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Product Branding and Consumer Loyalty in Nigeria: an Empirical Study of Registered Bakery Firms in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined product branding and consumer loyalty in registered bakery firms in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State Nigeria. Repetition of the first sentence, delete The instrument used in generating data was questionnaire administered on one hundred and thirty (130) respondents as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was the statistical tool used for data analysis. The stated hypotheses used in eliciting information from respondents were tested using linear regression through SPSS as it was more appropriate in testing results of the samples collected. The findings revealed that product branding within the scope of brand equity, brand image, brand name, and brand association have positive significant impact on consumer loyalty. In the light of the above, it was recommended that bakery firms should embrace the practice of product branding as the benefits are overwhelming from the findings of this research. Again small and medium scale enterprises development agencies of Nigeria (SMEDAN) should carryout regular sensitization programs on the need for product branding among bakeries and other firms in the SMEs industry amongst others.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Please recastThe potential to significantly improve customer lifetime value, which will raise income at a far more cost-effective pace, may be realised by converting your customers into lifelong brand advocates. The capacity of bakery businesses/enterprises in Delta State to establish desirable brand equity, image, name, and association for its goods before the target market and the general public at large would generate this capacity to develop consumer/customer loyalty. A sustainable brand loyalty is usually created out of the strengths, opportunities, capabilities and competences of the firm over its competitors.

Iyadi and Edeme (2022) note that it is crucial to remember that in a globalised and digitally connected business environment where customers can choose from a wide range of brands in the Nigerian bakery industry as well as other industries, it has become more complex for enterprises (companies or firms) and their marketers to keep customers or win their loyalty through the effectiveness (potency) of their products and business strategies. As a result, every business in the bakery sector must consider the requirement for customer loyalty as a top priority and integral component of its marketing strategy. However, it cannot be successfully earned unless the company or enterprise uses its resources to address growth challenges, changes in the variety of product substitutes available to consumers, and the competitive forces brought on by newly emerging bakery firms in the twenty-first century. It also develops strategic measures from its core competence to gain competitive advantage and cultivate consumer loyalty for its brands.

As a result of the intense market rivalry that exists today in every industry, it is a fact of life in the business world that a company that does not see the value of branding early and quickly enough will quickly go out of business. Therefore, creating strong and appealing brands for all of the bakery enterprise's goods is essential (Farris, Neil & David, 2021). A strong brand when purchasing products and services, according to Chen and Chang (2020) and Adnan, Khan, and Hayee (2021), boosts client confidence and aids in their understanding of the intangible value aspect of the product. This demonstrates how a strong brand is a valuable asset for the company.

According to Dick and Basu (2022), if the brand value is strong, particularly in light of its presence, the business may lower the cost of marketing since consumers are loyal to it and the buyers also increase its range of trustworthy products. High brand value may compete with product costs, according to Clottey, Collier, and Stodnick (2018), and makes the defence industry require less advertising since customers are prepared to spend more to benefit from their preferred brand's qualities. But can a business win customer loyalty without creating a strong brand?

According to Itunuoluwa, Ayodele, Adesuyi, and Ayo (2021), a brand is a promise made about what a company or product would offer to customers. A brand, according to Kim, Morris, and Swait (2020), is made up of all the characteristics that set one seller's products and services apart from those of another, including name, term, design, style, symbols, client touchpoints, etc. All brand components serve as a psychological trigger or stimulus that produces a connection with all other ideas we have about this brand, according to Rubio, Villaseor, and Yagüe (2021). According to Lee, Moon, Kim, and Mun (2015) and Kotler and Armstrong (2015), a brand includes distinguishing product features (such as quality, design sensibility, etc.), as well as intangible elements of a customer's interaction with a product or company (such as reputation, customer experience, etc.).

Consumer loyalty in marketing refers to a customer's determination to keep utilising a specific brand by consistently purchasing a good or service (Farris, et al., 2021). Consumer loyalty may also be defined as the act of a consumer repurchasing the same brand of goods, say Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty (2019). Actually, there is a propensity to remember a customer's consistent answer. Keller (2017) asserted that real brand loyalty arises when a customer is dedicated to the brand and has a strong relative attitude towards the brand, which is subsequently displayed by repurchase behaviour. This is in addition to the consumer's ability to do so.

The American Marketing Association (2021) (sales promotion definition) defines brand loyalty as the situation in which a customer frequently repurchases the same manufacturer-originated products or services over time rather than shopping from a variety of suppliers within the category. The organisation also defined it as the length of brand loyalty a consumer exhibits within a certain product category. According to Gil, Fraj, and Martinez (2017), brand loyalty status represents a consumer's propensity to migrate to a rival brand if the price or product specifications change. Their tendency for repeat purchases, readiness to promote the brand, loyalty to the firm, and other characteristics are among the elements that affect this variable (Maduka, 2016). According to Olusegun, Oyebamiji, and Oke (2019), customer loyalty can be defined as the degree of a customer's positive brand perception, the depth of his commitment to the brand, and the intention to continue purchasing in the future. However, the definition also includes a customer's steadfast intention to repurchase a good or service in the future.

The level of happiness or discontent with the brand that has been accumulated through time and is impacted by the quality of the product has a direct impact on brand loyalty. In order to determine the potential impact that product branding may have on the capacity of businesses or firms in the bakery industry to cultivate consumer loyalty in the market for bakery products in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, and Nigeria generally, this study is therefore centred on product branding and consumer loyalty.

Statement of the Problem

Many businesses have failed to keep up with the trend of change and advancement in the modern business world because of the high cost of production, rising rivalry and competition, difficulty in meeting consumer demand, satisfying their desire for high quality at a lower price, and the presence of new substitutes made by emerging firms in the bakery industry. They were unable to comprehend that an expanding rate of patronage is a function of brand efficacy, which can only be attained by complete dedication to developing and maintaining every component of a product.

Because it relates to the companies' obligations to their clientele, brands are extremely important. Advertising must thus comprehend the value of building a strong brand in order to be able to stand out in a competitive market, especially in this decade. However, maintaining a strong brand no longer guarantees success over the long term or a sizable consumer base. Companies have to adapt to market developments and catch the attention of the market, especially in the bread business where a variety of products meet a similar need of the client.

The present market rivalry has altered how businesses see servicing their markets. Change is very necessary since only those who are willing to change will survive. Bakery businesses must constantly prepare for change since it brings with it new opportunities and pushes out the old. The situation has increased competition and led to a large range of brands that may be found.

In reality, the Delta North Senatorial District has more bakery brands than ever before, giving customers more brand options. Eventually, it became far more challenging to win a customer's long-term allegiance to a single favourite brand. As a result, maintaining a relationship in the business sector now heavily depends on the customer-brand relationship. Today's marketers are frequently well-organized to provide consumers a better experience, with the hope of influencing the customers' decisions and giving them a rich client experience to boost the brand's perception.

Due to its significance in segmenting the whole market environment, product branding is one of the most important factors for bakery marketers. Targeting consumers with effective difference is crucial if you want to survive the fierce competition. In order to understand market preferences and win people over to their brand, it is crucial for marketers to build long-term relationships with these elements. On account of this, this study is designed to look at consumer loyalty and product branding in registered bakery businesses in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine product branding and consumer loyalty in registered bakery firms in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State. The specific objectives include to:

1. determine the degree to which brand equity can affect consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria.
2. examine the effect of brand image on consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria.
3. ascertain the effect that brand name can make on building consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria.
4. evaluate the extent to which brand association can affect consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. To what degree can brand equity affect consumer loyalty on bakery products in Delta North Senatorial District?
2. What effect does brand image have on consumer loyalty on bakery products in Delta North Senatorial District?
3. What effect does brand name have on consumer loyalty on bakery products in Delta North Senatorial District?

4. To what extent can brand association affect consumer loyalty on bakery products in Delta North Senatorial District?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1 There is no significant relationship brand equity and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

Ho2 There is no significant relationship between brand image and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

Ho3 There is no significant relationship between brand name and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

Ho4 There is no significant relationship between brand association and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

Scope of the Study

In order to examine product branding and customer loyalty in the Delta North Senatorial District, this study focuses on businesses in the baking industry. In order to accomplish the study's goal, brand equity, brand image, brand association, and brand name were used as proxies for product branding instead of the dependent variable, customer loyalty. It includes significant bakeries or businesses in the Delta North Senatorial District. The researcher's conclusions were based on information gathered from the companies under study and data obtained by the researcher.

Despite the significant study on the importance of the global bakery sector, many questions remain regarding how these companies can increase customer loyalty to their brand in order to survive in the competitive market. This study made an effort to overcome this constraint by looking at the relationships between the factors that influence consumer loyalty across businesses in the Nigerian bakery sector. These factors include brand equity, brand image, brand name, and brand association. This study is also pertinent because it will open the eyes of business owners and marketers (especially those in the bakery industry) who are not yet benefiting from brand position in their business operations. They will be able to learn how to build, maintain, and grow their brands, which will help them draw in more clients and gain recognition on a global scale.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

This section of this article encapsulates the basic concepts relating to product branding, and consumer loyalty.

Product Branding and its Associate Variables

As previous researchers have focused heavily on other factors (such as brand awareness, commitment, trust, etc.) in connection to customer loyalty, the notion of product branding is assessed utilising brand equity, image, name, and association in this study. This study will conceptualise product branding from the dimensions of brand equity, brand image, brand name, and brand association in an effort to fill the gap in the current literature.

Aobakwe (2020) describes product branding as a technique that establishes a special collection of marketing components to distinguish a certain product. It is a process that establishes how a product's image is conveyed to consumers. It may also be viewed as a business endeavour intended to build a brand.

A brand in marketing is a conglomerate of attitudes towards an economic producer. The accumulation of brand experiences—both those that are directly related to using the product and those that are influenced by advertising, design, and media commentary—creates feelings. A brand is the symbolic representation of all the details pertaining to a business, item, or service. The purpose of a brand is to establish associations and expectations among a producer's products. The explicit logo, typefaces, and colour schemes that make up a brand are frequently constructed to stand in for implicit beliefs, concepts, and even personalities (Caurana, 2015). The psychological component, also known as the brand image, is a symbolic construct that individuals develop in their brains that encapsulates all the knowledge and expectations related to a good or service. The best strategy for brand development takes into account the conceptual frameworks of enterprises, individuals, and brands.

A brand is a name, word, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of all of these that identifies the manufacturer or seller of a something or service, according to Goodie-Okio (2022). Customers consider a product's brand to be a crucial component, and branding may increase the value of a product. Consumers form connections with brands and give them significance.

In addition to being names and symbols, brands play a crucial role in the interaction between a company and its customers. For instance, as part of a larger initiative to offer the brand additional meaning and social significance to its young audience, Pepsi recently updated the visuals on its soft drink cans. Pepsi developed at least 35 unique local and foreign can designs in its pursuit of a fresher, more current, and refreshing appearance.

Many businesses throughout the world who have established strong brands in the marketplace are constantly at a competitive advantage over those that do not. The majority of customers identify firms with strong brands with those that will likely benefit them rather than the other way around. Some brand marketers make a distinction between a brand's psychological and experimental aspects. The brand experience (Fernando, Kumara, Mendis, Wettawa & Samarasinghe, 2018) is the total of all points of interaction with the brand and represents the experimental component.

1. Brand Equity:

This is used to describe the market influence, economic development, and monetary worth that come with the goodwill and reputation that an established brand name has accumulated over the course of its life. An intangible asset called brand equity depends on the associations that customers form. Its worth depends on how well-versed a customer is in a brand and how much trust they have developed in a brand through time. When the brand is well known and has favourable connections in the consumer's mind, it may provide substantial value. Brand equity refers to this idea, namely the favourable connotations a brand has in the minds of its customers.

Apart from creating powerful brands, marketing managers' top priorities include monitoring the status of their brands. "Brand equity" is used to accomplish this. Since brand equity is one of an organization's most important assets, brand equity metrics must be created.

According to Solomon, Tijjani, Agbo and Ismail (2021), the Marketing Science Institute proposed five broad purposes for brand equity measures which include to:

(i) Guide marketing strategies and tactical decisions.
(ii) Assess the extendibility of a brand
(iii) Evaluate the effectiveness of marketing decisions
(iv) Track a brand’s health in comparison to competitors over time, and
(v) Assign a financial value to the brand in balance sheets and financial transactions.

Two methods of measuring brand equity have been put forth in order to achieve this goal: the first, producing measures for the company, concentrates on the monetary or financial value of the brand in the marketplace, and the second refers to a multidimensional concept that involves the value added to a good or service by consumers' associations and perceptions of a brand, which is typically conceptualised as consumer-based brand equity.

2. Brand Image:

This is how customers perceive a brand's overall qualities, purposes, and connotations (Raji, Rashid, and Ishak, 2021). For the purposes of this study, brand image is calculated as customers' assessments of a brand's product. Businesses want to have a dependable reputation that gives them a competitive edge. This means that businesses must constantly deliver high-quality services, highlight their major advantages and characteristics, and forge an emotional connection with consumers if they want to establish a solid reputation with them (Aobakwe, 2020). Therefore, fast food firms are able to position their items as the top choice in consumers' eyes by having a strong and distinct brand image.

By lowering risk perceptions and building confidence in a company's services, the development of a strong image promotes consumer trust in that brand. It was found in earlier research by Chinomona (2016) and Erkmen and Hancer (2019) that cultivating a brand's image may have a considerable influence on brand trust. This idea is supported by Han, Yu, Chua, Lee, and Kim (2019), who note that brand image can enhance the degree of brand trust in the marketplace. In order to increase brand trust with consumers, garment companies should focus more on presenting a sincere image (Chinomona, 2016).

3. Brand Name:

Depending on the level of happiness or discontent a buyer had with the brand, a product's reputation among the general public may be good or negative. A brand name distinguishes a particular business, item, or service and sets it apart from other brands in the same market. To safeguard their equity, brand names are frequently filed with the Patent and Trademark Offices, and they frequently include a logo (Goodie - Okio, 2022).

The first thing prospective clients notice is the company name. It aids in making a good initial impression for the company. It aids the commercial firm in differentiating its brand from that of its rivals. Basically, a strong brand name has to have people associate it with the company's overarching theme and be simple to recall. The brand should be easily recognisable and elicit a favourable emotional reaction when consumers see it.

According to Tran, Nguyen, Tran, Tran & Huynh (2019), a good brand name that can command consumer loyalty should be able to possess the following qualities:

(i) It should be easy to spell and pronounce.
(ii) It should be relevant or related to the business brand.
(iii) It should be a memorable name which consumers can easily remember.
(iv) It should be fresh and unique as unique names stand out from the crowd of competitors’ brand name.

4. Brand Association:

This is the association a client has in their mind between a brand and a notion, representation, feeling, event, individual, interest, or activity. This connection, which has the potential to be immediately favourable or negative, has a significant impact on consumer choice (Itunuoluwa, Ayodele, Adesuyi, and Ayo, 2022).

It is all of the memories connected to a certain brand. It is broken down into three groups: attitudes, advantages, and qualities. A brand's attributes are its defining characteristics, such as what a buyer thinks a brand is or possesses, and what goes into buying or consuming it. Benefits are the subjective judgements that consumers make about a brand's qualities or what they think the brand can achieve for them. The term "brand attitudes" refers to customers' general opinions on a certain brand. Brand association and brand equity are closely related. To boost brand equity, very powerful brand associations can be leveraged.

Brand association was categorised by Erkmen and Hancer (2019) into five (5) categories. The first is brand association based on characteristics, which defines an attribute as a descriptive trait that describes a good or service and highlights unique aspects of what a firm sells. The relationship between brand associations and the subjective value or positive connotation that consumers associate with a good or service is covered in the second category, benefits-based brand association. Brand association based on attitudes is the third category, which shows that a brand's attitude frequently depends on how well-liked it is overall by customers. This kind of brand connection is often abstract and can be connected to both the benefits and features of a product. A fundamental requirement for appealing to a customer's intelligence or consciousness is brand association via interest, which is the fourth category. The most common type of brand affiliation used to promote products is celebrity brand association. To influence customers' perceptions of a product and enhance sales, celebrities' images are often used.

2.2.2 Consumer Loyalty

Organisational settings are becoming more chaotic and unpredictable than ever before in this era of rapid technology innovation, changing client expectations, globalisation, the erasing of company borders, and more rivalry. corporations have been under increasing pressure over the past ten years to accept responsibility for the social impacts of their business practises, particularly when such impacts go beyond the immediate financial interests of the corporations.

Companies nowadays are working to increase their performance by utilising various methods. Investing in and growing quality brands capable of inspiring consumer or customer loyalty is one of these strategies. In highly competitive marketplaces, brands are not only a useful tool for managers but also a strategic need that enables businesses to add more value to their consumers and develop long-term competitive advantages (Iyadi, Kifordu, & Ofili, 2020).

The degree of belief, trust, and recommendations that a customer (or consumer) has for a business or corporation may therefore be referred to as consumer loyalty. This generally reflects on the patronage shown to a business's goods on a regular basis or repeatedly.

Customer loyalty is cultivated deliberately; it doesn't just happen. The plan for fostering loyalty is sometimes referred to as the "brand continuum" or the "customer journey," but language aside, what keeps consumers coming back follows a pattern. And business owners may move clients quickly through it by using clever, consistent marketing (Young, 2018).

Repeat customers and ardent supporters will wind up recommending you to their networks as a consequence. These clients represent the proverbial "holy grail": After all, a little increase of only 5% in client retention can increase earnings by as much as 95%. However, you must spend money on marketing contact points at each crossroads to move clients through the various phases of loyalty. This is so because while each level provides advantages for company, the step-by-step growth produces the highest Returns on Investment (ROI).

Product Branding and Consumer Loyalty

Iyadi and Egwuenu (2017) assert that a company that has earned its customers' trust throughout the course of its life is more likely to draw in new customers and keep them as loyal customers. When a brand and its customers first become acquainted, there is always some sort of taste gap that the consumers anticipate to be filled; if they discover that the product can satisfy their needs, they will become brand loyal.

Given the fierce competition that exists among businesses in the 21st century, where many companies operate in the same sector, it is evident that it is essential to comprehend consumer behaviour in a target market, create brands that can capture their attention, and offer services that will encourage brand loyalty. In fact, building these relationships with consumers and working to preserve and strengthen those relationships are necessities for businesses in Nigeria (particularly those in the bakery sub-sector of the food industry) (Iyadi, Kifordu & Ofili, 2020).

Customers want to feel satisfied, either because the product meets a need or because they have a strong sense of loyalty for it. Both types of clients may exist, and as a manager or marketer for a company, you must discover strategies to appeal to each. Offer a product that satisfies the demands of your customers and guarantees that it is dependable and of the greatest calibre. Marketing professionals that are aware of this will be better able to keep customers and change the opinions of customers who are dissatisfied with a brand's service or product.

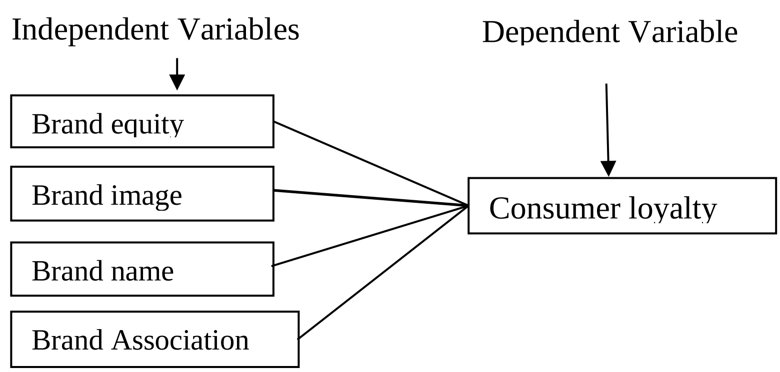
To this aim, the connection between a brand and a customer is special and has the potential to benefit both parties as well as the business as a whole. This is because brands become more human to customers and take on meaning and value when they form connections with them and begin to view them as partners. Consumers' connections with brands and those with other people are similar. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that you understand the strength of the links that exist between brands and consumer loyalty in order to ensure that you are aware of how to interact with your consumers and make place for the expansion and development of the company.

Product branding and customer loyalty play a part in achieving a company's growth goals. This is due to the fact that a brand that has been able to gain the trust of its customers may be able to obtain a higher level of exclusive legal protection for its distinctive efforts and product features against competitive parody; provide essential tools for differentiating and catering to market segments of different purses, purposes, and personalities; make it easier to recognise a company's product on store shelves; and give a manufacturer a way to avoid the difficulties of pricing disputes.

Iyadi and Edeme (2022) claim that these will have a short-term impact on the organisation in the form of a steady increase in patronage, which would eventually result in an increase in income and profit. Long-term, it will increase the firm's market share, provide it a competitive edge over rivals, help it take the lead in the market, and expand beyond its anticipated business horizon. All of these will eventually result in the firm's expansion and development.

Conceptual Framework

The framework below shows the line between independent variables and dependent variables indication the relationship between brand equity, brand image, brand name, brand association and consumer loyalty.



Theoretical Framework

Theories are analytical tools for comprehending, illuminating, and predicting a certain subject. The following definition of a theory could be used: "A scientific ideational framework of large scope, conceived by the human imagination, that comprises a family of empirical (experimental) rules addressing regularities occurring in objects and occurrences, both observed and hypothesised. A scientific theory is a framework developed to explain these rules in a manner that is consistent with science (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018).

In this project work, the theory adopted is the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Brand Relationship Theory as they are very much relevant for this study.

Brand Relationship Theory

Gummesson (2015) put up this notion and said that there are connections between people. As a result, brand relationships are defined by consumers from their own unique viewpoints, and brand relationships and relational value are highly personalised in their eyes. Based on their unique perceptions of the value and significance of the brand as well as their own experiences, consumers create unique connections. In other words, via their communications in various circumstances, consumers appear to directly develop the brand (Lindberg, 2015).

The personal aspect of the interaction between a brand and its clients has also been studied in earlier study. Fornell (2016) investigated the types of connections that consumers have—and desire to have—with businesses. According to Fournier, the quality of a brand relationship can vary along six dimensions other than loyalty or commitment, including self-concept connection, commitment or nostalgic attachment, behavioural interdependence, love/passion, intimacy, and brand-partner quality.

For a typology of metaphors that reflect typical consumer-brand connections, she offers the following: Childhood friendships, courtships, dependencies, flings, enmities, marriages of convenience, planned marriages, casual friends/buddies, committed partnerships, closest friends, compartmentalised pals, kinships, rebounds/avoidance-driven relationships, affairs, and enslavements. While this typology includes the majority of positive interactions, it may exclude a variety of potential antagonistic and neutral relationships, such as those with trading partners.

Aaker (2016) carried out a two-month longitudinal analysis of the emergence and development of consumer-brand relationships. They discovered that the brand's personality and two characteristics that were transgressing had a big impact on the dynamics and shape of development.

2.5 Empirical Review

In Nigeria's telecom sector, Kowo et al. (2021) investigate the connection between product branding and customer loyalty. Survey research was used in this study. A questionnaire that was sent to Lagos State-based consumers of Nigeria's three largest telecommunications providers—MTN, AIRTEL, and GLOBACOM—was used to collect primary data. The study included 172 participants, and the easy computation approach was used to estimate the sample size of 120. The analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation coefficient, and Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0 were among the statistical methods used in the study. According to the study, there is a strong correlation between consumer loyalty and product branding in the Nigerian telecommunications sector. As a result, from a practical standpoint, telecommunications companies should widen their network coverage, raise the standard of their services, and provide Nigerians better access to networks both inside and outside of the country.

The performance of distributors at Flour Mills of Nigeria PLC is examined by Solomon, Tijjani, Agbo, and Ismail (2021), with an emphasis on the north central part of Nigeria. Data were gathered by a self-administered questionnaire for the study's survey research, and SPSS IBM 23 was used to test the hypotheses with multiple regressions. The study's conclusions showed that elements including the product's brand acceptability and perceived quality, which boost the company's market share, had a significant impact on the level of performance of distributors at Flour Mills of Nigeria PLC. The study concluded that the positive effect of brand equity on performance of distributors in Flour Mills of Nigeria PLC is very high.

Soomro (2019) studied the moderating impact of personal collectivist ideals on the antecedents of brand loyalty in Pakistan's fashion sector. The major goal of this study was to determine how individual level collectivist ideals affected the causes of Brand Loyalty (BL) in a moderating manner. What impact does the difference in customer collectivist values—low vs. high—have on brand loyalty in the garment industry? It has been discovered that both types of customers have unique purchasing options. To examine the impact on brand loyalty, the Individual Level and three antecedents—promotion (PRO), perceived brand quality (PBQ), and brand trust (BT)—were used. Through the use of a non-restricted non-probability sampling approach, the questionnaire was created by the respondent and circulated online on social networking sites to 201 respondents from Pakistan. To examine the moderation in AMOS, Path Analysis and SEM analysis were conducted. By discovering that individual-level collectivist values (ILCV) significantly moderate the link between PBQ and BL, this study has established and tested the idea. The results show that customers with low ILCV become noticeably more brand loyal, especially when PBQ is very high. The study's primary contribution is the presentation of the proven brand loyalty model with ILCV interaction.

2019 saw the completion of a Systematic Mapping Study on Customer Loyalty and Brand Management in Italy by Tartaglione, Cavacece, Russo, and Granata. In order to provide a useful research road map for future study, this work aims to give researchers a systematisation and mapping of the contributions on this topic. A mapping research and bibliometric analysis of 337 papers on brand management and consumer loyalty from 2000 to 2018 have been completed. The findings include a map of the most often used and referenced terms, a list of the most frequently cited publications on the subject, and six word clusters based on co-occurrence. The most pertinent study findings, trends, and problems are revealed through the cluster analysis, offering intriguing theoretical and practical consequences.

Research on the determinants (such as brand equity, brand image, brand name and brand association) of brand loyalty within a developing country is limited. A review of the literature uncovered that most studies related to the interrelationship between brand equity, brand image, brand name, brand association and brand loyalty are concentrated on developed countries such as Vietnam, Turkey, and India (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019; Kaur & Soch, 2018; Tran, Nguyen, Tran, Tran & Huynh, 2019).

In addition, previous studies have explored the linkages between the determinants of brand loyalty in unique industry settings such as hotel, restaurant, and mobile technology, with little or no studies being conducted in bakery sub-srctor of food industry. From a developing country perspective, literature review have discovered the association between relationship quality and brand loyalty in South Africa and Nigeria, with no previous research on Nigerian bakery sub-sector of food industry. With this in mind, the literature points out that none of the studies both in developed and developing nations have explored the theoretical connection between brand equity, brand image, brand name, brand association, and brand loyalty in the bakery sub-sector of food industry. These gaps in literature made it necessary for this study to investigate the determinants of brand loyalty in the bakery sub-sector of food industry in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

In order to ascertain the link between product branding and customer loyalty for bakery items in the Delta North Senatorial District, this study used a survey research design methodology. Consumers of bakery goods in the research region make up the study's population.

Names and Location of Registered Bakery Firms in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria

Location	Total Population	Name of Registered Bakery Firms
Asaba	20	Kingdom Bread Industry, Turner Modern Bakery, Sparkle Cakes & Pastries, Oriental Bakery and Restaurant Ltd, Bonsaac Bakery, Phronesis Bakery & Confectioneries, Chi Chi Bakery, Beezeebee Cakes and Events, Chommy Confectionaries, Owenx Cakes N Events, Candy Cakes Confectionery, Makarios Cakes, Vivacious Cakes & Pastries, Sunset Bakeries Asaba (Maggy Bread), Sweet Daze Events et al, Asaba baker cakes by debby, Merrier Sweets and Confectioners, Bread Republic Bakers and Confectioneries, Celebrity Bridal N Cakes, Pemak Foods, Chys Delightsome Cakes n Events; and Sparkle Cakes & Pastries.
Ogwashi-uku	2	Foster's Cup Cake; and Harrison Bakery Industry
Kwale	2	
Agbor	2	Meris Bread Nigeria Limited; and Angelos Food Court.

Source: Wikipedia, 2023

This investigation focused on the twenty-six (26) registered bakeries that were situated in Asaba, Ogwashi-uku, Kwale, and Agbor (urban areas in the Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria). The staff members received a questionnaire from the research assistant. The sample size for the study was determined by randomly selecting 130 employees from the selected registered establishments, which were bakeries in the study area. Using a research assistant, a questionnaire was sent to the staff in order to collect data on the subject.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and linear regression were used in the study as statistical methods. In order to achieve the primary goal, which was to measure the factors influencing consumer loyalty on bakery firms in the studied area, the regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the dependent variable (consumer loyalty) and the determinants of the independent variable (product branding). The optimal variable for predicting consumer loyalty and its impacts may be found by calculating the contributions of each variable to the dependent variable. The following is how the model's linear customer loyalty function is specified:

$Y = f(\alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots + \beta_9 X_9 + e$

Where:

Y = Consumer loyalty in bakery firms

f = Function

X_1 = Age (in years)

X_2 = Marital status (Single =1 Married =2)

X_3 = Educational status (No. of years spent in school)

X_4 = Working Experience (No. of Years spent in bakery firms)

X_5 = Brand Equity (5- point Likert scale)

X_6 = Brand Image (5 – point Likert scale)

X_7 = Brand Name (5- point Likert scale)

X_8 = Brand Association (5- point Likert scale)

$\beta_1 - \beta_9$ = regression coefficients

α = Constant

e = error term

DATA ANALYSIS

In this study's part, analyses were conducted to record the hypotheses in order to make it easier to validate or verify the hypotheses that had been developed. The qualitative information gathered through the field survey was rated on a five point Likert scale. Regression analysis was then performed on the resulting value using SPSS statistical software. The table below displays the regression analysis's findings.

Table 4.1a Model Summary (Brand Equity and Consumer Loyalty)

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std error
1	.891	.794	.175	.01327

Source: Researcher Computation 2023.

Table 4.1b Coefficient (Brand Equity and Consumer Loyalty)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**	T	Sig
Constant	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Brand equity is an intangible asset that depends on associations made by the consumer.	1.895	0.667		2.983	.005

The value of brand equity is based on how much a consumer is aware of a brand.	0.348	0.121	0.323	2.879	.005
Brand equity is built-up in a brand over the period of its existence.	0.237	0.106	0.251	2.225	0.030
The brand can add significant value when it is well recognized and has positive associations in the mind of the consumer.	.316	0.125	0.332	2.811	.005
	.023	0.052	0.047	2.438	.022

Source: Researcher computation 2023.

Table 4.1a shows the result of the regression analysis capturing the effect that brand equity has on consumer loyalty. The result shows that brand equity exact 79.4% effect on consumer loyalty as evidenced by the value of the R square.

On the other hand, Table 4.1b displays the values of the coefficients for the brand equity metrics. The findings show a favourable correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This suggests that in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria, brand equity measurements have a direct and advantageous link with consumer loyalty. The standardised coefficients' beta values, all of which show a positive signal (P>0), serve as proof of this. The likelihood and statistic value of the outcome also indicated that brand equity is statistically significant. The variable's t-value is 2.438, and its chance of being significant is 0.022 (P 0.05) for its positive impact on customer loyalty.

Table 4.2a Model Summary (Brand Image and Consumer Loyalty)

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error
1	0.969	0.939	0.222	0.26971

Source: Researcher computation 2023.

Table 4.2b Coefficients (Brand Image and Consumer Loyalty)

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		Standardized Coefficients	**T**	**Sig**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.082	0.759		1.425	0.159
Consumers prefer the brand of a firm that is publicly well spoken of.	0.086	0.133	0.090	0.650	0.518
The structure of the product redirects the consumers' perception about a brand.	0.436	0.169	0.358	2.580	0.012
Most consumers don't buy products that are not well known.	0.087	0.134	0.090	0.651	0.517
The images in the product appeal to the perception of the consumer about a brand.	0.410	0.127	0.361	3.219	0.002

Source: Researcher computation 2023.

Analysis result revealed in table 4.3.2a and 4.2b captures the effect of brand image on consumer loyalty. Table 4.2a shows that the model brand image has a high predictive power as evidenced by the value of the R. Square (0.939). It implies that brand image accounts for 93.9% of consumers' willingness to be loyal to a brand. The implication of this is that for a firm to earn consumer loyalty, it will require about 94% of the brand's image.

The results of the parameter estimations for the independent variable coefficients are displayed in Table 4.2b. The findings showed that all brand image metrics are statistically significant. The T-square and significant values demonstrate that other factors, such the usage of brand image by businesses (0.002) at 0.05 level of significance or 95% confidence interval, are statistically significant. As shown by the beta values of the standardised coefficients, all assessments of brand image were positively correlated with the indicator of customer loyalty. These inter-variable correlations were demonstrated by the results of table 4.2b.

Table 4.3a Model Summary (Brand Name and Consumer Loyalty)

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error
1	0.836[a]	0.699	0.331	0.29978

Source: Researcher computation 2023.

Table 4.3b Coefficients (Brand Name and Consumer Loyalty)

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.102	0.474		4.433	0.000
The name should be easy to spell and pronounce.	0.393	0.123	0.432	3.199	0.002
The name should be relevant or related to the business brand.	0.058	0.063	0.100	0.919	0.362
The name should be a memorable name which consumers can easily remember.	0.394	0.124	0.433	3.189	0.003
The name should be fresh and unique as unique names stand out from the crowd of competitors' brand name.	0.397	0.142	0.435	3.192	0.003

Source: Researcher computation 2023.

The analysis's findings in tables 4.3a and 4.3b pertain to the regression indicator for how much brand recognition can influence customer loyalty. According to the findings and the value of the R Square (0.699), brand awareness has a 56% effect on consumer loyalty.

The parameter estimates for the brand name independent variable's measured coefficients are shown in Table 4.3.6. As indicated by the beta values of the standardised coefficients (>0), the outcome demonstrates that all measures of the independent variable's (brand name) impacts are positively connected with the measure of customer loyalty.

Table 4.4a Model Summary (Brand Association and Consumer Loyalty)

Model	R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	Std error
1	.879	0.773	.375	0.31327

Source: Researcher Computation 2023.

Table 4.4b Coefficient (Brand Association and Consumer Loyalty)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**	T	Sig
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Constant	1.984	0.686		2.892	0.005
Consumers tend to remember most of the characteristics of a brand.	0.348	0.121	0.323	2.879	0.005
Consumers do easily remember the symbol and logo of the brand.	0.237	0.106	0.251	2.225	0.030
Most consumers seem to be loyal to a leading brand in the market.	.237	0.106	0.251	2.225	0.030
Consumers tend to be loyal to a brand that offers a variety of price ranges.	.237	0.106	0.251	2.225	0.030

Source: Researcher computation 2023.

Table 4.4 shows the result of the regression analysis capturing the effect of brand association on consumer loyalty. The result shows that brand association exact 77.3% effects on consumer loyalty as evidenced by the value of the R square.

On the other hand, Table 4.4b displays the values of the brand association variable measure coefficients. The findings show a favourable correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This suggests that customer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria, has a direct and favourable link with brand association metrics. The standardised coefficients' Beta values, all of which show a positive signal (P>0), serve as proof of this.

The statistic's value and probability value support the conclusion that the measure of brand connection is statistically significant. The variable has a t-value of 2.225 and a probability or significance value of 0.030 ($P<0.05$), and brand association has a positive impact on consumer loyalty.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses formulated were tested in this section using the results from our regression analysis.

Test of Hypothesis 1

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship brand equity and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

The above hypothesis desires to test as to whether measures of brand equity have effect on the consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria. From the results of the regression analysis on the effect of brand equity on consumer loyalty, it was established that measures of brand equity have positive correlation with the dependent variable consumer loyalty as evidenced by the beta values of the standardized coefficients ($\beta>0$). The results also revealed that the measure of brand equity effects are statistically significant as established by the value of the statistic and significant value at 95% confidence interval ($P<0.05$).

In the light of the above, results given that the measures of brand equity will then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant relationship brand equity and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

Test of Hypothesis 2

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between brand image and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

The above hypothesis intends to secure if brand image do have significant effect on consumer loyalty. However, the results of analysis on the effect of brand image on consumer loyalty has established that the measures of brand image were positively related with the measure of consumer loyalty reveals that the beta values of the parameters estimate of the standardized coefficients were greater than zero ($\beta>0$). The result also established that all measures of brand image were statistically significant.

Thus, in the light of the above results which established that the measures brand image was statistically significant, we will then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant relationship between brand image and consumer loyalty.

Test of Hypothesis 3

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between brand name and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

The aforementioned hypothesis looks to examine if brand name metrics have any impact on client loyalty. The regression analysis on the relationship between brand name and consumer loyalty has found that the measure of brand awareness influences are positively correlated with consumer loyalty, as shown by the estimated values of the standardised coefficients in table 4.3.6, where the All beta values are above zero (>0).

The null hypothesis will then be disproved in light of the established findings, and it will be determined that in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria, brand recognition and customer loyalty are significantly correlated. This is so that it's clear that all other measures of brand name impacts were statistically significant, as the established result above demonstrates.

Test of Hypothesis 4

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between brand association and consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District.

The aforementioned hypothesis seeks to determine whether brand association metrics have an impact on customer loyalty. In Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria, the results of the regression analysis on the extent to which brand association affects consumer loyalty revealed a positive correlation between brand association measures and the dependent variable, consumer loyalty, as shown by the beta values of the standardised coefficients ($\beta>0$). Additionally, the findings showed that the brand association influence measures are statistically significant as demonstrated by the statistic's value and significant value at the 95% confidence level ($P<0.05$).

In the light of the above, results given that the measures of brand association influences will then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant relationship between Brand Association and Consumer Loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the regression analysis showed that measures of brand equity have a positive correlation with the dependent variable, consumer loyalty, as shown by the beta values of the standardised coefficients, in the case of the first objective, which aimed to ascertain the extent to which brand equity can affect consumer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria. This was in line with the findings of studies on firm brands and customer loyalty by Tartaglione, et al. (2019) and Soomro (2019). One may easily draw the conclusion that brand equity and customer loyalty in Nigeria have a substantial link based on this research.

As a result of the test of the second hypothesis, which examined the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, it was established that all brand image measures were statistically significant and that there was a positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. This was in line with research on product branding and customer loyalty done by Kowo, et al. in 2021 and Djumarno, et al. in 2017. We shall thus draw the conclusion that brand equity significantly influences consumer loyalty in Nigeria.

The brand name and brand association characteristics that were employed in the study also showed that there is a strong, positive link between brand name, brand association, and customer loyalty in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State of Nigeria. This was in line with the conclusions of studies on product branding and customer loyalty by Solomon et al. (2021), Rajesh (2021), and Tartaglione et al. (2019). As a result, we shall draw the conclusion that in Nigeria, both brand name and brand association have a major impact on consumer loyalty.

As a result of the discussion of the findings above, it has been experimentally established, using the instance of a few bakeries in the Delta North Senatorial District of Nigeria's Delta State, that product branding has a strong positive association with customer loyalty. This was in line with the conclusions of a research on product branding and customer loyalty in a modern business environment conducted by Kowo in 2021.

Conclusion

Examining "product branding and consumer loyalty in registered bakery firms in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria" is the purpose of this study. One hundred thirty one (130) respondents were given the questionnaire that was used to gather the data, and all responses were fully recovered. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical technique used for data analysis. Since it is acceptable for testing the outcomes of the samples obtained, hypothesis testing was carried out using linear regression using SPSS. The results show that brand equity, brand image, brand name, and brand association are all aspects of product branding that have a large, positive impact on consumer loyalty.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research work, the following recommendations were made:

1. Bakery businesses should embrace the practise of product branding because the advantages outweigh any drawbacks.
2. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) should regularly run programmes to educate bakers and other SMEs on the importance of product branding.
3. The government should provide bakery businesses a dedicated subsidy to support their ongoing branding initiatives.
4. Similar studies on product branding within the context of SMEs should be conducted.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study has filled a vacuum in the literature by taking into account consumer loyalty and product branding in the context of bakeries, whereas many other studies have overlooked the value of product branding for bakeries. This study would thus be enlightening in particular for owners of bakery businesses and other food and beverage industry players who are not yet reaping the rewards of product branding and customer loyalty in their company operations in Delta State and Nigeria generally. This study has also contributed significantly to the improvement in current literatures as well as pave way to researchers to concentrating their research work at grass root level in order to gain absolute facts about how branding can facilitate the growth of bakery firms in Nigeria.

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