requirements (customization) and how reliably these requirements are delivered (reliability). According to Zeithaml (1988) perceived quality is not the actual quality of the brands or products but rather "the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority. Aaker (1991) defines perceived quality as "the customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of the product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives."

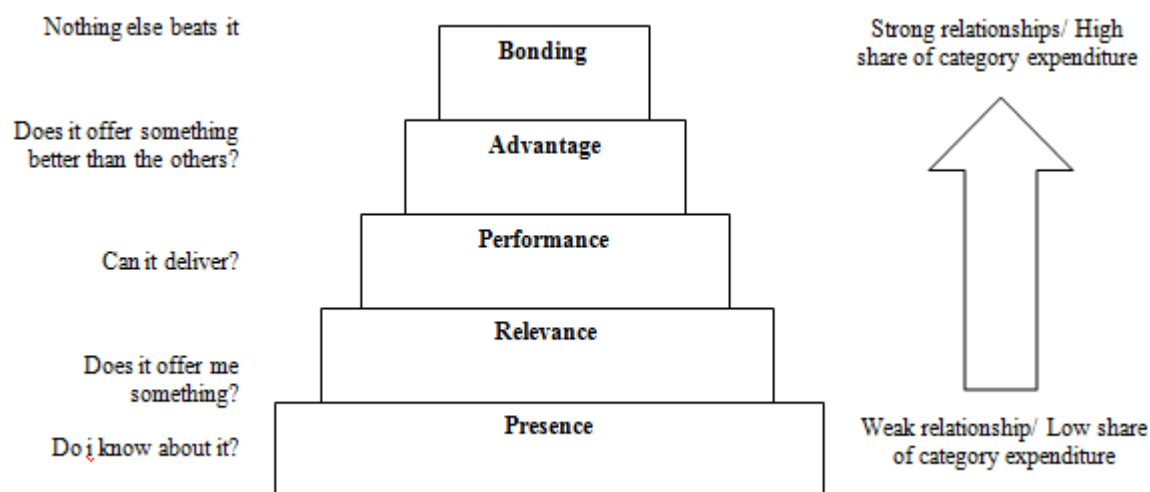
Consumers often judge the quality of a product or service on the basis of a variety of informational cues that they associate with the product. Some of these cues are intrinsic to the products, whereas others are extrinsic. As defined by Zeithaml (1988), cues that are intrinsic concern physical characteristics of the products itself, such as product's performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability and aesthetics. On the other hand, extrinsic attributes are the cues that are external to the products itself, such as price, brand name, brand image, company reputation, manufacturer's image, retail store image and the country of origin. Perceived quality has direct impact on customer purchase decision and brand loyalty, especially during the time customers have less or no information of the products that they are going to purchase (Aaker, 1991; Armstrong and Kotler, 2007).

Theoretical framework

Brand dynamics pyramid

The Brand Dynamics pyramid is a model providing insight into different levels of brand customer relationship is built (Dyson, Farr and Hollis, 1996). This process model consists of five steps (presence, relevance, performance, advantage and bonding), with each step up on the pyramid denoting a greater level of brand loyalty. The five steps to the top of the pyramid are, in upward direction:

Figure 2. Brand Dynamics Pyramid



Source: Dyson, Farr and Hollis (2009). Brand model (process model). *Journal of Branding Research*, 2(2), 19-23.

1. **Presence**: this stage refers to having carved out a position in the consumer's mind, although it should be noted that presence is not the same as familiarity. Presence is a kind of familiarity that also yields brand loyalty; only active and dynamic brands will turn in good scores at this level. This level can be attained by heavy advertising, a presence at the greatest possible number of sales outlets, or by creating a buzz in the market. The authors also refer to this as instating active familiarity based on trial, salience, or knowledge of the brand promise.
2. **Relevance**: At this stage the brand promise has to be relevant to the customer/ consumer. After all, a product will only be sold if it at least meets a need. If a consumer does not feel a brand will at least meet a need, he/ she will not even consider buying it. So apart from familiarity, added value will have to be offered in terms of functionality or image.

3. Performance: this concerns the performance of the brand, and whether it offers benefits in relation to the market standard. In this phase, the consumer offsets the delivered quality against the accompanying brand promise ('does the brand deliver what it professes?' and: 'how does it compare to competing products?'). At this stage, the brand will at least have to attain the generally accepted quality benchmark for its market.
4. Advantage: this is where a brand's competitive edge over other brands comes in. This can be deduced from the uniqueness of the brand's proposition, which the customer/ consumer can derive certain emotional or rational benefits from. In otherwords, this is when the brand has to (handsomely) outperform the average quality standard of the market. Customers/ consumers are at this point convinced of this advantage, making them highly loyal to the brand in question.
5. Bonding: the closest bond between brand and customer/ consumer is achieved when the customer/ consumer will always buy the brand product on the basis of strong rational or emotional belief in its superiority. Competing brands are hardly considered, it at all; the consumer's evoked set is therefore only made up of one brand at this stage. Consumers in this phase tend to be brand ambassadors (Dyson et al. 1996)

Brand loyalty increases at higher levels of the Pyramid - consumers at the level of Bonding are likely to be active advocates of the brand (Dyson et al. 1996). There is also an increase in share of wallet - the proportion of consumer expenditure within the category on that brand - as the brand ascends the Pyramid. The goal is to build as large a group as possible of truly loyal consumers, by sustaining a suitable relationship and increasing their loyalty to the brand (Dyson et al. 1996).

Hoyer and Brown (1990) also discovered in their research that brand awareness affects consumer decision making and that a known brand has a much better chance of being chosen by consumers than a brand, which is unknown. Rossiter & Percy (1987) affirmed that a consumer has to be made aware of the brand, before he can buy it. If not aware, brand attitude cannot be formed, and intention to buy will not step in. Wilson (1981) confirmed in his study the importance of top of mind awareness. He states that there is a positive relationship between the position of the brand in the consumer's mind and purchase intention of the brand. Hence a brand with high awareness likely performs better compared to a lesser Known brand.

Martineau (1957) discovered that building a positive brand image can influence repeat purchase because a strong brand image can lead to customer loyalty. Furthermore, Bullmore (1984) states that customers who are loyal to certain brand will recommend it to other people and not easily

influenced by competitors to make purchases. This is in line with the findings of Chang and Tu (2005) which revealed that a positive brand image can influence customer loyalty. This indicates that there is a positive influence of brand association on customer loyalty. According to Cretu and Brodie (2007), brand image has specific effects on customer loyalty and perceptions of customer value. Hess and Story (2006) also confirmed in their research findings that overall brand image has significant effects on overall customer loyalty intention and that there is positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty intention. The result from the research carried out by Vazquez-Carrasco and Foxall (2006) indicated that the image of a product or particular or social and reliable brand, has positive impact on customer loyalty intentions. It also revealed that the brand image due to customer satisfaction will affect customer loyalty intention.

Brand attributes serving as signal of quality have been dichotomised into intrinsic and extrinsic cues. According to (Olson & Jacoby, 1972) product/brand attributes comprise intrinsic and extrinsic cues/attributes that serve as surrogate indicators of quality. Ulgado and Lee (1993) indicated their research that extrinsic product cues such as brand and price are considered as product quality indicators. The results of a study conducted by Szybillo and Jacoby (1974) provided evidence that intrinsic cues such as design and product compositions significantly influenced consumers' product quality perception judgments. Packaging for food is more critical because of its importance in maintaining the quality of the product. Attractiveness of packaging is also important to encourage consumers to try the product, especially if they do not have previous experience with that branded product. Consumers use brand, price, colour, taste and scent cues to judge the product quality (Cox, 1967).

Olson (1972) in his study considered taste to be one of the most important intrinsic cues that represent indigenous produce-related attributes. He added that intrinsic cues were more important than extrinsic cues in product quality evaluation. Newman and Becknell (1970) stated that the evaluation of product quality is clouded by the fact that some consumers may make quality judgments on the basis of price rather than physical product attributes. Tull, Boring and Gonsior (1964) in their research found out that Product with low prices are perceived as being of bad quality by consumers and that some consumers may feel less satisfied with low-priced products.

Hypothesis Testing

The Research hypothesis was raised and tested in the course of this study. The significant level of 0.05 or 95% confidence level was set to determine if the findings were significant or not. The findings were presented below;

H₀₁: There no significant influence of brand image on customer loyalty.

H_{a1}: There is a significant influence of brand image on customer loyalty

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.519 ^a	.269	.267	.470

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.158	1	26.158	118.222	.000 ^a
	Residual	71.025	322	.221		
	Total	97.183	323			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image

b. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.077	.231		8.998	.000
	Brand Image	.539	.050	.519	10.873	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Interpretation

From the tables above, simple linear regression was conducted to determine the influence of brand image on customer loyalty. From the model summary, a variation of 26.9% in customer loyalty can be explained by an influence of brand image. The result is statistically significant at a p value of .000 which is less than level of significance of 0.05. This indicates that brand image positively predicts customer loyalty. In addition, a beta coefficient of 0.519 indicates that brand image is a significant predictor of customer loyalty.

Decision: Reject the null hypothesis as p-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant influence of brand image on customer loyalty.

Summary of Findings of The Study

Findings from the test of hypothesis two show that brand awareness has a significant role in influencing purchase intention. Findings from the test of hypothesis three show that there is a significant influence of brand image on customer loyalty. This implies that brand image has a significant influence on customer loyalty. Many studies have reported related findings in line with the finding of this study. A number of studies have examined the influence of brand image on customer loyalty. Park, Jaworski and McInnis (2001) reported that brand image can positively influence customers' loyalty to a market offering. This is in line with the findings of Chang and Tu (2005) which revealed that a positive brand image can influence customer loyalty. Munoz (2004) found that positive and significant relationship exists between brand Image and brand loyalty. The findings of Cretu and Brodie (2007) revealed that brand image has specific effects on customer loyalty and perceptions of customer value. Furthermore, finding of Hess and Story (2006) indicate that overall brand image has significant influence on overall customer loyalty intention and that there is positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty intention. Keller and Lehmann (2006) discovered that building a positive brand image can influence repeat purchase because a strong brand image can lead to customer loyalty.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are based on the findings from test of hypothesis. This study concludes that there is a significant influence of brand image on customer loyalty. Brand image relates to consumers beliefs, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes associated with a brand.

Establishing favorable associations about a brand can help to create or improve the value of the brand in order to influence customer loyalty. The loyalty of customers to a brand can be heightened when associations about a brand are combined in such a pleasant way that will influence consumers to choose the brand that brought the most pleasant memories of purchasing experiences. Hence, brand image has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

Contribution/Originality: This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by delving into the nuanced relationship between brand image and customer loyalty within the manufacturing sector. By focusing on this sector, the research sheds light on industry-specific factors that contribute uniquely to the dynamics of brand image and customer loyalty, thereby offering a distinctive perspective within the broader domain of marketing and consumer behavior research. The study's originality lies in its exploration of the intricate interplay between brand image formation and its direct impact on cultivating enduring customer loyalty in the manufacturing landscape, providing actionable insights for practitioners and scholars seeking a deeper understanding of this crucial relationship.

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