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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# EFFECT OF BRANDING STRATEGY ON PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SUGAR MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN KENYA

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A B S T R A C T

Many organizations in the global market have realized that branding is an important initiative that they can put in place to ensure survival in the market. The sugar industry especially in Kenya has increasingly become saturated, attracting new and retaining old customers has not only become difficult but also costly in terms of marketing. The purpose of the study was to establish the effect of branding strategies namely, brand name and image on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Western Kenya. The target populations of the study were members of the four (Muhoroni, Nzoia, South Nyanza and Chemilil) public sugar manufacturing firms in Western Kenya. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the 12 managers while simple random sampling was used to select the 43 supervisors and 119 clerks. The data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics and the findings indicated that, Brand name and Image had a positive and significant influence on the performance of public sugar firms, it was recommended that the management of SMFs should invest more and ensure effective use of these branding attributes by putting more emphasis on use of branding strategies in order to enhance performance.



## INTRODUCTION

Many organizations in the global market have realized that branding is an important initiative that they can put in place to ensure survival in the market. Branding is an organized strategic marketing concept since the mid-$19^{th}$ century and continues to intensify in the retail market (Goldman, 2003). Branding thus, turns a generic product into an entity with a name and with attributes which can evoke feeling and which has distinct personality.

Branding has an ancient history which could be traced back to the times when the ancient Egypt brick makers used to stamp symbols on the bricks for identification and distinction purposes (Farghuhar 1990). Aaker (1991) observes that branding has a history that goes back to medieval Europe whereby, Craftsmen and artists used to put unique identity marks on their work. Customers could seek these marks as they associated them with quality. Branding in this era was associated with commerce. However, Aaker says that it was in the twentieth century that branding became central to competition. Kotler (2000) recognizes that in the latter part of the 20th century, the growth of competition forced companies to shift from the production and selling concept to the marketing concept which necessitates that companies be better than competitors in creating, delivering and communicating value to its target markets in order to win buyer preference. This led to the increase of brands and branding activities as companies were aggressively looking for mechanisms to emerge and stay on top of the competition 'game'. Kotler (2000) quotes the American Marketing Association definition of a brand as 'a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them intended to identify goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers'. The use of signs, symbols and artifacts would allow explaining the process of unfolding services, reducing time spent by customers and creating the feeling of effectiveness for customers. This implies that branding is not about getting your target market to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem.

Brands have become one of the most discussed phenomena of market research in recent years. An important part of brand is its image. It is the way a brand is perceived by the public, which is based on and closely linked with another important part of a brand and that is its identity. Brand identity reflects the company' attempts to develop a desired brand image. The process of developing a brand identity revolves around interacting with the target customers with the aim of achieving a lasting competitive advantage (Urde, 1999).

The cheap sugar imports under the COMESA protocol have significantly affected the sales performance of the local sugar. Thus, sales turnover have significantly remained below the production level in spite of the domestic sugar market being in permanent deficit. Local sugar manufacturing firms in Kenya for example, experienced closing sugar stocks estimated at 28,113.3 Metric tonnes per annum for the period

1996-2005, which according to Kenya Sugar Board, a national body mandated to manage sugar issues in the country, largely attributed to high pricing of domestic sugar against cheaper imports. The trend has persisted, thus the need to devise remedial measures that would sustain the domestic sugar industry in an imperfect market condition (Obange *et al*., 2011).

### *Objectives of Study*

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of branding strategy on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Kenya.

The specific objectives were to:

i) Examine the effect of brand name on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Kenya.
ii) Establish the effect of the brand image on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Kenya.

### *Research Hypotheses*

This paper focused on addressing the following two research hypotheses:

$H_{01}$: There is no significant effect of brand name on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Western Kenya.
$H_{02}$: There is no significant effect of brand image on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Western Kenya.

### *Conceptual Framework*

Based on the analysis of literature a hypothetical model for this study was constructed as shown in Figure 1.Branding strategies affect level of performance of sugar firms in Kenya. The relationship between Brand strategies and performance of sugar firms is affected by customer satisfaction. The dependent variable, the performance of the sugar manufacturing has the following indicators: profits, sales, market share and efficiency.

### *Literature Review*

### *Brand Name and Performance*

A good brand name can evoke feelings of trust, confidence, security, strength and many other desirable characteristics. Companies are finding that brand names are one of the most important assets they possess. Successful extensions of an existing brand can lead to associated profits (Peter *et al*., 2007).

Brands can be characterized as either being products, corporations, persons and places. This means that brands are multidimensional creations and should be coordinated at management level. Several characteristics of a good brand have been identified by several authors (Aaker, 2002); among other. These characteristics can be categorized into quality, positioning, brand name, repositioning, communications, first mover advantage, long-term perspective and internal marketing (Etzel *et al*., 2007).

According to Keller (1998), branding tactics is a concept that is tackled under brand management. Brand management is basically the application of marketing techniques to a specific product, product line, or brand with the aim of increasing the product's perceived value to the customer and thereby increasing brand equity. Kevin *et al*. (2006), suggests that brand name has led to concept of brand equity, the added value a given brand gives to a product beyond functional benefits provided. Brand equity provides competitive advantage to an organization thereby increasing its market share. Consumers are often willing to pay a higher price for a product with brand equity. The brand equity is presented by premium a consumer will pay for one brand over another on the functional benefits provided is identical. Manufacture brands are created by the producers. They are sometimes called national brands because the brand is promoted all across the country or in large regions.

Many manufacturer brands are now distributed globally, (Perrault, 2003). It's most common when the company is generally known and well regarded in the market place, (Linton, 2001). National brands not only identify products but also indicate a standard quality and price. They appeal to customers who want consistent quality, dependable product performance, status and who will not take risks with unknown goods and services. An individual brand is where separate brand names are chosen for each product. It's best used when it is important for the product to each have a separate identity as when the products vary in quality and type. If products are different, individual brand names can avoid confusion. Some firms use individual brand names for products to make segmentation and positioning efforts easier.

Private label brand names are owned and initiated by wholesalers and retailers. This usually involves associating the brand with the store that sells. The manufacturers name does not appear on the product. Private brands appeal to customers who want the quality and performance of national brands at a lower price. They are better controlled by retailers because they cannot be sold by competitors.

### *Brand Image and Performance*

Keller (1993) defines brand image as perception about a brand as reflected by the brand association held in customer's memory. These associations refer to any brand aspect within the consumer's memory (Aaker, 1996). Basically, brand image describes the consumer's thoughts and feelings towards the brand (Roy and Banerjee, 2007). In other words, brand image is the overall mental image that consumers have of a brand, and its uniqueness in comparison to the other brands (Faircloth, 2005). Brand image comprises a consumer's knowledge and beliefs about the brand's diverse products and its non-product attribute. Brand image represents the personal symbolism that consumers associate with the brand, which comprises of all the descriptive and evaluative brand-related information (Iversen and Hem, 2008). Brand image stems from all of customers consumption experiences and perceived services quality is a function of this consumption experiences hence customers perception about service quality directly affects brand image. The importance of brand in the market is influenced by company's ability to evaluate the fact how consumers interpret the image of brands and company's ability to manage the strategy of brand positioning, adequately revealing brand's equity to a consumer (Kotler, 2001). Brand associations consist of brand image, brand knowledge and brand awareness (Keller, 1998). He further says that brand associations include perceptions of brand quality and attitude towards the brand.

Brand image comprises a consumer's knowledge and beliefs about the brand's diverse products and its non-product attribute. When consumers have a favorable brand image, the brand's messages have a stronger influence in comparison to competitor brand messages (Hsieh and Li, 2008). Therefore, brand image is an important determinant of a buyer's behavior (Burmann *et al*., 2008). In the B2B market, brand image also plays an important role. This is especially so given that it is difficult to distinguish between products and services, based on their tangible attribute (Mudambi *et al*., 1997).

Brand image, is the totality of consumer perceptions about the brand, or how they see it, which may not coincide with the brand identity. Companies have to work hard on the consumer experience to make sure that what customers see and think is what they want them to, thus highlighting the notion of brand identity. A brand tries to establish a coherent perception of the company for its different stakeholders and reflects a good corporate reputation in the eyes of the general public (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Nevertheless, the single most important public of a brand is its end consumers, who are drowning in the overwhelming abundance of brands and brand communication. A favorable brand image would have a positive influence on consumer behavior towards the brand in terms of increasing loyalty, commanding a price premium and generating positive word-of mouth (Martenson, 2007).

Marketing studies argue that brand image is an important factor affecting brand equity (Villareji-Ramos and Sanchez-Franco, 2005). (Faircloth *et al*., 2001) also found that the more positive the brand image, the more consumers are willing to pay and thus the greater the brand equity. A brand image can be an association set and is usually organized in some meaningful way (Aaker, 1991). (Keller, 1993) has argued that if a brand's image is related to association (e.g. attribute and attitude), the brand's association gains, favorable strength and uniqueness in the mind of the consumer. A positive brand image is created by marketing programs that link powerful and unique associations to a consumer's memory of the brand (Keller, 1998). That is, brand image can create associations that elicit positive feelings and attitudes towards the brand (Porter and Claycomb, 1997). Besides, (Biel, 1992) has argued that brand association could also arise from corporate image, product image and user image. Most of the corporate association theory has been developed from corporate image (Power *et al*., 2008).

Brand image represent a set of association established within the minds of customers, implying a promise to them and represent what the brand currently stands for (Batra and Homer, 2004) the symbolic nature of brands have been recognized since 1950s marketers began to realize that the set of feelings, ideas and attitudes that consumers have about brands were crucial to purchase behavior. They found that brand consist of both objective and intrinsic attributes such as packages size and raw materials used and the intangible beliefs, feelings and association that congeal around them. Today brand image is a brand specific collection of product-brand and consumer related attributes (knowledge, feelings and attitudes towards the brand) that an individual hold in memory,(McGraw Hill, 2004).

The brand image typically consists of multiple concepts: perception, because the brand is perceived; cognition, because that brand is cognitively evaluated; and finally attitude, because consumers continuously after perceiving and evaluating what they perceive form attitudes about the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2002; Keller, 2003). Brand image is the pivotal point of the consumer-based approach.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey design was appropriate in this study since the data to be collected was both qualitative and quantitative. The target population for this research was drawn from the eight sugar firms in Western Kenya out of which four (4) public sugar manufacturing firms were used in the research namely: Nzoia, Muhoroni, South Nyanza and Chemilil sugar companies. The researcher intended to reach out to the 41 managers, four hundred and twenty seven (427) supervisors and 1194 clerical officers. The sample size was determined by use of Kombo and Tromp (2006) recommendation that a sample size of 10% to 30% is representative enough for the study population. Therefore, the sample size of employees was determined on the basis of 10% for supervisors and clerks and 30% for the managers which gave 43 supervisors and 119 clerical officers obtained through simple random sampling technique and 12 managers who were drawn from 41 managers through proportionate sampling. Questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. A five point likert scale with opinions ranging from 5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Not Sure, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree was used. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and explained using the mean and standard deviation. Regression analysis was used to determine and establish the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Brand name on performance*

The findings were interpreted by regarding responses with mean as close: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral (not sure), 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. The study findings are shown in Table 1. It shows that majority of the respondents were of moderate opinion regarding whether brand name assists them in handling their daily duties competently as indicated by mean of 2.60 when asked whether brand name provides them with aesthetic pleasure majority of the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 2.27. Similarly, majority of the respondents agreed when asked whether brand name influences brand loyalty, if brand name enhances brand association and acceptability as indicated by means of 1.99, 2.03 and 1.98 respectively. From the results its evident that majority of the respondents agree that brand name has an effect on the performance of Sugar manufacturing firms (Smfs).

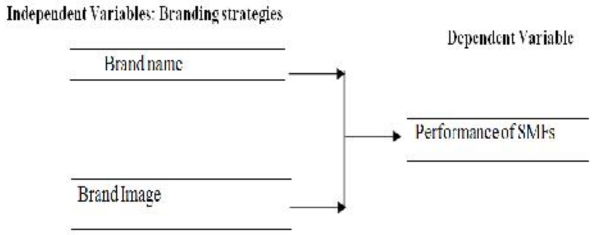


**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

This proposition was tested using multiple regression analysis where it was found that brand name had a positive coefficient which was significant in the model (β1= 0.057) in relation to performance of public SMFs. This was consistent with the findings of survey study conducted by Ahmad and Buttle (2001) who identified six economic benefits of retaining customers through a customer appreciating a given brand name and the position the brand holds in his mind, this may be by using loyalty cards as savings on customer's acquisition or replacement costs; guarantees of base profits as existing customers are likely to have a minimum spend per period; growth in per-customer revenue as over a period of time, existing customers are likely to earn more, have more varied needs and spend more; a reduction on relative operating costs as the firm can spread the cost over many more customers and over a long period of time; free of charge referrals of new customers from existing customers, which would otherwise be costly in terms of commissions or introductory fees and price premiums as existing customers do not usually wait for promotion or price reduction before deciding to purchase.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistical analysis of brand name on performance of public SMFs

| Brand Name | Strongly agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly disagree % | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assist me in handling my daily duties competently | 19.7 | 38.6 | 16.7 | 15.2 | 9.8 | 2.60 | 1.222 |
| Provides aesthetic pleasure to me | 15.9 | 49.2 | 25 | 6.1 | 3.8 | 2.27 | 0.900 |
| Influences brand loyalty | 32.6 | 48.5 | 10.6 | 5.3 | 3.0 | 1.99 | 0.852 |
| Enhances brand association | 27.3 | 50.8 | 17.4 | 3.8 | 0.8 | 2.03 | 0.791 |
| Enhances acceptability | 30.3 | 51.5 | 10.6 | 7.6 | 0 | 1.98 | 0.815 |

Source: Research data (2015)

**Table 2** Descriptive statistical analysis of the Brand Image on Performance of Public SMFs

| Brand Image | Strongly agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly disagree % | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Impacts positively on organization performance | 19.7 | 38.6 | 16.7 | 15.2 | 9.8 | 1.81 | 0.830 |
| Improved customer perception | 18.9 | 46.2 | 23.5 | 7.6 | 3.8 | 1.86 | 0.836 |
| Has enhanced appearance and improved sales | 31.1 | 49.2 | 9.8 | 4.5 | 5.3 | 2.04 | 0.868 |
| Has improved communication | 24.2 | 40.2 | 20.3 | 12.9 | 2.3 | 2.30 | 0.955 |

Source: Research data (2015)

### *Brand Image on performance*

The study investigated the extent to which brand image affects performance as shown in the table 2 which shows the study findings. From the study findings majority of the respondents agreed that brand image impacts positively on their organization performance (1.81), brand image has improved their customer perception (1.86), it has equally enhanced appearance and improved sales (2.04) and that brand image has improved communication (2.30).From the results its evident that majority of the respondents agree that brand image has an effect on the performance of SMFs with enhancing appearance and improving sales ranking high.

### *Multiple Regression Statistics*

A regression analysis was carried out with performance of sugar manufacturing firms as the dependent variable and predictor variables being brand name and brand image. The findings from table 3 shows that the adjusted R squared value is 0.205 implying that 20.5% variation in sugar firms performance is explained by brand name and brand image.

**Table 3** Model Summary Involving All the Variables

**Model Summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .453[a] | .205 | .193 | 2.47433 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), BI, BN

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Name, Brand Image,
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of SMFs
R Squared was positive (0.205) in this study.

**Table 4** Coefficients of Regression Equation

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients B | Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.841 | .857 | | 4.485 | .000 |
| | BN | .078 | .081 | .089 | .969 | .334 |
| | BI | .432 | .098 | .402 | 4.389 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: BPE

Source: Research data(2015)

The results from multiple regression ($\beta_2$=0.197) indicated that there was a positive and significant effect between brand image and performance of public sugar manufacturing firms. These results are in line with the findings by Mburu (2001) who undertook research on the impact of perceived quality of brand choice in the soft drinks industry (private sector). The study concluded that branding aims at creating an image in the mind of consumers about a product by tapping into their emotions and this influences purchase or rejection of a good. Corresponding to the issues above, several scholars have suggested that those brands that express image may generate more loyalty consumers (Bennett &Rundle-Thiele, 2005; Nandan, 2005). Empirical supports have confirmed that image does influence satisfaction, which in turn led to loyalty in the context of retailing (Bloemer and Ruyter(1998). However, the impact of image on satisfaction required a more complete validation, since some contradictory results can be observed in image literature (Palacio, Meneses, & Perez, 2002).

***Hypotheses Testing***

$H_{01}$: There is no significant effect on the relationship between brand name and performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Western Kenya.Since the significance level of the brand name using t-test p = 0.000, it shows therefore it has a positive and significant association on performance of SMFs at p<0.005. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis ($H0_1$) on the basis of the sample data.

$H_{02}$: There is no significant effect on the relationship between brand image and performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Western Kenya.Since the significance level of the brand image t-test p = 0.000, therefore it has a positive and significant association on performance of SMFs at p<0.005. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis ($H0_2$) on the basis of the sample data.

## CONCLUSIONS

Many organizations in the global market have realized that branding is an important initiative that they can put in place to ensure survival in the market. The sugar industry especially in Kenya has increasingly become saturated, attracting new and retaining old customers has not only become difficult but also costly in terms of marketing. This study had two objectives to achieve: to assess the effect of brand name and brand image on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in western Kenya. The study found out that the independent variables Brand Name and Brand image had positive and significant influence on the performance of public sugar firms at 95% interval confidence level. The strength and significance of the correlation displayed showed that the two variables were lowly related as shown by Brand Name($\beta_1$=-0.057,p<0.000) and Brand Image ($\beta_1$=-0.197,p<0.000 respectively. It was therefore concluded that brand image was the most preferred among the two attributes of branding though these branding attributes were not effectively used. The study recommended that the management of SMFs should be sensitized on the role that branding plays in the global economy and the management of Sugar Manufacturing Firms should invest more and ensure effective use of these branding attributes by putting more emphasis on use of branding strategies in order to enhance performance.

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