



INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL BRANDING ON CONSUMER BRAND PERCEPTION IN EAST AFRICAN BREWERIES LIMITED, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The main challenges that consumers face are the abundance of available information, which makes decision making much more complex, and the standardization of products that tend to be identical. Furthermore, one of the main challenges that consumers face is the abundance of available information, which makes the decision-making process much more complex, as well as the standardization of products that tend to be identical. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of emotional branding on consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The study unit of analysis was EABL distributors in Nairobi City County, Kenya, and the unit of observation was each distributor's registered customers. Using the stratified sampling technique, respondents were divided into 11 categories of EABL distributors within Nairobi City County. Following that, these respondents were chosen using a simple random sampling method. The study's sample size was 355 respondents. The study relied on primary data gathered through the use of questionnaires. To determine how variables influence one another, descriptive statistical analysis such as mean and standard deviation were used, as well as multiple regressions. Emotional branding, was found to have a positive and significant influence on consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya. The study concludes that emotional branding enabled the organization to develop, design and implement a branding strategy based on the specific positive emotions of its customers. The study recommended that the organization should identify its audience's emotional triggers by determining what its target audience is most likely to be excited about, and then incorporate that into each point of the sales funnel.

Keywords: Emotional branding, Consumer brand perception

INTRODUCTION

Brand perception aids in the development of marketing strategies because it is owned by consumers and thus aids in the development of customer relationships (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to Rooney (2015), organizations strive to create positive brand perception, which influences customers to prioritize the brand. As a result, Rooney (2015) observes that companies conduct surveys appropriate to their consumption life cycle to measure brand perception. As a result, when a consumer comes into contact with a brand name, his or her experiences interact with one another, culminating in perception.

According to Barbu, Ogarcă, and Barbu (2016), brand consolidation investment, like innovation and customer relationship management, is a long-term activity. For example, Kim, Moon, and Iacobucci (2019) observe that while customers from all over the world may purchase the brand, they may be divided into segments that differ in terms of liking and loyalty due to factors such as culture and local brand options. Furthermore, with the advent of social media, different customers can comment on and compare their brand evaluations with others residing in the same or different countries, global brand management has become increasingly complex.

According to Riaz, Ahmed, Akhter, and Hussain (2017), emotional branding and buying behavior are intertwined, and emotional branding plays a significant role in designing buying behavior, attracting, and retaining customers in Pakistan's soft drink industry. According to Holbrook (2018), rising competition in the Pakistan beverage industry, particularly in the fizzy drink category, has made it difficult for marketers to gain and keep customer loyalty. When planning and investing in promotional activities, they aim for a higher opportunity cost. As a result, it is recommended that the beverage industry develop unique practices and incorporate an emotional dimension into its integrated marketing communication strategy in order to establish personalized relationships with customers and differentiate brand identity from a plethora of competitors in the industry.

According to Christian and Sunday (2017), beer manufacturing firms in Port-Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria that want to stay ahead of the competition should develop a more effective advertising campaign program to increase consumer preference for their brand. Furthermore, Christian and Sunday (2017) point out that advertisements for beer brands should convey information about the advantages that the brand being advertised has over the competition. As a result, the advertisement should encourage group purchasing and the positive effects of such purchases, as well as depict a friendship situation.

Kenya has a thriving beer industry that produces high-quality beer that is recognized internationally. With so many product brands on the market, it's important to understand how marketing influences product and brand selection (Mwangulu, 2016). However, according to Otieno (2018), factors such as the cost of beer, the availability of cheaper alternatives, increased income, lifestyle, and personality all have a significant impact on the choice of beer products. To achieve this balance, it is prudent to ensure that any product fully meets the needs and desires of the consumer group.

According to Hsieh, Pan, and Setiono (2016), customer perception of brand value is related to brand loyalty. Customers form their perceptions of brand value based on their perceptions, and a particular brand has different values from different people's perspectives. As a result, when customers have a positive perception of a brand, they are more likely to trust it. According to Kapferer (2018), consumers may trust a brand if they are satisfied with its identity. Customer satisfaction is an emotional reaction to a buying opportunity. It can be concluded that when a purchase results in a positive reaction, brand trust is an immediate result.

According to Nigam (2016), marketing is one of the primary communication tools used by the industry for brand building. Consumer perceptions and attitudes toward marketing

communication efforts can influence brand equity perception and, as a result, purchase intention. Because brands provide companies with a competitive advantage, consumer brand perception management is critical to achieving such objectives. Consumer-based brand equity, according to Yoo and Donthu (2017), can be created, maintained, and increased by strengthening each of its various dimensions. As a result, it can be argued that marketing activities have a high potential to influence brand perception over time through careful marketing investments in the brand.

Emotional branding is the process of engaging consumers in a deep, long-term, intimate emotional connection with a brand that goes beyond benefit-based satisfaction and creates a special trust-based relationship for the development of a holistic emotional experience (Morrison & Crane, 2017). Lynch and De-Chernatony (2019) define emotional branding as "emotional content that creates and communicates brand values through the development of strong brand relationships." As a result, firms should focus on the emotional bonding between brands and consumers who live and store the brand experience as a relationship-building factor in branding strategy.

Brand perception is concerned with how the consumer perceives the brand. It is closely related to brand attitude, which reflects the consumer's brand evaluation and includes brand-related beliefs, reactions, and relationships (Olson & Mitchell, 2013). According to Romaniuk and Sharp (2015), brand perceptions can be influenced by a variety of factors such as consumer experiences, marketing communications, and/or word of mouth. They can include descriptive information, benefits, assessments of specific aspects of the brand, and/or purchase/consumption scenarios. Essentially, any information encountered with the brand name can become linked to the brand name in memory and thus become part of that brand's image if sufficiently processed.

Brand perception is linked to brand recognition, which refers to consumers' ability to recall and differentiate the brand under a variety of conditions (Wonglorsaichon & Sathainrapabayut, 2016). According to Wheeler (2017), a brand is all about perception, which means that a company will not be able to easily guide a potential customer to choose their brand. Wheeler (2017) also demonstrated that by focusing on strategy, a company can certainly influence how a person's personal brand is perceived and bring satisfaction. As a result, a successful brand must be able to provide greater value to customers while also distinguishing itself from competitors.

According to Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (2014), when brand perception is positive, consumers attribute higher quality to the product, and their perception of the product's value and overall willingness to purchase is higher. However, different customers may have different perceptions because they have different attitudes and expectations regarding brand satisfaction. Customer mind is more important than ever in determining brand perceptions, according to Goode, Dahl, and Moreau (2017). Taking this into account may alter the strength of the relationship between brand image and consumer satisfaction.

East African Breweries Limited, or EABL, is a Kenya-based holding company that produces branded alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. In 1922, two white settlers, George and Charles Hurst, established Kenya Breweries Limited as a private company. It became a public company in 1934 after acquiring Tanganyika Breweries in 1935, necessitating a name change to East African Breweries Limited in 1936. In 1959, it acquired a financial stake in Ugandan Breweries,

giving it a controlling stake in the East African brewing market. EABL is East Africa's leading branded alcohol beverage company, with a diverse portfolio of brands that includes beer, spirits, and adult non-alcoholic beverages.

While East African Breweries Limited (EABL, a subsidiary of Diageo) remains the dominant producer in Kenya, competition from small local brewers and imports of international brands such as Heineken and SABMiller has increased in recent years. Nonetheless, East African Breweries Limited still controls roughly 90% of the Kenyan beer market and is expanding into the rest of East Africa. The group's diversity is an important factor in delivering the highest quality brands to East African consumers and long-term value to East African investors, with breweries, distilleries, support industries, and a distribution network across the region.

East African Breweries Limited (EABL) is a regional beverage alcohol leader with a diverse portfolio of beer and spirits brands. The organization's business is concentrated in three core markets: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, but its products are sold in more than ten African countries and beyond. In today's retail environment, consumers are bombarded with a plethora of brands and products. This makes it difficult for these organizations to meet their customers' desires and wishes in a flexible manner. As a result, their marketing managers must employ emotional marketing strategies to improve their consumer brand perception.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's hypercompetitive marketplace, business brands across all industries recognize that only goods or services and their functions are insufficient to attract new target audiences or even maintain relationships with existing clients (Rytel, 2015). Companies, it is believed, should consider the emotional aspect of their products in order to stand out and differentiate themselves from competitors. Jalilvand, Samiei, and Mahdavinia (2018), on the other hand, observe that many organizations face challenges in managing consumer brand perception because market conditions are constantly changing.

According to Gobe (2015), understanding consumers' emotional needs and desires allows business brands to engage their clients on the level of emotions and senses, resulting in a stronger and longer-lasting connection and relationship with customers. According to Otieno (2018), EABL has a weak cost structure, which means that the company's costs are high in comparison to competitors; additionally, the threat of intense competition can lower EABL's profit because competitors can entice consumers with superior products. EABL also faces the threat of changing consumer tastes, so the company relies on understanding their customers' wants and needs. Furthermore, one of the main challenges that consumers face is the abundance of available information, which makes the decision-making process much more complex, as well as the standardization of products that are often identical. As a result, EABL should build strong and trusting relationships with their customers, as well as strong emotional bonds. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of emotional branding on consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

Gonul and Srinivasan created the brand equity theory in the year 1996. It asserts that marketers must create a brand in four steps. To begin, markets must understand how each consumer can identify the brand that best meets their needs, which is typically operationalized as awareness. As a result, once a brand is identified, the consumer develops a level of perception based on a product's performance and then forms judgments about quality. Third, consumers' cognitive and emotional attachment creates a sense of belonging, which leads to commitment and engagement, which leads to loyalty.

According to Erdem *et al.* (2016), a brand signal is the sum of a brand's past and present marketing activities. Imperfect and asymmetrical market information creates uncertainty in the minds of consumers. A credible brand signal adds value to the consumer by lowering perceived risk, lowering information search costs, and creating favorable attribute perceptions. Aaker (2017), on the other hand, observes that brand equity theory is essential for successful brand management and will inform this study by providing a thorough understanding of emotional branding from the perspective of the customer's product perception. Because emotion can be applied more directly in advertising, such as in a specific ad or campaign, the theory explains the emotional branding variable. Each emotional ad contributes to the emotional branding strategy. Emotional ads are like individual building blocks that contribute to the brand's structural integrity. East African Breweries Limited, Kenya will therefore create emotional advertisements in response to major events while also promoting their products or services.

Empirical Literature Review

Sonntag (2016) conducted research on the impact of emotional branding on brand loyalty in the skin care market, comparing the German and UK markets using Nivea and Dove as examples. Brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality, and brand personality were all used to assess emotional branding. The study relied on both primary and secondary research, as well as qualitative research methods. Secondary research entails the examination of written documents and other secondary data sources. According to the findings of the study, addressing the consumer's actual self rather than the ideal self is more important for developing emotional bonds and loyalty.

Nanda (2018) investigated emotional branding as a new way to connect with customers. Data was gathered from 105 students at Jammu's various colleges and universities (India). The exploratory nature of the study is based on primary data collected from students at various colleges and universities in the Jammu region. For the current study, 105 graduate and postgraduate students were interviewed using a convenient sampling method. All of the parameters used to measure emotional branding (brand trust, brand lifestyle, brand relationship, brand personality, and brand attitude) were found to be positively correlated with purchase intent.

Gregurec (2017) conducted research on the effect of emotional branding on consumers in Croatia's northern region. A descriptive quantitative survey was conducted on a sufficient sample, and the results were displayed collectively. Based on secondary data collected, a survey

questionnaire was developed to serve as a primary data collection instrument. According to the findings of the study, modern businesses recognize the importance of developing brands that excite consumers on all levels, with a recent emphasis on the emotional level.

Singla and Aggarwal (2016) investigated the impact of emotional branding on brand perceptions associated with logo color. A basic study involving a randomly selected homogeneous group of 45 MBA students was conducted to better understand the emotions associated with this color. Respondents were shown a block of red color and asked to associate at least five emotions with the color from a list of 20 emotions associated with various colors under investigation. This list was compiled after a thorough review of the literature on colors and the emotions they represent. According to the findings, the new Godrej logo was able to connect with more new generation consumers because it was found to be more acceptable and recognizable.

Aslam, Ham, and Farhat (2018) investigated the impact of emotional branding on consumer brand perception in online apparel shopping in their study. Five constructs were measured using a survey questionnaire: brand experience, brand image-congruence, brand affect, brand trust, and brand repurchase intention. The convenience sampling method was used to select the respondents. The responses were gathered using an online Google form and hard copies of the questionnaire distributed to respondents. Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviations, were used to analyze the data. According to the study, a better website structure that provides quick feedback, as well as a better design of branded apparel that takes into account the consumer's self-image, will eventually motivate the consumer to repurchase the brand online.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used in this study. The study unit of analysis was EABL distributors in Nairobi City County, Kenya, and the unit of observation was each distributor's registered customers. Using the stratified sampling technique, respondents were divided into 11 categories of EABL distributors within Nairobi City County. Following that, these respondents were chosen using a simple random sampling method. The study's sample size was 355 respondents. The study relied on primary data gathered through the use of questionnaires. To determine how variables influence one another, descriptive statistical analysis such as mean and standard deviation were used, as well as multiple regressions.

FINDINGS

The findings of the influence of emotional branding on consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Emotional branding**Table 4.5: Emotional Branding**

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (M)
Emotional branding strategy offers EABL what it needs to be different and stand out from the rest of its competitors	4.04	0.96
Brand attitudes are the predictor of the purchasing behaviour of consumers	4.09	0.91
Brand relationship helps the organization stand out in a saturated market	4.27	0.73
Customers with strong brand attachments influence other people around by making referrals	4.11	0.89
Service brands are characterized by the need to maintain a consistently high level of service delivery.	4.42	0.58
Aggregate Score	4.19	0.81

Source: Research Data (2022)

The results in Table 1 show that the respondents agreed that emotional branding influences consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya as shown by the aggregate score of 4.19 and standard deviation of 0.81. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Sonntag (2016) on the impact of emotional branding on brand loyalty in the skin care market: Using Nivea and Dove as examples, the study discovered that addressing the consumer's actual self rather than the ideal self is more important for building emotional bonds and loyalty.

The respondents agreed on the statement that service brands are characterized by the need to maintain a consistently high level of service delivery (M=4.42, SD=0.58). This was followed by the statements that brand relationship helps the organization stand out in a saturated market (M=4.27, SD=0.73), customers with strong brand attachments influence other people around by making referrals (M=4.11, SD=0.89), brand attitudes are the predictor of the purchasing behaviour of consumers (M=4.09, SD=0.91) and that emotional branding strategy offers EABL what it needs to be different and stand out from the rest of its competitors (M=4.04, SD=0.96).

These findings are consistent with Singla and Aggarwal's (2016) study, which investigated the effect of emotional branding on brand perceptions associated with logo color, and the findings were that the new Godrej logo was able to connect more with new generation consumers because it was found to be more acceptable and recognizable. The findings are also consistent with a study by Aslam, Ham, and Farhat (2018) that investigated the influence of emotional branding on consumer brand perception on online apparel shopping and discovered that a better website structure that provides quick feedback, as well as better design of the branded apparel in consideration of the consumer's self-image, will eventually motivate the consumer to repurchase the brand online.

Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Table 2: Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.431 ^a	.786	.779	.445	.186	26.138	1	343	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional branding

Source: Research Data (2022)

From the findings in Table 2 the value of adjusted r squared was 0.779 (77.9%) an indication that there was variation of 77.9% on consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya was due to changes in emotional branding at 95% confidence interval. Additionally, this therefore means that factors not studied in this research contribute 22.1% of consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya

Coefficient of Determination of the Variable

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination of the Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.787	.293		2.686	.000
	Emotional branding	.809	.022	.257	36.773	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand perception

Source: Research Data (2022)

As per the SPSS generated Table 4.3, the equation ($Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$) becomes: $Y = 0.787 + 0.809 X_1$

Where $Y =$ Consumer brand perception
 $X_1 =$ Emotional branding

According to the regression equation established, taking emotional branding variable into constant at zero, consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya would be 78.7%. The data findings analyzed also showed that emotional branding had a positive and significant effect on the consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya by t-values ($t=36.773$, $p < 0.05$). In addition, emotional branding was found to affect consumer brand perception in East African Breweries Limited, Kenya at 0.809(80.9%).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The study concludes that emotional branding enabled the organization to develop, design, and implement a branding strategy based on the specific positive emotions of its customers. Has provided the organization with what it requires to differentiate itself and stand out from its competitors. The organization is able to connect with its audience authentically and create a common, authentic, and unique mutual understanding, resulting in better, personalized, and targeted marketing campaigns.

The study recommended that the organization should identify its audience's emotional triggers by determining what its target audience is most likely to be excited about and then incorporating that into each point of the sales funnel. By creating an emotional connection between a potential customer and a brand, the organization can show its targeted customers that it recognizes their individuality, which can be accomplished through personalization.

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