

IMPACT OF BRAND PERSONALITY IMPROVEMENT ON MARKETING PERFORMANCE IN FOOD AND BEVERAGE COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between brand personality improvement and marketing performance. The population of the study comprised 27 food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State and 108 respondents comprising procurement managers, logistics managers, sales managers, and marketing managers provided primary data for the study through structured questionnaire designed in Likert 5- point scale. The reliability of the study instrument was determined by Cronbach Alpha reliability test, and 3 null hypotheses were tested using Spearman's rank order correlation with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science version 26.0. Test of hypotheses revealed that brand personality improvement has a moderate, positive and statistically significant relationship with marketing performance. The study concluded that brand personality improvement significantly relates to marketing performance of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State: and recommended that, the management of the food and beverage firms should improve the attractiveness of their personality and identity through the engagement in actions and practices that focus on the advancement of factors such as service quality and value to customers; thus, contributing towards enhancing the marketing performance of the food and beverage companies in Rivers State.

Keywords: Brand personality improvement, marketing performance, customer retention, customer acquisition, customer commitment.

Introduction

The marketing of food and beverage items holds significant importance for marketing professionals, as evidenced by their substantial market share (Motoki et al., 2023). Furthermore, due to the size of the market, there is a growing need for investment in branding strategies for these products (Skaczkowski et al., 2016). According to Ekawati et al. (2021), global brands that have endured over several decades have attained the status of being the most valuable brands due to their effective implementation of a successful management framework. The state of Rivers in Nigeria is home to a multitude of food and beverage production enterprises, each offering a diverse range of brands. Certain brands are capable of sustaining their present status, whereas others have enduring financial setbacks and ultimately cease operations. Moreover, there are those who are engaged in a struggle for their own existence. Mamangkey et al (2018) argue that in order for a business to achieve success, it is imperative to offer products or services that are capable of satisfying the dynamic and expanding demands and needs of consumers. Competition serves as the catalyst for the emergence of brands, while simultaneously acting as the

driving force for the demise of brands. A brand is defined as a distinctive element, such as a name, specification, design, symbol, or any other identifiable feature, that serves as a means of distinguishing a product, whether it be a tangible object or an intangible service, and as a differentiating factor between various sellers.

A brand is a strategic asset for a firm, serving as a long-term investment that can generate significant advantages for the managing organization. When a brand undergoes rejuvenation and becomes part of a brand family, the other brands within the family derive advantages from its newly established good relationship. The cognitive processes occurring within the minds of consumers have a significant impact on their ultimate purchasing choices (Perreault et al., 2013). The company should consider making modifications to the product attributes and introducing new goods with expanded applications in order to enhance marketability and gain a stronger competitive edge. Revitalizing a formerly renowned yet presently inactive brand might prove to be a really effective strategy given the suitable conditions. One potential method for attaining this objective is via enhancing the brand's personality, as suggested by Aarker (2004). According to Ekawati et al. (2021), the concept of brand personality refers to the symbolic consumption and emotional connection that customers establish with a brand. The concept of brand personality is a crucial intangible asset that plays a key role in distinguishing the products and services provided by a company.

Brand personality is a strategic approach aimed at establishing a psychological connection between products and consumers. According to Hermanto and Rodhiah (2019), it functions as a medium for the representation of symbolism and self-expression. There is a positive correlation between customer brand affinity and loyalty, which then leads to increased sales and ultimately, improved profitability for the organization. According to Ilyas et al. (2020), a robust brand is distinguished by a favorable perspective and its association with the creation of brands and products targeted towards consumers. According to Udomkit and Mathews (2015), in order for a brand to achieve success and differentiate itself from competitors, it is imperative that it possesses distinctiveness and attractiveness. The distinctiveness of this attribute presents challenges for competitors attempting to replicate it, while also creating a lasting impact on the perceptions and preferences of consumers (Hamadneh et al., 2021). The establishment of brand personality has been found to have a positive impact on marketing success, as it cultivates a propensity among consumers to be willing to pay higher prices for products and services.

Despite the limited number of theoretical and empirical investigations conducted on the correlation between brand personality enhancement and marketing performance, there is a scarcity of studies that have systematically examined how brand personality improvement can impact marketing performance within the food and beverage manufacturing sector in Rivers State. The study conducted by Attor, Jibril, Amoah, and Chovancova (2022) investigated the influence of brand personality dimensions on customer purchasing choices within the telecommunications industry. In their study, Van Deventer (2021) examined the impact of perceived brand personality aspects on brand identification within the retail-banking sector, specifically focusing on the Generation Y banking market in South Africa. The study conducted by Harcourt, Kayii, and Ikegwuru (2020)

examined the relationship between brand personality and consumer loyalty within beverage companies operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. This study thus joins the discourse to expand the horizon of knowledge by examining the relationship between brand personality improvement and marketing performance of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Concept of Brand Personality Improvement

Brand personification or brand persona is a means by which the inherent attributes of a brand are elucidated (Yeoh et al., 2014). Brand personality refers to a unique attribute inherent to a brand, which influences its character and enables consumers to readily differentiate it from competing brands (Udomkit & Mathews, 2015). Brand personality refers to a set of human traits that are attributed to a specific brand. Brand personality refers to the practice employed by organizations to establish a connection between their brand and human personality traits. This connection is intended to be symbolic, robust, unique, consistent, and meaningful, with the aim of effectively engaging the consumer. Brand personality refers to a brand attribute that encompasses the perceived integrity, commitment, and value of a company's offerings as viewed by its customers. The concept of brand personality involves attributing human-like attributes to a brand, a notion that is indisputable. According to Lin and Huang (2012), the brand character that is established might possess qualities such as strength, authority, sociability, empathy, independence, creativity, and other similar attributes. In order to differentiate itself from competitors, the brand must possess a distinctive and exclusive identity that is meticulously crafted to cater to the needs and preferences of the consumer. The absence of a distinct personality inside a brand hinders its ability to differentiate itself from competitors and maintain a lasting presence in the consumer's memory. According to Ozer (2015), consumers frequently see the alignment between personalities and products as a significant factor when making choices between competing products. The comprehension of brand personality can be inferred from the consumer base that engages in purchasing the brand. The concept of brand personality is employed as a means of establishing an emotional bond between customers and the product (Freling et al., 2011). The influence of brand personality on consumer perceptions of its impact on purchase intentions and repeat purchases is believed to stem from the customers' view that the product or service aligns with the brand personality (Guido et al., 2010). Companies leverage their personalities as enduring competitive advantages in order to effectively position themselves and differentiate their products. According to the research conducted by Coelho et al. (2019), it was determined that brand personality is a highly influential factor in shaping customer decision-making processes. According to Kim and Phua (2020), the establishment of brand personality is achieved through the association of a company's image with human-like traits, hence encompassing various facets of human personality in the real world.

Concept of Marketing Performance

Marketing performance refers to an organization's capacity to utilize its existing resources in a proficient and effective manner in order to achieve predefined objectives, while also considering their significance to consumers (Taouab & Isor, 2019). Rodriguez and Morant (2016) define marketing performance as the measurable results that arise from the implementation of marketing strategies and activities by a firm. Marketing performance refers to the evaluation of marketing outcomes or outputs in relation to predetermined objectives. The notion of marketing performance is presently of utmost importance for organisations seeking success within the business milieu. According to Hashem (2019), the concept of marketing performance encompasses the attainment of goals, the preservation of consumer preferences, and the satisfaction of stakeholders. According to Morgan (2012), the assessment of marketing success holds significant importance for organisations and has been a prominent topic of scholarly discourse. The term "success" in this context encompasses both the level of achievement reached by an organisation during a certain timeframe, as well as the quantitative and qualitative indicators that gauge the extent of success achieved by an individual, group, or institution in relation to the intended goals of their endeavors' measurement of marketing performance has been a prominent topic in the field of marketing and continues to be a significant concern for a majority of firms (Morgan et al., 2019). The architecture of marketing performance encompasses multiple dimensions. In their study, Didia and Nwokah (2015) utilised various indicators to measure business performance, including sales growth, customer retention, return on investment, market share, acquisition of useful knowledge, ability to secure local resources, and staff motivation. In an additional endeavor to enhance the range of marketing performance measurements, other researchers have utilised several indicators such as Customer acquisition, brand equity, market share, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Harcourt & Ikegwuru, 2018; Gao, 2010). In this study, customer retention, customer acquisition, and customer commitment were utilised as indicators of marketing performance.

Customer Retention

According to Buttle and Maklan (2015), Customer retention is a marketing target aimed at preventing customers from transferring to other companies. The implementation of Customer retention strategies is crucial for enterprises operating in contemporary marketplaces characterized by increasing competition. These strategies encompass various characteristics, such as financial incentives, social advantages, and structural connections. According to Khan (2012), those who exhibit a willingness to pay a higher price for goods or services tend to possess a greater degree of brand consciousness and sensitivity towards prestige. Customer retention refers to the act of customers making multiple purchases of a particular product or service, therefore establishing a pattern of continued patronage over a prolonged duration. Customer retention refers to the strategic focus of organisations on retaining their existing customers in order to sustain ongoing commercial relationships with them (Danish et al., 2015). Customer retention refers to the sustained maintenance of the business association between a customer

and a company. In addition to fulfilling consumer expectations, customer retention includes the act of surpassing these expectations and cultivating a loyal base of brand advocates. According to Buttle and Maklan (2015), customer retention is a crucial strategy for enhancing market share and revenue. The objective of this endeavor is to exert an impact on customer behavior or alter customer attributes in a manner that fosters loyalty and cultivates a robust and enduring relationship with the organisation. According to Myer and Moira (2018), competitive enterprises engage in a perpetual pursuit of customer acquisition by presenting more advantageous offers. The primary objective of customer retention initiatives is to establish and maintain enduring relationships with customers who contribute significant value to the organisation. The primary objective of a customer development strategy is to enhance the value of existing customers to the company through techniques such as upselling, cross-selling, and promoting positive word-of-mouth and customer referrals. Conversely, a customer retention strategy aims to minimize the rate at which valuable customers defect from the company.

Customer Acquisition

Customer acquisition refers to the strategic process by which businesses obtain new consumers or convert potential customers into active ones (Juneja, 2021). Customer acquisition focuses on employing distinctive and accessible tactics to establish a novel connection with prospective Customers. Customer acquisition refers to the strategic process of effectively convincing prospective customers to make purchases of a company's products or services. Customer acquisition refers to the systematic approach employed by a firm to identify and attract new Customers for its products or services (Berndt et al., 2005). According to Ateke and Amanagla (2020), the concept of customer acquisition refers to the systematic approach of acquiring new consumers or converting potential prospects into actual customers. The term encompasses several strategies and approaches employed by businesses to both acquire new consumers and cultivate customer loyalty by addressing the concerns of dissatisfied customers. Frequently, this process entails a series of interrelated activities encompassing customer touchpoints, customer engagement, and customer conversion (Ateke & Amanagla, 2020). Lianos and Sloey (2016) discuss many strategies for Customer acquisition, which encompass telemarketing, referral marketing, collaboration with external entities to attract customers, online marketing, postal mail, bulk mail, and email. Customer acquisition refers to the process of obtaining new Customers for a firm. According to Afeche et al. (2012), the process of customer acquisition plays a crucial role in building market presence by recruiting new consumers and ultimately boosting a company's income. The assessment of the value Customers contribute to an organisation is often based on the cost of customer acquisition, as highlighted by Galetto (2015). The significance of Customer acquisition is contingent upon the particular circumstances of a certain organisation. Customer acquisition is a focal point that encompasses many considerations, including the attainment of consumers at a reduced expense, maximizing the quantity of customers, procuring customers that are local and possess a business-oriented mindset, and acquiring customers who engage with cutting-edge business channels (Juneja, 2021).

Customer Commitment

The concept of customer commitment refers to the dedication and loyalty of customers towards a certain brand or company. It encompasses the willingness of customers

Commitment can be regarded as a quantifiable indicator of the level of attachment that a customer has with a business, often stemming from their interactions and encounters with the firm (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Commitment can be defined as a long lasting and unwavering inclination to maintain a significant and meaningful connection. Demonstrating commitment to a service provider or brand entails cultivating a profound emotional connection to the brand and harboring the intention to sustain a long-term relationship with them. Commitment beyond the sheer act of sustaining a relationship and encompasses a genuine aspiration to foster its growth and advancement. The notion of commitment involves the establishment and evolution of relationships between participants engaged in a transaction, as well as their ongoing continuity. In order for relationships to possess long-term viability, commitment emerges as a crucial factor, exerting a substantial influence on the retention of customers. Based on the findings of Alkitbi et al. (2021), it has been established that the cost associated with retaining existing consumers is significantly lower compared to the expenses incurred in gaining new customers. Committed partners exhibit a willingness to allocate resources towards acquiring valuable assets that possess distinct qualities specific to their partnership, so showcasing their dedication to fulfilling essential responsibilities in the forthcoming endeavours. The buyer's anticipation of significant switching costs leads to a preference for maintaining a high-quality connection. The buyer's expectation of incurring significant expenditures when transferring from one product or service to another may lead to the development of commitment. It has been proposed by scholars that in order to assess customer commitment, researchers should conduct simultaneous evaluations of consumer behavior and attitude. These evaluations encompass attitude fidelity and behavioral fidelity. Behavioral fidelity, also known as purchase fidelity, pertains to customers' consistent and repetitive purchase behaviors towards specific brands. Attitude fidelity, on the other hand, relates to the level of commitment derived from the perception that a brand provides distinctive value (Grace, Ross, & King, 2020).

Brand Personality Improvement and Marketing Performance

Brand personality according to Nofle and Shaver (2006) as cited in Ogbuji *et al.*, (2016) is crucial to developing strong relationship with customers that results in their choosing to purchase from a company. This is because consumers are drawn to branded products with personality before, they buy them (Aaker et al 2004; Niro & Pollalis, 2014). Attor, Jibril, Amoah, and Chovancova, (2022) study examined the impact of the brand personality dimension on customer buying decisions in the telecoms sector. The result identified five main attributes of brand personality (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) as antecedents of customer buying decisions in the research model. The study concluded that an effective brand increases its brand equity by having a consistent set of traits that a specific consumer segment enjoys. Van Deventer (2021), investigate the influence of perceived brand personality dimensions on brand identification in a retail-banking context among the Generation Y banking market in South Africa. The results of the study indicated that Generation Y consumers view their chosen retail bank as successful, sophisticated, sincere, rugged, community driven and classic. Harcourt, Kayii, and Ikegwuru (2020), analyzed Brand Personality and Customer Loyalty of Beverage Firms in Rivers State of Nigeria. The findings revealed that brand excitement has a positive and significant relationship with customer service and customer retention: brand sophistication has a positive and significant relationship with customer service and customer retention. The study therefore, concludes that a significant and positive relationship exists between the dimensions of brand personality and measures of customer loyalty, and that brand

personality is positively influencing customer loyalty of beverages firms in Rivers State of Nigeria. Ogbuji, Onuoha and Oworchukwu (2016), aimed to identify if brand personality affects marketing performance. It was found that brand personality has a strong positive association with marketing performance of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. However, the following null hypotheses are stated:

H₀₁: There is no significant association between brand personality improvement and customer retention of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between brand personality improvement and customer acquisition of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between brand personality improvement and customer commitment of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted an explanatory design to ascertain the relationship between brand personality improvement and marketing performance. The population of the study consists of 27 food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State. All the elements in the population were studied and 108 respondents comprising procurement managers, logistics managers, sales managers, and the marketing managers provided primary data for this study through a questionnaire designed in Likert 5-point scale. The reliability of the study instrument was determined through Cronbach's alpha reliability test, and three null hypotheses were tested using Spearman rank order correlation coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26.0.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of Items	Alpha coefficients
Brand personality	3	0.802
Customer Retention	3	0.819
Customer Acquisition	3	0.822
Customer Commitment	3	0.807

Source: SPSS Output from Survey Research

The reliability analysis of the research instrument is shown in Table 1. As shown in the Table, all the variables in the study have high Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients that surpass the minimum acceptable level (0.70) set by Nunnally (1978). The implication is that, if this study is carried out again in a similar context the result will be similar to the results of this study.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 2: Brand personality and marketing performance

		Personality	Retention	Acquisition	Commitment
Personality	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.431**	.545**	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	92	92	92	92
Retention	Correlation Coefficient	.000	1.000	.000	.488**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.545**	.	.000	.000
	N	92	92	92	92
Acquisition	Correlation Coefficient		.000	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N	92	92	92	92
Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.540**	.607**	.488**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	92	92	92	92

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output from field data

The results of the spearman's rank order correlation analysis revealed in Table 2 that there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between brand personality and customer retention which is evident in the correlation coefficient of 0.431 and a probability value of 0.000 that is less than the critical value of 0.05 ($r = 0.431$, $N = 92$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). In view of this result, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between brand personality improvement and customer retention of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

There is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between brand personality and customer acquisition which is evident in the correlation coefficient of 0.545 and a probability value of 0.000 that is less than the critical value of 0.05 ($r = 0.545$, $N = 92$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). In view of this result, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between brand personality improvement and customer acquisition of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Again, there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between brand personality improvement and customer commitment which is evident in the correlation coefficient of 0.540 and a probability value of 0.000 that is less than the critical value of 0.05 ($r = 0.540$, $N = 92$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). In view of this result, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between brand personality improvement and customer commitment of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State. This implies that there is a significant relationship between brand personality improvement and customer retention, customer acquisition and customer commitment of food and beverage manufacturing companies in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show that brand personality improvement contributes to outcomes of marketing performance. Strong brand identity is viewed as one of a company's core components that help tailor a brand image in the minds of customers (Aaker 2004, Ghodeswar, 2008). Building a strong brand identity can help business gain advantages such as increased customer loyalty, reduced vulnerability towards competitors, higher profit margins, more favorable customer's response to price fluctuations (Keller, 2019). It is important to note that in order for a successful repositioning to take place there is a need to restructure the brand identity. Temporal (1999) noted that some of the companies choose to change their brand identity completely. The change may include not only creating a new logo, but also a new name, brand personality and structure. These measures are taken in order to solve the company's past problems that negatively impacted on the brand image and customer perceptions. Also, the present findings support the findings of Attor, Jibril, Amoah, and Chovancova, (2022) study examined the impact of the brand personality dimension on customer buying decisions in the telecoms sector. The study concluded that an effective brand increases its brand equity by having a consistent set of traits that a specific consumer segment enjoys. Companies that do not make their business look attractive will erode the competition. This stresses the use of consistency from business actors to improve personality of their products to be more competitive in the market. The study also aligns with the findings of Harcourt, Kayii, and Ikegwuru (2020) that brand excitement has a positive and significant relationship with customer service and customer retention: brand sophistication has a positive and significant relationship with customer service and customer retention.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In view of the findings of this study and the findings of previous studies examined, this study concluded that, the improvement of brand personality provides for enabling a more attractive and engaging identity of the organization through a reconfiguration of values and goals and that way, contributing positively toward outcomes of customer retention, customer acquisition and customer commitment of food and beverage firms in Rivers State. Therefore, it is recommended that, the management of the food and beverage firms improves the attractiveness of their personality and identity through the engagement in actions and practices that focus on the advancement of factors such as service quality and value to customers; thus, contributing towards enhancing the marketing performance of the food and beverage companies in Rivers State.

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