



THE NIGERIA JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Volume 1, No. 1 March, 2020

ISSN: 2630-7308

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Brand Development Strategy and Consumers' Choice in Nigeria

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Abstract

In recent times, consumers expend quality time and energy in shopping for products that can meet their needs at any point in time. The searches are usually narrow down to the known and acceptable brands. Business enterprises were challenged to developed brand strategies in positioning their product brands in the mind of consumers. Therefore, this study examines the influence of brand development strategy on consumer choice in Nigeria. Specifically, the study evaluates the effect of brand extension, product line extension and multi-brand on consumer's choice. Cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. Validated structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents with average variance extracted (AVE) as a test of both convergent and divergent validity of more than 0.50, with Cronbach alpha of 0.81 and composite reliability of 0.80. Four hundred and twenty one households within Ibadan metropolis were selected for the study. Knorr seasoning product of Unilever Nigeria Plc. was evaluated. Partial least square algorithms and bootstrapping techniques were used to analysed the data with the aid of SMARTPLS 3. The findings revealed that the identified variables of brand development strategy influence consumer's choice with R^2 of 0.507, t-value greater than 1.96 and p-value less than 0.05. The study concluded that brand development strategy influence consumer's choice. The variables are capable of predicting consumer's choice. The study recommended that multi-brand, price extension and brand identity strategies should be enhanced to improve consumer's satisfaction.

Keywords: Consumer's choice, Brand extension, Product line Extension, Multi-brand, Business Enterprise

Introduction

There is no gain saying the fact that some products are more popular than the others and the companies that produced them. Some products are well known in the market than even the organisations that launched them. The end users of these products are more loyal to the product brand to the extent that they referred to all other substitute products in the product categories as the same. The users of tooth paste always refer to all tooth paste as Maclean. In the household, all food seasoning ingredients are called Maggi. Likewise, the consumers of noodles always referred to all noodles as Indomie. This shows the power of brand. At times, product brand name is as strong as the company's image. In order to create a competitive brand, organisations need to pay attention to their customers' buying decision process because customers are dazed with so many products; they buy different products according to their needs (Gajjar, 2013).

Branding is of special importance to the business world. It is about creating unique identities and positions for products and services to distinguish them from competitors. Branding has emerged as an essential component of the overall business strategy of companies. Over the years, companies have pioneered strategies for managing the identity of their products, these brand development strategies are important as they share the same strategic vision and corporate culture of the company.

Business enterprises have a varieties of options available to them with respect to brand development strategy which are brand extension, product line extension, multi-branding and new brand. Brand extension means to use a successful

brand for new products. Meaning a company uses its current brand to offer new products in other categories (Arendt & Brettel, 2010). Brand extension closely links up with consumer's memory and recall. Line extension involves introducing a new product – that is similar to what the company already offers, line extensions physically resemble the parent brand, line extensions can offer a way for the manufacturer to reduce production costs, utilize excess capacity, and gain economies of scale, a multi-brand strategy involves having more than one brand competing in the same product category and New brands occur when the firm is expanding its offering – by developing a new product line that they haven't offered before (Wen, Jeng, & Soo, 2013). A brand extension and multi-brand strategy favors trials of new brand, while product line extension favors trial of existing product which comes in another variety. Trials facilitate consumer decision making power, it opens up new set of information, this information results in building brand evaluation, experiences and their decisions are directly or indirectly related to these perspectives. Brand extensions are attractive to firms that face the reality of high new product failure rates because they provide a way to take advantage of brand name recognition and image to enter new markets. The leverage of a strong brand can substantially reduce the risk of introducing a product/service by providing consumers the familiarity and knowledge about an established brand.

As competition increases, consumers choose among a wider number of brands, thereby making the firm's products less attractive in terms of profitability. As a result of this, companies lengthen their product lines by engaging in long-term investments promising new product variants, effectively offering consumers more alternatives (Schmitt, 2012). However, it has been observed that some organizations lose patronage because they introduce new products using the wrong brand development strategy which mars the image of the brand and lead to negative brand equity. Thus, this study examines the effect of brand development strategy on consumer buying decision. Specifically, the study evaluates the influence of brand extension, product line extension and multi-branding on consumer choice.

Literature Review

Concept of Branding

Branding is central to creating customer value not just images and is also a key tool for creating and maintaining competitive advantage (Holt, 2015). Branding is the process of creating a relationship or a connection between a company's product and emotional perception of the customer for the purpose of generating segregation among competition and building loyalty among customers (Loken, Ahluwalia, & Houston, 2010). Branding ultimately works as a signal. It allows consumers to quickly recognize a product as the one they are familiar with or one they like. (Onaneye, 2013) opined that "apart from the herculean task that will be associated with trying to decide what manufacturer's product to buy from all unbranded products, other product management decisions based on market segmentation, promotion, product positioning, pricing etc. would have been practically impossible.

Concept of Brand Development Strategy

According to Holt (2015), Developing brands, a company has four choices: line extensions, brand extensions, multiband or new brands. They include:

i. *Line extension* refers to extending an existing brand name to new forms, sizes, colors, ingredients or flavors of an existing product category. This is a low-cost, low-risk way to introduce new products. However, there are the risks that the brand name becomes overextended and loses its specific meaning. This may confuse consumers. An example for line extension is when Coca-Cola introduces a new flavor, such as diet cola with vanilla, under the existing brand name (Gajjar, 2013).

Product line extension has the following variations: Packaging extension- This has to do with changes in package size or form; Flavors extension- This involves adding additional flavors to a company's product line; Features extension- This involves adding or subtracting features on the existing product; Colors extension- This involves adding different varieties of colors; and Price extensions- This is the release of new products at different price levels from a company's current offerings.

There are many benefits of product line extension which are: Low cost of production; Low cost of development; Established and loyal customer base; and Competitive barriers. While its demerit is observed from expanded line without any clear cut role leads to confused customers and confused retailers; variants are copied with an intention to neutralize competition; and Line extensions may act as a serious drain on company resources because new variants are added to product line without much strategic thinking (Lin, 2010).

ii. *Brand extension*: This also assumes an existing brand name, but combines it with a new product category. Thus, an existing brand name is extended to a new product category. This gives the new product instant recognition and faster acceptance and can save substantial advertising costs for establishing a new brand. However, the risk that the extension may confuse the image of the main brand should be kept in mind. Also, if the extension fails, it may harm consumer attitudes toward other products carrying the same brand name (Gajjar, 2013).

Brand extension has the following variations: Companion product extension- This is brand extension in the form of companion products. The reason is to capitalize on product complimentary. As consumers view both products jointly,

it offers scope for brand extension; Extension of customer franchise- This focuses on the customer base, the diverse needs of a specific customer group are satisfied. For example, Johnson and Johnson company takes care of the diverse needs of customers by offering baby shampoo, baby oil, baby diapers etc; Extension of company expertise- Companies extend their brand according to their expertise, companies that are expert in technology extend their brand by developing various technologies under their brand name; Extension of brand distinction - Many brands are unique in terms of attribute. Customers strongly associate with the uniqueness of such brands. The company launches different products necessary to capitalize this distinction; Component extension - A brand may develop a close association with a combination of taste. When it is well received in the market, it enjoys a proprietary association of distinctive taste. Capitalizing on these properties, the brand could be leveraged in other product fields.

Brand extension increases brand image, reduces perceived risk by the customer, saved cost of developing a new brand. it gives consumers varieties, it enhances packaging and labeling efficiencies. Though, there is a risk that the new product may generate implications that damage the image of the original brand. Also, there are chances of less awareness because the management may not provide enough investment for the introduction of new product assuming that the spillover effect from the original brand will compensate. If the brand extensions have no advantage over competitive brands in the new category, then it will fail (Loken, Ahluwalia, & Houston, 2010).

iii. *Multi-brands*: Means marketing many different brands in a given product category. P&G (Procter & Gamble) and Unilever are the best examples for this. In the USA, P&G sells six brands of laundry detergent, five brands of shampoo and four brands of dishwashing detergent. Why? Multi-branding offers a way to establish distinct features that appeal to different customer segments. Thereby, the company can capture a larger market share. However, each brand might obtain only a very small market share and none may be very profitable.

Multi-brand can be done through any of the following: Separation by brand identity- This is when the only thing that differentiates products from competitors is the brand identity; Separation is done by distinct brand names- Separation is done by distinct brand names but the parent company supports by keeping the parent name; No relation to parent brand- The brand names are kept separate and the audience has no clue as to which brand belongs to the parent company and which doesn't (Khan, & Fahad, 2012)

Multi branding channels different brands targeting different segments which can lead to higher share of market for the company; greater shelf space in retail stores could be obtained, increasing the visibility of the company as a whole; greater alternatives to consumers, especially for customers who switch in between brands frequently. While Multi Branding may lead to cannibalization between similar brands, dilution of the difference between different brands, and Overlapping consumer segments may get confused and may eventually switch to a brand outside the company's umbrella

iv. *New brands* are needed when the power of existing brand names is waning. Also, a new brand name is appropriate when the company enters a new product category for which none of its current brand names are appropriate (Lin, 2010).

When it comes to brand development, there are four main brand approaches, as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Brand Development Strategy Matrix

	Product Category	
	Existing	New
Existing	Product line extension	Brand Extension
New	Multi brand	New brand

Source: Holt, D. (2015), *Brands and branding*. Cambridge: Harvard Business Press.

Concept of Consumer Choice

Consumer choice is simply the decisions that a consumer make in relation to the goods and services they acquired or purchase. It examine the attitude, behavior and decision consumer make over time putting into consideration some factors which can either be personal, financial or psychological (Schmitt, 2012). Consumer choice is combination of products and services a consumer purchases. It affect how households make their choices on what to consume, how and where (Kapferer, 2010). It explains the selection and choice from the lists of available alternatives. Choice is influence by a lot of factors such as available information, budget and demand capacity, consumer preference, consumer's needs, consumer satisfaction, product proximity and total utility derived from those choices (Gajjar, 2013).

Lin, (2010) is of the opinion that people make diverse choices by accepting the proverbial wisdom that tastes are a matter of personal preference. However, economists also believe that the decisions people make are affected by the budget (incomes), by the value (prices) tag to the goods and services they consume, and by factors like where they live (Kambiz, & Ronak, 2010).

Consumer's Behavior

Consumers use different variables to determine the quality of a product. This quality lies in the eyes of the consumer in question. What may seem to be of high quality to one consumer may be inferior to another. Even though consumers use price as an indicator of product quality (Kotler, 2012), perception is a process of how an individual selects and makes sense of their environment. Perception is about the selection, organization and interpretation of stimuli by individuals (Kapferer, 2010).

Kotler defines consumer behavior as "the process by which people select, organize and interpret information from the meaningful picture of the world". Thereby whenever a consumer buys a product, it depends on the perception they have on that particular product. Perception plays an important role in the life of the consumer. Our environment including the business environment is littered with numerous stimuli trying to attract our attention. The quality of perception depends on the way we process and interpret the stimuli or the information reaching our senses. Perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world. When we interpret a situation or events we are then in a position to respond (Isabel, Sara, & Eva, 2014).

It is clear that consumers evaluate directly attributes by physical cues such as taste, smell and size. Others are variables such as place of origin, type of distribution channel, price, packaging the manufacturer and among others.

Perception is how humans recognize and interpret stimuli (Currás, 2010). Consumers' perception of quality is measured as an essential determinant of product choice (Khan, & Fahad, 2012). In other words perception is the first impression that individuals draw and on the basis of it select, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world (Chen, 2010). That's why it is believed that consumer perception influences customer level of satisfaction and so their buying and usage decisions.

Theoretical Review

The theory of consumer choice

Consumer choice theory has to do with consumer preference with their consumption expenditure. This theory is a section of microeconomic which relates consumer decision to expenditure and their demand. The crux of this theory rests on the belief that consumer use their hard earned money to consume product that can give them the highest level of satisfaction and are well-known and acceptable in the market. The choice of what they purchase is influenced by the product information, consumer preference, demand capacity and satisfaction derived from the use of products or similar products from the same organisation (Gajjar, 2013). This explains why business enterprise must ensure a good image and sound product brand. It scrutinizes how consumers exploit the attractiveness of their consumption as measured by their preferences with due regard to their expenditures, by maximizing satisfaction in relation to their budget.

Empirical Review

Balgopal (2013) examined the impact of branding strategy on consumer buying behavior in India. The study adopted an exploratory and descriptive research design and the hypotheses were tested using Chi-square. The study concluded that brands play a very important role when evaluating the quality of a product. The study however suffers from a number of weaknesses. The study digressed from its core objective and its conclusion was quite different from its objective. The study was carried out in India and so it becomes difficult to generalize the findings.

Fatima, Muzamil and Muhammad (2014) carried out a research on the impact of branding on consumer buying behavior. The study adopted a survey research design. The study found that branding is important in affecting consumer behavior. The study has a number of weaknesses, the study subjectively drew sample size, validity and reliability tests were not carried out and this may have affected the data collected.

Yahmar and Yasab (2015) carried out a research on "the effect of brand on consumer preferences". The study was carried out by utilizing structural equation modeling technique, respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The study concluded that Brand name has a significant impact on the overall preference of the consumer. This study was carried out in Turkmenistan, the findings of the study cannot be generalized in all countries because of the differences in culture and environment.

Tekin, Yiltay and Ayaz (2016) carried out a research on the effect of brand image on consumer behavior. The study adopted a quantitative method. Respondents were selected using random sampling. The study found out that brand image has an effect on consumer behavior. The study concluded that brand image has a significant power of creating a product or wiping it from consumer's market.

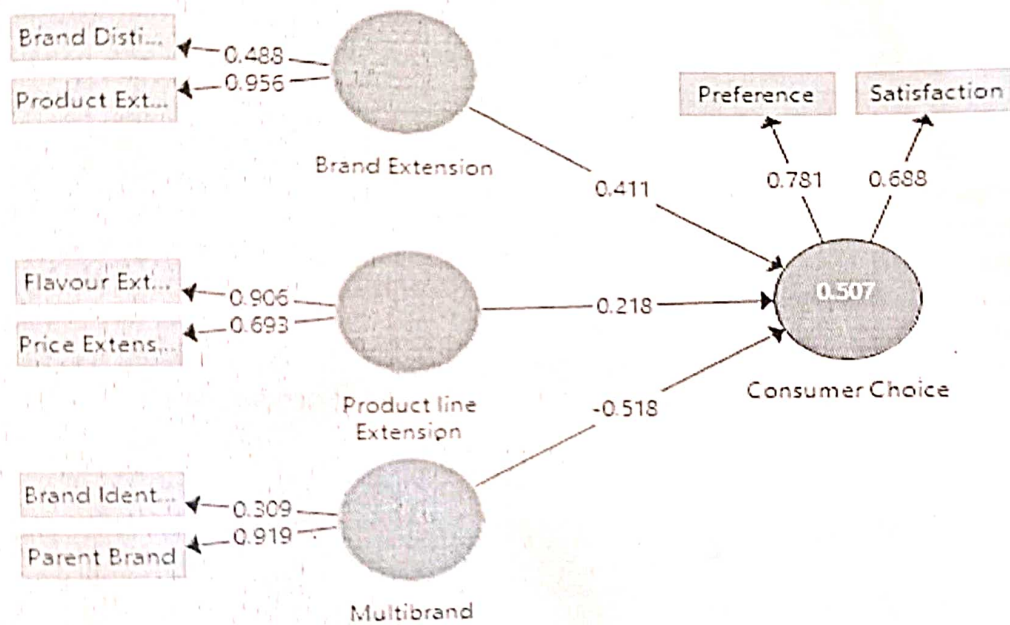
Methodology

The study focused on influence of brand development strategy on consumer choice of Knorr seasoning product – a product brand of Unilever Nigeria Plc. in Ibadan metropolis. Knorr is selected because of its brand development strategy over the years. Cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. This is important to record, describe, analyze and interpret the belief, opinion, thought and feelings of the respondents. The population comprises of all the households in Ibadan which comprises of eleven local governments. Four hundred and forty households were purposefully selected for the study which cut across all the local government in the study area. Validated structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents with average variance extracted (AVE) as a test of both convergent and divergent validity of more than 0.50, with Cronbach alpha of 0.81 and composite reliability of 0.80. The research instrument was administered over the weekend with the help of five trained research assistants. There are four brand development strategy in the literature but the study focused on three brand development used by Unilever Nigeria Plc. for Knorr seasoning product which are brand extension, multi-brand, and product line extension which form the variables of the study measured on consumer choice. The collated data were analyzed using structural equation model through SMARTPLS 3 focusing on Bootstrapping and Partial least square (projection of latent structures) algorithms.

Findings and Discussion

The collated data were scrutinized and the usable instrument was four hundred and twenty one which is 95.7% success rate. The path model of the variables is shown below;

Figure 1: Brand Development Strategy and Consumer Choice path model



Source: Researcher's Path Model, 2020

Figure 1 shows the path model analysis of brand development strategy influence on consumer choice. Brand development strategies adopted for the study are Brand extension – proxies by brand distinction and product extension; Product line extension – proxies by flavor extension and price extension; and Mutibrand – proxies by brand identification and parent brand. These variables were checked against the consumer choice of the product proxies by consumer satisfaction and consumer preference. The figure present an interaction effects where more than single variables contribute to the latent variables.

Table 1: PLS Path Coefficients

	Brand Extension	Consumer Choice	Multibrand	Product line Extension
Brand Extension		0.411		
Consumer Choice			-0.518	
Multibrand				

The findings from the path coefficients table show a given standardization of weight ranging from -1 to +1 and the closeness of the weight to absolute 1 shows the strongest paths. On the other way round, weights close to zero reflect the weakest paths. Brand extension and product line extension shows a positive contribution to the latent variable and multi-brand revealed a negative weight. The absolute magnitude of brand extension gives a better coefficient approximately twice the product line extension variables. This implies that brand extension path, product line extension and multi-brand are good model for the prediction of consumer choice of product brand. The identified variables contribute significantly to the prediction of consumer choice in the study sampled.

Table 2: Outer Loadings

	Brand Extension	Consumer Choice	Multibrand	Product line Extension
Brand Distinction	0.488			
Brand Identity			0.309	
Flavour Extension				0.906
Parent Brand			0.919	
Preference		0.781		
Price Extension				0.693
Product Extension	0.956			
Satisfaction		0.688		

Source: SMARTPLS Output, 2020

The outer model shows the indicators' contribution to the definition of the latent variables. Though, the closer the loading to 1 the better, the convention well-fitting reflective model state that the path loading must be above 70% (criterion for minimum measurement loading) which explained about half of the variance in the indicator and its factor should be greater than error variance. From the result outputs, brand distinction, brand identity, price extension and consumer satisfaction could have been dropped but dropping the indicator did not improves composite reliability. Outer weight model vary from zero to an absolute maximum lower than 1, it has been established that the more the indicators for a latent variable, the lower the maximum and the lower the average outer model weight. The results of outer model weights justify why the weak loading could not be dropped as all the loading weights were greater than 0.50 except brand identity, consumer satisfaction and brand distinction. Also, these variables were major constituent of the latent variables from the literature.

Table 3: R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Consumer Choice	0.507	0.503

Source: SMARTPLS Output, 2020

The common effect size measure in the path shows the R square of 0.507 which implies that 50.7% of the variance in consumer choice can be explained by the joint model of brand development strategy proxies by brand extension, product line extension and multi-brand. This is a moderate effect as the identified variables influence consumer choice which implies that the remaining 49.3% is due to other variables not imputed in the model. Though, R-square greater than 80% suggests a possible multicollinearity problem ($\text{Tolerance} = 1 - R^2$) but in this case, there is no multicollinearity problem as tolerance in this data set is greater than 0.25 at the extreme. However, adding predictors to a regression model tends to increase R^2 . The adjusted R-square of 0.503. The adjusted R^2 is close to the unadjusted R square in this model because of the small number of variables involved in the model.

Table 4: Bootstrapping Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Brand Extension ->	0.411	0.421	0.036	11.560	0.000

Consumer Choice					
Multi-brand -> Consumer Choice	-0.518	-0.513	0.040	12.886	0.000
Product line Extension -> Consumer Choice	0.218	0.220	0.038	5.678	0.000

Source: SMARTPLS Output, 2020

The PLS bootstrapping output showing the t and p value revealed that any t value above 1.96 will be significant at 95% confidence interval and 5% significance level. From the output result, it was observed that all the identified variables were significant in the prediction of consumer choice even significant at .001 probability level. The implication of this is that all the brand development strategy variables identified in the study were capable of predicting consumer choice of the sampled product brand.

The output of the analysis revealed that for the organisation to project the product brand name favourably to the consumers, there is need for the organisation to strengthen their multi-brand strategy especially the brand identity to enhanced brand recall to influence consumer choice of the product brand. It was also revealed that the loading weight of consumer satisfaction was also below the 0.70 cut off suggested for the loading weight. The consumer satisfaction is likely to increase if brand identity, price extension and brand distinction strategy of the organisation is enhanced. However, brand development strategy influence consumer choice of the product brand.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the influence of brand development strategy on consumer choice in Nigeria with particular reference to Knorr seasoning product of Unilever Nigeria Plc. The sampled respondents were households purposively selected from the eleven local governments that constitutes Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria. The findings revealed that brand extension, product line extension and multi-brand strategies contribute significantly to influence consumer's choice with R-square of 50.7%; t value of all the identified variables greater than 1.96 and p-value of less than 0.05. The study concluded that brand development strategy influence consumer choice in the study area. This implies that brand extension, multi-brand and product line extension strategies were significant in predicting consumer choice of the product brand. The study recommended that;

- Multi-brand strategy of the organisation needs to be strengthen to enhanced consumer choice of the company's product especially brand identity. Multiple brands can be developed to focus on different segment of the market.
- Brand distinction and price extension strategies should be adopted to take care of different income level of the consumers. This will definitely improve the level of consumer satisfaction.

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