FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF MAIZE FLOUR BRANDS BY CONSUMERS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY KENYA

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ABSTRACT *Consumer behaviour is the focus on the processes a consumer uses to make purchase decisions, as well as to use and dispose of purchased goods or services. Understanding consumer behaviour is one of the largest challenges a business can face. The maize milling sector in Kenya is very competitive, mainly because of its low entry barriers leading to price as the only competing factor. With turnover and earnings driven primarily by market share and capacity utilization, the major determinant of success among its players is organic growth and cost leadership. The success of each individual company is dependent on its ability to gain market share and this has made the industry players to go through various lengths to increase capacity and to manage their costs. This study sought to determine the factors that influence the choice of maize flour brands by consumers in Nairobi, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research method. The population of the study comprised of 80 retail customers receiving services in four selected supermarket in Nairobi. The selected supermarkets were Nakumatt, Uchumi, Tuskys and Naivas. The study used questionnaires, which were given to customers buying flour in the supermarkets to fill. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics whereby frequencies and percentages, generated from the various data categories were computed and presented in graphs, pie charts, and tables. The study found that various factors such as price, perceived quality, the level of income, and the social cultural aspects influence the choice of maize flour brands by consumers in Nairobi. Thus, this study recommends that disparities resulting from the difference in their purchasing power should be utilized properly by the maize millers by producing brands that suit different classes in the society.*

Key words: consumer behaviour, perceived Quality, brand image

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour is the focus on the processes a consumer uses to make purchase decisions, as well as to use and dispose of purchased goods or services; also includes factors that influence purchase decisions and the product use. Understanding consumer behaviour is one of the largest challenges a business can face. According to Kotler (2003), consumer buying behaviour is the purchasing behaviour of people and households who buy goods and services for personal consumption and there are many factors that influence the process of purchasing decision. Key factors that influence consumer buying behaviour include culture, values, social class, individual influences and psychographics. Factors outside the business environment will often play an important role in the success of an organisation's marketing plan. While the business has no direct control over these factors, it is essential that the business has a strong understanding of how such factors can influence the buying behaviour of its customers. The four key factors influencing consumer choice are psychological, socio-cultural, economic and government.

The flour milling industry in Kenya comprises of two levels of private players i.e. the small and large scale players with no government owned milling firm. Majority of the large milling firms are confined to the major Kenyan towns and the current market allows for free entry and exit by various milling firms in to the market. Shortages of the raw material coupled with surging maize prices at the world market are adversely affecting the operations of flour milling industry. With turnover and earnings driven primarily by market share and capacity utilization, the major determinant of success among its players is organic growth and cost leadership. Key players in the industry include Unga Limited (Jogoo and Hostess brands), Capwell Industries (Soko and Pendana brands), Mombasa Maize Millers (Ndovu, Taifa and Dola Brands), Pembe Group Limited (Pembe brand) and Premier Flour Mills Group Limited (Jambo and Ugali brands).

The level of competition that exists within the industry is high. The success of each individual company is hinged on its ability to gain market share and this has made the industry players to go through various lengths to increase capacity and to manage their costs. This has encouraged the players in the industry to adopt strategic management in their system. However the companies have not fully utilized their potential of meeting the needs of the market due to the misalignment between strategy formulation and implementation. Some of the challenges that the milling companies might face include competing activities that distract attention from implementing the decision, changes in responsibilities of key employees not clearly defined, key formulators of the strategic decision not playing an active role in implementation, problems requiring top management involvement not communicated early enough, advocates and supporters of the strategic decision leaving the organization during implementation and taking more time than originally allocated (Al-Ghamdi, 1998).

Maize is the key food crop in Kenya, constituting 3% of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 12% of the agricultural GDP and 21% of the total value of primary agricultural commodities (Government of Kenya, 2008).

Various studies in Kenya have been conducted with regard to the factors that influence consumer behaviour. In a bid to

shed greater light on the factors that influence consumer compliance behaviour, Wanjau (2001) did a study on the influence of brand personality on consumer's choice: the case of malt based non-alcoholic drinks in Nairobi, Kenya. Wanjau (2001) identified age, occupation, income, economic factors; lifestyle and self-concept were discovered as being major influences on consumer behaviour in relation to the study. Wasonga (2003) also did a study on the factors affecting consumer perception of Kenyan manufactured fast moving consumer goods in the East African Community. However, the importance of relationships differs significantly between the flour milling industry and the other industries and this has not yet been addressed. In this light, there is need to establish, whether social factors, economic factors and market factors influence consumer purchase behaviour in purchase of maize flour brands in Nairobi, Kenya. This study aimed at determining what factors influence the choice of maize flour brands by consumers in Nairobi, Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of this study was the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Black Box model.

Maslow's theory focuses on needs satisfaction, and strongly that needs greatly influence consumer behaviour. He believed that people possess a set of motivation systems unrelated to rewards or unconscious desires. Maslow (1943) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfil the next one, and so on. The earliest and most widespread version of Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. This five-stage model can be divided into basic (or deficiency) needs (e.g. physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization). The basic needs are said to motivate people when they are met. One must satisfy lower level basic needs before progressing on to meet higher-level growth needs.

On the other hand, the stimulus-response model (or the black box model) is a model of buyer behaviour which shows how stimuli, consumer characteristics, decision processes and consumer responses interact. The stimuli can be distinguished between interpersonal stimuli (between people) or intrapersonal stimuli (within people) (Sandhusen, 2000, pp. 218-219). The model is related to the black box theory of behaviourism, where the focus is the relationship between the stimuli and consumer responses. The buyer's black box contains the buyer's characteristics and the decision process, which determines the buyer's response. Marketing and other stimuli enter the customer's "black box" and produce certain responses. The buyer's characteristics influence how s/he perceives the stimuli; the decision making process determines what buying behaviour is undertaken. Key factor is in understanding buyer behaviour is to focus on the factors that determine the buyer's characteristics in the black box model. The aim of this paper is to understand the influences of the factors that were measured in a survey on purchasing behaviour.

Determinants of Consumer Choice

Customers have increasingly become price conscious and dealers with competitive prices tend to attract more customers. The price a company sets for a product or service has a very significant effect on how the consumer behaves. Price is one of the non-product attribute of brand associations where it can be

an important association in the formation of brand perceptions, particularly with regard to value and desirability and is a criterion by which consumer often segment their knowledge of a market or category. Price is undoubtedly one of the most important market variables (Bauer, Klieger & Koper, 2004). It becomes apparent from the literature that there are numerous ways of price framing which is defined as how the offered price is communicated to the consumer (Briesch, Krishna, Lehman & Yuan, 2002). Framing the same information in different ways can have a great impact on consumer decision making and choice behaviour. Blair and Landon (1981) found that consumer estimates of the advertiser's regular price are higher for ads with a reference price than for ads without one. Reference price can be defined as a concept of an internal standard against which observed prices are compared (Kalyanaram & Winer, 1995). This effect can subsequently cause a heightened interest in the advertised offer by increasing consumer estimates of the product savings offered by the advertiser. In a study on the effects of promotion framing on price expectations and choice DelVecchio, Krishnan, and Smith (2007) found that frame affects consumers´ perceptions of the promoted price and the weight they place on the promoted price.

Another factor that influences consumer buyer behaviour is income. The types and quantity of goods bought differ depending on the wage earned by the consumer. John B. Taylor (2001) explains that, a decrease in income shifts purchasing behaviour from buying normal goods to inferior goods. Consumer economic situation has great influence on his/her buying behaviour. The smaller the consumer's family size or dependents, the higher the income and savings of such consumer, this will in turn influence the consumer to favour products

that are more expensive. On the other hand, a person with low income and savings will purchase inexpensive products (Shah, 2010). Myers, Stanton, and Haug, (1971) also provided support for the predictive power of economic factors such as income, family size and consumer budget over other social factors in explaining expenditure patterns for low-priced goods. They concluded that economic factors are a major determinant of buying behaviour and can be used to predict the type of clothes consumer is likely to buy.

A third factor is perceived quality. In Kenyan markets, customers look for product quality and features that will satisfy their needs. The extensive literature and emphasis on actual quality seems to have conspired against what we describe as the neglected frontier of quality: an outside-in perspective driven through the customer-centric perception of quality by intrinsically dealing with the voice of the customer. The customers' perception element of quality has its own distinct definition and form of measurement. It carries subjectivity and is the level of perceived value reported by the customer who benefits from a process or its outcome. Indeed, the belief that high perceived quality leads to repeated purchases is the foundation of any business. Generating high quality requires an understanding of what quality means to customer segments, as well as a supportive culture and a quality improvement process that will enable the organization to deliver quality products and services.

Perceived quality may differ from actual quality for a variety of reasons. First, consumers may be overly influenced by a previous image of poor quality. Because of this, they may not believe new claims, or they may not be willing to take the time to verify them. Thus it is critical to protect a brand from gaining a reputation for shoddy quality

from which recovery is difficult and sometimes impossible (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1996). Second, a company may be achieving quality on a dimension that consumers do not consider important. There is a need to make sure that investments in quality occur in areas that will resonate with customers. Third, consumers rarely have all the information necessary to make a rational and objective judgment on quality and even if they do have the information, they may lack the time and motivation to process it. As a result, they rely on the influencing perceived quality where understanding and managing these cues properly are key. Thus, it is important to understand the little things that consumers use as the basis for making a judgment of quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1996). Brand Image is another factor. Mooij, (1998) stated that brand image is characterized by a noticeable name or symbol which can differentiate the goods and services from the rivals' (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1998). In addition to a specific brand name, a brand is also composed of products, packaging, promotion, advertising, as well as its overall presentation (Murphy, 1998). From the consumers" perspective, brand is a guarantor of reliability and qualifying consumer products (Roman et al., 2005). Added to this, consumers would like to buy and use brand-name products with a view to highlight their personality in different situational contexts (Aaker, 1999; Fennis and Pruyn, 2006). When deciding which products to purchase, consumers would have their preferences, which are developed in accordance with their perceptions towards the brand. Successful branding could make consumers aware of the presence of the brand and hence could increase the chance of buying the company's products and services (Doyle, 1999).

Finally, we have Socio-Cultural Factors. Culture is part of the external influences that impact the consumer. Culture is defined as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other habits acquired by one person as a member of the society (Kileba, 2001). Culture is the complex of values, ideas, attitudes and other meaningful symbols that allows humans to communicate, interpret and evaluate as members of society (Blackwell et al, 2001). Another factor is social class, which is constituted of other variables: occupation, income, education, and wealth (Blackwell et al., 2001).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research method. Creswell (2008), states that the descriptive method of research gathers information about the present existing condition. The researchers attempted to describe and define a subject, often by creating a profile of group of problems (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

The target population for this study comprised of consumers of maize flour brands in Nairobi i.e. retail customers receiving services in four selected supermarket in Nairobi. The selected supermarkets were, Nakumatt, Uchumi, Tuskys and Naivas. These supermarkets are within the central business district and they handle large volumes of diverse products and retail customers on a daily basis. Based on findings from these branches the researcher was able to draw conclusions about the entire population of customers.

Due to the nature of the population, convenience sampling was used to get the respondents. According to Kothari (2004), the population frame becomes the pool of individuals in the sample source, which may

not include all segments in the target population or only have a few members of certain segments, depending on how the sample source is built. In this case sample quotas, weighting schemes and mixed mode data collection methods are often used in an effort to reach representativeness. A total of 20 respondents were thus selected from each of the four supermarkets

A questionnaire was used to collect the primary data. The researcher involved three research assistances to help in distribution of the questionnaires to the targeted respondents.

Qualitative data was analyzed based on the content matter of the responses. Responses with common themes or patterns were grouped together into coherent categories. Descriptive statistics involved the use of absolute and relative (percentages) frequencies, measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean and standard deviation respectively). Quantitative data was presented in tables and graphs while the explanation to the same was presented in prose.

STUDY FINDINGS

The research was conducted on sample size of 80 respondents out of which 70 respondents completed and returned the questionnaires duly filled making a response rate of 87.5%. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) highlighted that a response rate of 50% and above is viable for statistical reporting.

This study categorized the respondents in the various supermarkets under study in terms of gender. The study showed that the majority (60%) of the consumers who went to the Naivas, Nakumatt, Uchumi, and Tuskys supermarkets were female, whereas 40% were males. This shows that most of the consumers who responded were females.

In this study, the respondents were grouped in terms of their ages as shown in the table below:

Table 1 Age of the Respondents

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 18 years	5	7
18-25 years	11	15
26-35years	15	21
36-45 years	21	30
46-55 years	11	15
Over 55 years	7	12
Total	**70**	**100**

As per the findings, majority (30%) of the respondents who went to the supermarkets to buy maize flour were in the age bracket of 36-45 years. Additionally, 21% of the respondents were aged between 26-35 years. Cumulatively, 43% of the respondents were aged below 35 years. Only 12% were aged above 55 years

The respondents were asked to indicate their income level. The findings are shown in the Table 2

Table 2: Level of Income of the Respondents

Level of income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Over 50,000	21	30
31000-50000	28	40
16000-30000	10	14
5000-15000	7	10
Below 5000	4	6
Total	**70**	**100**

From the findings, 70% of the consumers had a monthly income of above 31,000, while 16% earned less than 15,000. This is an indication that most of the consumers buying from these supermarkets had a relatively good income. The low income earners perhaps do not visit the supermarkets in town as they buy small quantities in the estates

The study requested the respondents to give the information about the area they came from and the results were shown in the Table 3

Table 3: Residential Area of the Respondents

Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Eastlands	15	22
Westlands	10	14
Southlands	18	25
Other regions	27	39
Total	**70**	**100**

From the findings, (39%) most of the consumers who bought the maize flour brands in the supermarkets come from other regions other than the ones included in this study. The respondents from Eastlands and Southlands contributed 22% and 25% respectively of the

consumers who bought maize flour brands at the supermarkets under this study respectively while 14% of the respondents came from Westlands. This was a clear indication that most consumers from other regions do their shopping for maize flour brands in the supermarkets.

In this study, the respondents were also requested to give their marital status to determine the relationship between the marital status and the choice of maize flour in the various supermarkets under the study. The study shows that the majority (70%) of the consumers who went to the Naivas, Nakumatt, Uchumi, and Tuskys supermarkets were married, whereas 30% of the consumers were single. This shows that most of the consumers who respondend were married.

Factors Influencing the Choice of Maize Flour Brands

The study sought to show the level of extent to which various factors covered in this study influenced the choice of maize flour brands in the four different supermarkets of choice. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement of the choice of maize flour in relation to those factors. The results are shown in Table 4

Table 4: factors influencing consumer behaviour

The Influence of Price on the Brand Choice	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
The types and quantity of goods bought differ depending on the wage earned by the consumer	*3.46*	*0.312*
A change in price could produce unexpected results when it comes to consumer buying behaviour	*3.65*	*0.245*
Consumer economic situation has great influence on his/her buying behaviour	*3.89*	*0.236*
Price set for a product or service has a very significant effect on how the consumer behaves.	*3.98*	*0.143*
Customers have increasingly become price conscious and dealers with competitive prices tend to attract more customers	*4.50*	*0.165*
The Influence of consumer income on Brand Image	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Consumer economic situation has great influence on his/her buying behaviour	3.34	0.331

Person with low income and savings will purchase inexpensive products	3.40	0.121
The smaller the consumer's family size or dependents, the higher the income and savings of such consumer, this will in turn influence the consumer to favour more expensive products	3.65	0.265
A decrease in income shifts purchasing behaviour from buying normal goods to inferior goods	3.98	0.223
The types and quantity of goods bought differ depending on the wage earned by the consumer.	4.12	0.347
The Influence of perceived quality on Brand Image	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Company may be achieving quality on a dimension that consumers do not consider important	3.00	0.326
High perceived quality leads to repeated purchases	3.20	0.127
Customers look for product quality and features that will satisfy their needs	3.62	0.342
When deciding which products to purchase, consumers would have their preferences, which are developed in accordance with their perceptions towards the brand	3.78	0.187
Perceived product quality is perhaps one of the most important constructs in marketing	3.89	0.256
The Influence of Brand image	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Brand image influences influence your choice of maize flour brands to a very great extent	3.75	0.393
Brand is a guarantor of reliability and qualifying consumer products	3.57	0.217
Consumers would like to buy and use brand-name products with a view to highlight their personality in different situational contexts	3.00	0.313
Consumers' emotions are one of the major determinants which affect their buying behaviour	3.10	0.287
Successful branding could make consumers aware of the presence of the brand and hence could increase the chance of buying the company's products and services	3.83	0.250

The Influence of socio cultural factors on brand choice	Mean	Standard Deviation
Culture influences influence your choice of maize flour brands to a very great extent	2.30	0.300
Culture is the primary reason behind a person's wants and behaviour	2.55	0.164
There is a powerful and consistent influence of culture at both ethnicity level and the individual level influences choice of maize flour brands	3.10	0.143
Self-identity and normative influences choice of maize flour brands	3.50	0.232

As far as the price is concerned, the findings showed customers have increasingly become price conscious and dealers with competitive prices tend to attract more customers (mean=4.12). This was followed by the price set for a product or service has a very significant effect on how the consumer behaves (mean=3.98). A change in price could produce unexpected results when it comes to consumer buying behaviour (mean=3.65). This portrays that majority of the respondents agreed that the price influenced the on choice of maize flour brands as all the mean scores are above 3.5 on a maximum score of 5

Income was also found to influence the choice criteria. The respondents agreed that the types and quantity of goods bought differ depending on the wage earned by the consumer (mean=4.12). This was followed by a decrease in income shifts purchasing behaviour from buying normal goods to inferior goods (mean=3.98). The smaller the consumer's family size or dependents, the higher the income and savings of such consumer, this will in turn influence the consumer to favour more expensive products (mean=3.65). This shows that majority of the

respondents agreed that the level of income influence on choice of maize flour brands.

From the findings, majority of the respondents agreed that the socio-cultural factors had moderate influence their choice of maize flour brands.

From the findings, the respondents agreed that successful branding could make consumers aware of the presence of the brand and hence could increase the chance of buying the company's products and services (mean=3.83). Perceived brand image influences influence your choice of maize flour brands to a very great extent (mean=3.75). Besides, brand is a guarantor of reliability and qualifying consumer products (mean=3.57). This shows that majority of the respondents agreed the perceived brand image influenced their choice of maize flour brands.

From the findings, the respondents agreed that the perceived product quality is perhaps one of the most important constructs in marketing (mean=3.89). When deciding which products to purchase, consumers would have their preferences, which are developed in accordance with their perceptions towards the

brand (mean=3.78). Moreover, customers look for product quality and features that will satisfy their needs (mean=3.62).

On the other hand, the respondents in this study were directed to indicate the extent to which perceived price influenced their choice of maize flour brands and the findings were presented in the Table 5:

Table 5 Extent to which various factors influence consumer choice

The Level Influence of Price on the Brand Choice	Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Very low extent	4	6
	Low extent	6	9
	Moderate extent	7	10
	Great extent	21	30
	Very great extent	32	45
	Total	**70**	**100**
The Extent Influence of Income Level on the Brand Choice	Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Very low extent	4	5
	Low extent	6	9
	Moderate extent	11	16
	Great extent	28	40
	Very great extent	21	30
	Total	**70**	**100**
The Extent Influence of the Perceived Quality on the Brand Choice	Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Very low extent	5	7
	Low extent	5	7
	Moderate extent	25	36

	Extent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Great extent	21	30
	Very great extent	14	20
	Total	**70**	**100**
The Extent Influence of the Brand Image on the Brand Choice			
	Extent	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
	Very low extent	7	10
	Low extent	18	26
	Moderate extent	21	30
	Great extent	14	20
	Very great extent	10	14
	Total	**70**	**100**
The Extent of Influence of the Socio-Cultural Factors on the Brand Choice			
	Extent	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
	Very low extent	14	20
	Low extent	25	36
	Moderate extent	21	30
	Great extent	7	10
	Very great extent	3	4
	Total	**70**	**100**

From the findings majority (45%) of the respondents at a very great extent agreed that the perceived price influenced their choice of maize flour brands. This was followed by 30% of the respondents who to a great extent agreed that the perceived price influenced their choice of maize flour brands. This was an indication that majority of the respondents agreed that the perceived price influenced their choice of maize flour brands.

From the findings, majority (36%) of the respondents at a low extent agreed that the socio-cultural factors influenced their choice of maize flour brands. Additionally, at a moderate extent, 30% of the respondents agreed that the socio-cultural factors influenced their choice of maize flour brands. This implied that majority of the respondents agreed that the socio-cultural factors

moderately influenced their choice of maize flour brands.

From the findings, majority (40%) of the respondents at great extent agreed that the level of income of the respondents influenced choice of maize flour brands. This was followed by 30% of the respondents who to a very great extent who agreed that the level of income of the respondents influenced choice of maize flour brands. In this study, the respondents were asked to indicate whether level of income influences their choice of maize flour brands. From the findings majority (75%) of the respondents indicated that level of income influences their choice of maize flour brands, while 25% showed that the level of income did not affect the choice of the maize flour brands. The results dictate that the level of income is a strong determinant of the choice of the maize flour brand.

From the findings, majority (36%) of the respondents at moderate extent agreed that the perceived quality influenced choice of the respondents on maize flour brands. This was followed by 30% of the respondents who to great extent agreed that the perceived quality influenced choice of the respondents on maize flour brands.

From the findings, majority (30%) of the respondents at moderate extent agreed that the brand image influenced their choice of maize flour brands. 26% of the respondents who to low extent agreed that the brand image influenced their choice of maize flour brands. This was followed by the 20% of the respondents at great extent and 14% to a very great extent who agreed that brand image influenced their choice of maize flour brands. This indicated that most of the respondents were of the opinion that the brand image influenced their choice of maize flour brands.

Discussion

The study found out choice of maize flour brands by consumers in Nairobi, Kenya varied greatly. Various factors were found to influence the choice of maize flour brands by consumers as analyzed under this study have an efficient risk management approach that can handle the risks.

The price of the maize flour brands was found to influence the choice of the maize flour brands. The majority of the respondents indicated that the price of the maize flour brands affected the choice of the maize flour brands; this implied that that the price of the maize flour is a strong determinant of the choice of the maize flour brand. The customers have increasingly become price conscious and dealers with competitive prices tend to attract more customers. The price set for a product or service has a very significant effect on how the consumer behaves. Moreover, a change in price could produce unexpected results when it comes to consumer buying behaviour. Most of the respondents at a very great extent agreed that the price influenced their choice of maize flour brands.

This portrays that price influenced the on choice of maize flour brands in the various supermarkets under this study. Therefore, the price a company sets for a product or service has a very significant effect on how the consumer behaves. Price is one of the non-product attribute of brand associations where it can be an important associations in the formation of brand perceptions, particularly with regard to value and desirability and is a criterion by which consumer often segment their knowledge of a market or category.

The level of income influences the choice of maize flour brands as indicated by the results of this study. It is clear that the types and

quantity of goods bought differ depending on the wage earned by the consumer. The smaller the consumer's family size or dependents, the higher the income and savings of such consumer, this will in turn influence the consumer to favour products that are more expensive. Moreover, people with low income and savings will purchase inexpensive products. Thus, the level of income influence on choice of maize flour brands. Myers, Stanton, and Haug (1971) also provided support for the predictive power of economic factors such as income, family size, and consumer budget over other social factors in explaining expenditure patterns for low-priced goods. They concluded that economic factors are a major determinant of buying behaviour.

In relation to the perceived quality, the study ascertained that perceived quality as a factor of consumer behaviour influenced choice of the consumers on the choice of maize flour brands the perceived product quality is perhaps one of the most important constructs in marketing. When deciding which products to purchase, consumers would have their preferences, which are developed in accordance with their perceptions towards the brand. Moreover, customers look for product quality and features that will satisfy their needs. On the other hand, high perceived quality leads to repeat purchases and a company may be achieving quality on a dimension that consumers do not consider important. Thus, it is important for the companies to understand the little things that consumers use as the basis for making a judgment of quality.

The study also found brand image as a factor that influenced the consumer behaviour on the choice of maize flour brand. Successful branding could make consumers aware of the presence of the brand and hence could increase the chance of buying the company's products and services. Brand is a guarantor of reliability and qualifying consumer products. At a neutral extent, consumers' emotions are one of the major determinants, which affect and the consumers would like to buy and use brand-name products with a view to highlight their personality in different situational contexts. When deciding which products to purchase, consumers would have their preferences, which are developed in accordance with their perceptions towards the brand. Therefore, successful branding could make consumers aware of the presence of the brand and hence could increase the chance of buying the company's products and services.

This study determined that socio-cultural factors played a moderately significant role in influencing the consumer behaviours. Self-identity and normative influenced choice of maize flour brands. In addition, there was a powerful and consistent influence of culture at both ethnicity levels, the individual level influenced choice of maize flour brands, and culture was the primary reason behind a person's wants and behaviour. Although, different societal groups have their own culture that affects consumers buying behaviour, the extent to which it influences the behaviour might vary from country to country. Each cultural group can be divided into groups consisting of people with common life experiences and situations, also known as subcultures.

Implications of the study

This study has clearly brought out the need for manufacturers to always consider the varius factors that influence the choice of various brands. These include brand image,

socio-cultural factors,perceived quality, price changes, inclome of the consumer and perceived quality . it is important for firms to be concious of these factors and to co sider the possible response by the custormer as they develop and launch various brands. This study provides a link beween industry and the research in that the findings generated here can be used by the manufacturing firms to improve in their operatiions. The study provides data that is very useful in enabling manufacturers of maize flour to enhance customer satisfaction

Recommendations

Based on information provided by the consumers of various maize brands from different supermarkets, it was clear that consumer behaviour is an issue that the maize millers should consider greatly. However, the execution parts faces some challenges as most of the corporations fail in gathering detailed information about every aspect of the consumer behaviour when releasing their brands to the market.

This study therefore recommends that even though cultural factors have moderate impact, for a brand, it is important to understand and take into account the cultural factors inherent to each market or to each situation in order to adapt its product and its marketing strategy. As these will play a role in the perception, habits, behaviour, or expectations of consumers. Additionally, people from different social classes tend to have different desires and consumption patterns. Thus, disparities resulting from the difference in their purchasing power, should be utilized properly by the maize millers be adapting to making the various brands of the same product to suit different classes in the society.

Suggestion for Further Study

Since the study is among a few on consumer behaviour conducted in Nairobi, it is essential that scholars and professionals in the fast changing business sector take on the topic with much depth. Further research on factors influencing the consumer behaviours would provide extensive knowledge on the topic creating a better understanding and a firm foundation for better execution by corporations to enhance competitively in the current world markets.

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