Aremu M.A., Isiaka, S,B., Suleiman A.A., (2017), Impact of Brand Management on Brand Image in a MultiProduct Oriented Company in Nigeria
GOUni Journal of Management and Social Sciences, 5(2):28-37

ISSN: 2550-7265

IMPACT OF BRAND MANAGEMENT ON BRAND IMAGE IN A MULTIPRODUCT ORIENTED COMPANY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Brand management is an important aspect of marketing activities that determines how the branded products of a firm would be well placed in the mind of the customers in a competitive market. The objective of this study is to determine the impact of brand management on brand image in a multiproduct company in Nigeria with a case study of Unilever Company Plc. The study utilizes primary data sourced from respondents with 150 sample size that was conveniently selected. Copies of Questionnaire were administered and the results were analyzed using regression. Coefficient of determination of 0.891, with p-value of 0.000 reveals that brand management variables accounts for 89.1% changes in the variation of Brand Image while other factors accounted for 10.9 with a nearly perfect positive correlation coefficient of .994, which shows that there is a strong relationship between the brand management and brand image in the in a multiproduct company. The study concludes that brand management factors have influence on brand image and as well places it in the mind of the consumers. The paper recommended that brand managers in the ***Multiproduct Oriented Company*** *should ensure to see that brand management factors (such as Product Quality, and Usage experience) are scrutinized and fuelled to ensure that they turn out to a good image.*

Keywords: *Branding, Brand management, Brand Image, Brand strategy, Multiproduct Company*

Introduction

Most companies in Nigeria today recognize brands but could not to see the true essence behind the brand or reason for their customer purchasing behavior. As a result, many see it as a process that involves only tangible aspects such as the visual appearance of a company and worthy of managing.

However, the definition of what a brand is and how it is being managed has changed overtime as the economic environment begin to emphasize more immaterial aspects of business. The emergence of this immaterial economy has made brand management a concrete tool for business development and gaining strategic competitive advantage for companies. Most brand studies and theories are directly related to managing the brands of large corporations or organizations. However, the importance of brands as a competitive weapon should be realized by both small and medium sized companies (multiproduct company). As a result, this study focuses on examining the impact of brand management on brand image. Everyone is driven by brands and the values, emotions, promises and quality hidden within the brand. Brands are so much more than just a name, which has been recognized by many corporate leaders, who have adapted complex and fundamental brand management strategies to drive their companies and their brands towards success. The process of brand management has grown in importance and the way brands are managed has changed. It is not only the role of marketing department but also the top management of the company. However, brand management becomes necessary for every part, and individual employee of the company to understand.

Brand management is a widely recognized process and important factor for large corporations, but are they important for multi-product company's? Often smaller companies only focus on their core business, the part that generates revenue. They often forget or disregard their brand and managing the brand. Many multiproduct company managers do not see the true value of brands and the clear influence of them to consumer behaviour, which results in their operations and growth being stagnant and reactive instead of growing and proactive.

Multi-product company's should begin to recognize the value of their brand and truely start to manage them, in order to differentiate from their competitors and strive, even in a recession. This is especially important in an economic downturn, when consumer spending behavior is decreasing and their propensity to save has gone up. The companies that get the business of consumers in a recession are companies that consumers think are different, better and most suitable to their needs.

To address these gaps, the present study therefore seeks to examine the relationship that exists between the brand management and brand image in a multiproduct company. As a matter of fact, a wellmanaged brand becomes an important instrument of differentiation and of competitive advantage (Hamel & Prahalad, 2014; Porter, 2002). Furthermore, the differentiation achieved through branding constitutes a barrier to entry, by making it difficult for competitors to emulate the company's offerings (Jones, 1986; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003).

The main objective of this study is to examine the management of branding in a multiproduct company, and also to examine the relationship that exists between effective brand management and organisational image.

Literature review

Branding

Brand is defined as a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, that intends to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitors Angus (2004). But Wood (2000) criticized this definition for being too product-oriented, with emphasis on visual features as differentiating mechanisms. Dibb *etal*. Waqas (2012) sees brand as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. Similarly, in the opinion of Gardner and Levy (1955) as cited by Olalekan & Adekunle (2013), a brand name is more than the label employed to differentiate among the manufacturers of a product. It is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes.

More recently, maintained that a brand is not the name of a product. It is the vision that drives the creation of products and services under that name. That vision, a key variable of the strategy and it is called brand identity in branding.

Brand Management

De Chernatony (2001) stated that brand management can help bridge the gap between a brand's image/identity and its reputation. Brand management is the process of creating, coordinating and monitoring interactions that occur between an organization and its stakeholders (Schultz and Barnes 2009), such that there is consistency between an organization's vision and stakeholders' beliefs about a brand. It is important that organizations initially focus their efforts on creating an appropriate brand image that has a niche in the market place.

Balmer (2003) sees corporate image as publics' latest beliefs about a company or the total impression an entity makes with such publics. Corporate reputation, on the other hand, refers to value judgments about an organization's qualities, trustworthiness and reliability built up over time (Balmer2003). This suggests that corporate reputation is more durable than image and cannot be developed or changed as quickly (Markwick and Fill 2014). Likewise, it requires nurturing over time (Weiwei 2007).

As the brand (and organization) grows, managerial emphasis should shift toward making a brand memorable, ensuring that positive brand associations can readily be recalled by consumers and reinforcing the link between a brand(image) and other products within a company's portfolio (Farquhar 2014; Park, Jaworski & MacInnis 2013). This must be adequately communicated to the consumers to enable them to make a right choice and brand (**Aremu & Saka, 2006).** Regardless of whether an organization is comprised of a singular or multiple brands, it is necessary that marketing efforts be directed toward establishing and maintaining a positive brand image in the minds of key stakeholders. Ultimately, this can contribute to the development of a favorable corporate reputation (de Chernatony 1999).

Managing Brands in an Organization

Small business managers generally accept that a good corporate reputation is important to receiving legitimization from different stakeholders (Goldberg, Cohen, and Fiegenbaum 2003). However, the difficulty often arises in terms of translating this viewpoint into specific reputation building activities. Managing the external image of a business is one way to build and enhance its reputation (Goldberg, Cohen & Fiegenbaum 2003). Although some scholarly attention has been directed toward organizational marketing (Carson and Gilmore 2000; Conant and White1999; Gilmore et al. 1999), we could find no enough prior research specifically on brand management in Organizations.

Brand Strategy

Branding strategy is about what makes a particular brand unique, inspiring, believable, trustworthy and likeable or even admirable (Gelder, 2005). Businesses around the world use a wide range of branding strategies to sell their products and services. In general, branding strategies can be grouped into corporate branding, house of brands and mixed branding.

Corporate branding strategy involves solely using the companies' name on their products and services. The brand name of the product or service is related to the company itself. This usually happens when companies start out with one product and soon come up with more products over time. As they introduce new products, companies have an option to use company identification in the brand name and continue branding strategy (Rao, Agarwal, & Dahlhoff, 2004). In Nigeria Coca-Cola company, Dangote company, and many more are good examples of the companies that adopt the corporate branding strategy. They name their products using the company's name, like DangoteSpagetti, Dangote Noodles, Dangote Cement, Dangote Flower, DangoteSugar and likewise in automobile industry we have Honda as a company name and product identification names are Civic, Accura, Accord, Alla, Prelude, Academy, Enecy, which consumers can easily identify with these companies. The advantages of using corporate branding strategy include economies of scale in marketing, lower total advertising costs, lower costs of creating brand equity, and lower costs of new product introduction (Rao, Agarwal, &Dahlhoff, 2004).

The second branding strategy is known as the ***house-of brands strategy***. This strategy involves coming up with individual brand names for different products without including the company name or its subsidiaries. This strategy requires the firm to build the reputation of every individual brand it has (Rao, Agarwal, Dahlhoff, 2004). Examples of companies who use this approach are Unilever, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Procter & Gamble. While under Unilever, we have Close Up under Toothpaste and Pepsodent brand, Washing Powder and Dish washing under Sunlight brand and Multi-active detergent under OMO brand and many more. All their products have their own special brand name. Also, under Procter & Gamble, we have products like Pampers and Febreze. The major benefit of using this strategy is that a distinctly customized brand can be offered and larger retail shelf space can be commanded (Rao, Agarwal, Dahlhoff, 2004).

The third branding strategy is known as the ***mixed branding strategy.*** This strategy involves a mixture of corporate branding strategy and house-of-brands strategy. The company uses corporate names for some products and individual brand names for the rest. This usually happens if the company acquired another firm whose products already have their own brands. Most of the time, brands which have names that differ from the company's are typically well established and important to the company. Gillete is one of the companies that use the mixed branding strategy. Gillete has brands like Gillete, Braun, Oral-B and Duracell (Rao, Agarwal, Dahlhoff, 2004).

Theory of Brand Loyalty:

The theory of brand loyalty explains the relationship of customers' psychology with the brand of a company. According to this theory, the positive behavior of a customer towards a brand has three different aspects: Emotional attachment, Brand evaluation, and Behavioural aspect. The first aspect relates to the emotional attachment of customer with the brand. That is, how much he likes or dislikes a product. If this is positive, he will always be inclined to buy this product and will never go to check other companies' products while brand evaluation is the estimation of the total financial value of the brand. It tries to measure the balance between the cost and value derived or the purpose it is meant to serve. If the desired value is sought, the customer is very likely to come again and otherwise. The strength of behavioral brand loyalty is, therefore, directly a function of the repetitive occurrence of purchase or consumption behavior. The consumer establishes a systematic biased response simply due to frequency of encounters. It is, therefore, analogous to what Krugman (2011) has called learning without involvement (Jagdish, Sheth &Whan, 2013).

Based on the above assumptions, it has been cleared that positive reaction of a customer towards a product will make the customer to like and buy such a product, in addition positive emotional attachment of a customer towards a product will motivate the customer to patronize such a product that satisfied their desire. Besides, the level of behavioral brand loyalty of a product is a direct function of the repetitive occurrence of purchase or consumption behavior as in the case of multi-product company (Unilever).

The likeness, repetitive buying behavior and consumption level of a product are functions of brand image which is influenced by brand management factors such as product quality, Appearance, Price and Packaging.

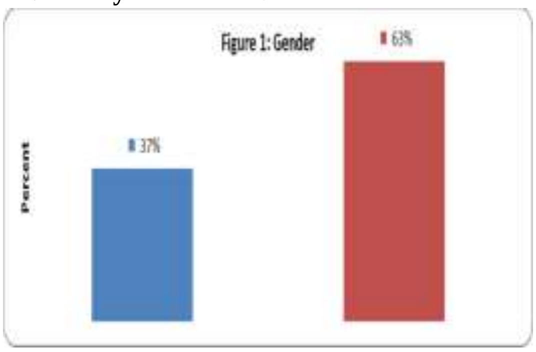
Methodology

This study examines the impact of brand management on brand image in a multiproduct company a case study of Unilever Plc in Nigeria. The study uses survey research design as it focuses on both distributors (wholesalers and retailers) and final users of the multiproduct of the Unilever Company in Nigeria. The study was conducted in the three selected locations in Ilorin metropolis (namely; OjaOba, Oja-Tuntun and Ita-amon). These locations were selected due to large number of Unilever distributors (wholesalers and retailers) and the size of the market. The sampling procedure adopted was convenience sampling. In this case, the researchers only focused attention on those people who are ready to co-operate in filling the questionnaire. The primary data were sourced through a structured questionnaire that was administered to distributors and final consumers of the Unilever products and this instrument was supported by oral interview to obtained information from uneducated respondents and semi-literate. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were administered to the distributors and customers of the selected Market areas while one hundred and fortysix (146) copies were correctly filled and returned. Simple bar chart and regression analysis were used to analyse the data.

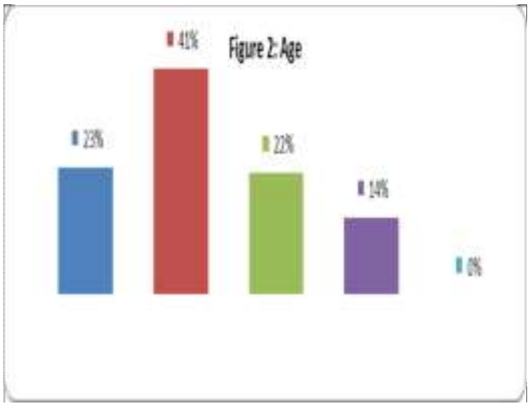
Research hypothesis

Ho_1: There is no relationship between the effective brand management and organizational image

4.0 Analysis and Discussion

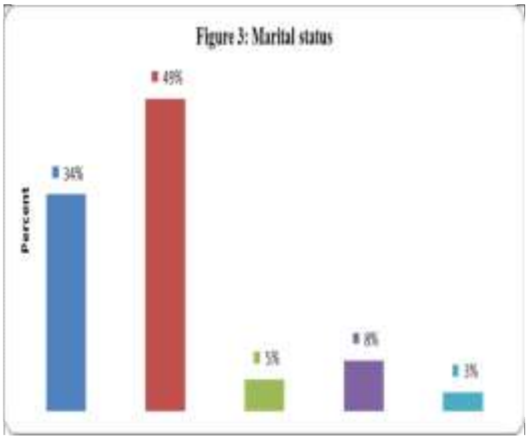


The figure above shows that 37% of the respondents were male while 63% of them were female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were female that uses branded products.



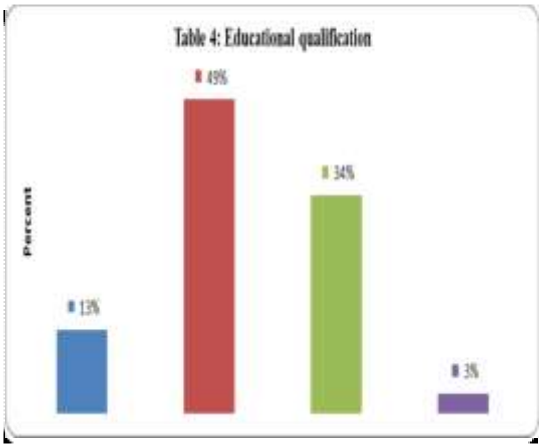
Sources: Researchers' computation (2016)

The figure 2 reveals that 23% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 1525 years, 41% of them were 26 to 35 years old, 22% of them were 36 to 45 years old, 14% of the lies in the age bracket of 46 to 55 years while none of them were in the age bracket of 56 years and above. Base on this, it could be inferred that the majority of the people who use branded products were in the age bracket of 26 to 35 years, which implies that they were youths who knew and have the understanding of value sticking to a particular brand which they derived utmost satisfaction from.



Sources: Researchers' computation (2016)

The figure above reveals that the 34% of the respondents were single, 49% of them were married, 5% of them were divorced, 8% were separated, while 3% of them were widow. It can therefore be said that the majority of the respondents were married. The bases for this could be that marriage produces a family while automatically increase the consumption of consumable items and the more items they purchase, the lesser they pay and sometimes they are likely to receive promo. Also, the 34% of them who were single could be to the fact that they just have natural love or preference for branded products which they felt could make them to be corporate in their look.



Sources: Researchers' computation (2016)

Figure 4.4 above, shows the educational qualification of the respondents of which 13% of them were B.Sc./HND holders, 49% of them were NCE/ND holders, 34% of them were having SSCE while 3% of them had other undisclosed educational qualification. Therefore, people with 49% were observed to be the majority of the respondents while followed by SSCE. This could be attributed to the fact that people in this category are in the circle or stage in life where information from those who have experience are circulated about the brand of the product. So, as a matter of influence, each one could be tempted to have a taste.

Test of hypothesis

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no relationship between the brand management and brand image

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.944[a]	.891	.887	.22299

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product Quality, Packaging, Price,Appearance, & Usage Experience

Sources: Researchers' computation (2016)

It is observed from the table above, that the co-efficient of the correlation (R) of 0.944[a], indicates that, a nearly perfect positive relationship exists between the brand management (Product Quality, Packaging, Price Appearance, & Usage Experience) and brand image. It also means that any movement or increment in brand management variables bring about the same proportional change in the brand image. The R-square of 0.891 which measures the coefficient of determination indicates that brand management explains for about 89.1% of the variance in brand image while the remaining 10.9% is explained by some other variables.

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square		Sig.
1 Regression	56.956	5	11.391	229.076	.000[a]
Residual	6.962	140	.050		
Total	63.918	145			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product Quality, Packaging, Price Appearance, & Usage Experience

b. Dependent Variable: Brand Image

Sources: Researchers' computation (2016)

The P-value of 0.000[a] in the ANOVA table above indicates that the variables under consideration are jointly significant. The implication of this test was that, a single variable say product quality as an element of brand management may not be significant to influence brand image, but when combined with others such as Packaging, Price Appearance, & Usage Experience, they can jointly influence the brand image of multiproduct companies.

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	3.311	.095		34.930	.000
Product quality	-.151	.047	-.226	-3.201	.002
Packaging	-.486	.059	-.906	-8.238	.000
Price	-.177	.044	-.367	-4.060	.000

Appearance	-.132	.058	-.272	-2.283	.024
Usage experience	.459	.051	.855	8.958	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image

Sources: Researchers' computation (2016)

The above estimated regression equation indicates that usage experience is positively related to the brand image as evidenced by the coefficient value of 0.459. Contrarily, Product Quality, Packaging, Price and Appearance are negatively related to Brand Image as evidenced by their co-efficient values of (-0.151), (-0.486), (-0.177) and (0.132) respectively. The results indicate that if Usage experience goes up by one unit, then Brand Image goes up by 0.459 units which is significant while keeping other variables constant, likewise a unit increase. In contrast, a slight movement in Product Quality would bring down Brand Image by -0.151units, though significant while keeping other variables constant, likewise a unit change in Packaging brings down Brand Image by -0.486 units while keeping other variables constant, which is also significant. Similarly, a unit change in the Price brings about a -0.177 changes in the Brand Image, which is significant while a unit change in Appearance generates a proportional decrease of -0.132 in the Brand Image. The Null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states that Brand management has significant effect on the Brand Image of the Multiproduct Company is accepted, because all the Brand management variables are proved to be significant as their p-values are less than 0.05.

Discussion of findings

Brands are strategic weapons that multiproduct organisations used to win and attract customers in the marketing environment. Multiproduct organisations must ensure that they produce quality products that will meet short and long run needs of the customers. The study revealed that brand management variables have influence on brand image.

The study finding further shows that a very high relationship exists between the brand management variables and brand image. Also, result from our investigation also indicates that the multiproduct organisation has successfully been keeping its promises which build satisfaction and ensure patronage as the desired value is derived from the products. Finding from the study finally reveals that management of the brand has assisted the multiproduct organisation to have been so placed high above other competitors in the industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Brand is a key and essential weapon that gives strength to the organization and brand is in a customer's memory, on the bases of the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

There is a very strong positive relationship between brand management variables and brand image. This must be given further attention to by management so that other unaccounted variables can be identified and managed. The management must also ensure to maintain effective marketing channel in order to ensure that accepted brands get to the consumers in good time. This also corroborate with the conclusion of the study of Aremu (2008).

Adopted brand management strategy has placed the brand well and high in the market and in the mind of the consumers. This will enhance the brand image in the organisation and subsequently the performance of the organisation.

It is therefore recommended that:

I. Brand managers in the companies should ensure to see that brand management variables are further scrutinized and fuelled to ensure that they turn out to a good image. This must be supported with effective marketing channels.

ii. Brand managers should also ensure that they sustain the adopted brand management strategy that promotes company in the industry.

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