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BOTTLE TO BRAND: EXPLORING HOW EFFECTIVE BRANDING ENERGIZED STAR LAGER BEER'S PERFORMANCE IN A FIERCE MARKET

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the significant influence of effective brand management on the success of products in the market. The study examines the aspects of brand management that affect consumer loyalty and market acceptance using the beer Star Lager as a case study. Data were gathered using a descriptive research design and questionnaires given to 200 respondents in the Surulere neighbourhood of Lagos, Nigeria. The study's findings highlight how brand attributes like taste, cost, television ads, and sales promotions influence consumer acceptance and loyalty. The study refutes presumptions regarding the impact of promotional products on consumer spending. It is concluded that maintaining market leadership and fostering competitive advantage depends on a strategic approach to brand management. The paper provides some recommendations for manufacturers, including a focus on key brand components, consistency in essential brand elements, and a preference for product development and customer satisfaction

Keywords: Brand Management, Product Performance, Customer Loyalty, Competitive Advantage, Consumer Satisfaction, Strategic Marketing, Promotional Strategies, Brand Consistency.

INTRODUCTION

In a competitive market like Nigeria, the success of any product or business hinges on its ability to stand out amidst rivals. This necessitates establishing a potent brand image, a tool pivotal in fostering customer allegiance. Consequently, the principles of Brand Management have emerged as a critical determinant of product performance within the marketplace. Beyond being confined to the marketing domain, Brand Management's significance extends to the apex of corporate leadership, with CEOs shouldering the mantle of brand leadership (Özturan & Grinstein, 2022). The foundation of effective Brand Management is rooted in a comprehensive grasp of the terms "Brand" and "Branding." Corporate leaders are responsible for elucidating the brand's essence and steering its management (Hanna & Rowley, 2013). This directive permeates through all tiers of the organization, particularly individuals interfacing directly with customers.

A brand is a product's origin marker, enabling consumers to attribute accountability to a specific manufacturer or distributor (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2020). The perception of an identical product can diverge markedly based on its branding. Consumer preferences gravitate towards brands, indicating that brand penetration or market share merely represents a statistical likelihood of repeat purchases (Pacho, 2023; Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper, 2020).

This study endeavors to address these questions comprehensively. Branding encompasses the strategic deployment of nomenclature, symbols, and their amalgamation to differentiate a product from its rivals. A brand is a distinct identifier for a product, service, or concept, facilitating communication and marketing. An efficacious brand strategy furnishes a substantial competitive edge, conveying a predetermined expectation to the customer. An optimal brand name is legally safeguarded and facile to articulate, remember, recognize, and find visually appealing. It should suggest product benefits and stand out amidst its contemporaries. Gaining the support of the organization and collaborators in brand development, assessing market prospects, outlining the brand as a compelling customer experience, ensuring consistency through customer relationship marketing, gauging performance and brand value, and harnessing intellectual property for supplementary revenue are pivotal steps in brand management (Barba, 2022; Deineka, 2023).

This study seeks to scrutinize the journey of a branded product from the collective assemblage and discern how adept brand management translates into customer loyalty and competitive supremacy. By examining the case of Star Lager beer by Nigeria Breweries Plc, we aim to decipher the mechanisms employed over the years that have propelled it to a position of dominance within the Nigerian Beverage Market. Additionally, we intend to pinpoint market competitors and illuminate how branding has fortified Star Lager Beer's market acceptance.

Branding's trajectory has evolved across centuries, culminating in its prominence as a linchpin of global best practices during the era of tangible goods. This transition transpired as producers recognized the imperative of conferring identity upon their creations. Guided by this framework, our study is poised to address the ensuing issues manifest in brand management, as evidenced by the triumph of Star Lager beer: Why do certain producers neglect product purpose and target audience in naming their offerings, despite counsel from brand management experts? Instances include products like the 1990s children's drink named "Buzz." Why do certain producers dismiss brand name development, management, and sustenance as wasteful in terms of time and resources?; Why do some manufacturers underestimate the nexus between effective brand management and customer loyalty and preferences, as seen in various small-scale producers in urban locales?

The marketing domain contends that many manufacturers remain oblivious to the pivotal role of effective brand management in a product's viability, a stance exemplified by the case of Star Lager beer. These predicaments persist in the world because their remedies are existent. Thus, this research endeavors to proffer solutions to specific challenges within alcoholic beverage branding. It seeks to address the following research questions:

(i) Why does a more significant segment of consumers prefer Star Lager Beer?

(ii) What factors do consumers contemplate when selecting a beer?

(iii) Do consumers perceive that the management of the Star Lager beer brand influences their loyalty?

(iv) Among the array of brand management tools, which does the consumer perceive as the most instrumental in the rise of Star Lager Beer?

The hypotheses formulated for this study are as follows:

- **H_0** - The success of Star Lager Beer in the market is not significantly impacted by brand management elements such as TV adverts, radio jingles, sponsorships, promotions, product positioning, pricing, and taste.

  H_1 - Branding significantly contributes to the success of Star Lager Beer in the market.
- **H_0** - Brand management does not wield influence over customer loyalty.

  H_1 - Brand management significantly affects customer loyalty.

Nigerian Breweries Plc (NBPLC), established in 1946, is the pioneer brewery in Nigeria. Its journey commenced with production operations in 1949, following its incorporation. The company's inception resulted from a collaborative effort between the United African Company (UAC) International, UK, and Heineken of Holland, constituting a 100 percent foreign ownership structure. In the early 1950s, as it commenced full operations, indigenous traders already involved with its products were invited to join as shareholders (Adesunloro, Udeh, & Abiahu, 2019; Okolo, 2019).

The company's trajectory underwent a significant transformation in the 1970s due to the indigenization policy. This policy mandated foreign shareholders to divest a substantial portion of their holdings. As a result, NBPLC's ownership structure evolved to comprise 60 percent Nigerian ownership, held by company employees and the public, and 40 percent foreign ownership, with CWA Holdings Limited (for Unilever) and Heineken Brouwerijen BV sharing the foreign stake (Ruben & de Steenhuijse Piters).

NBPLC's first beer, STAR Lager, debuted in June 1949, marking a pivotal milestone in the history of the company (Agbowo, 2018). Subsequent years saw the establishment of additional breweries by the company, including Aba Brewery in 1957, Kaduna Brewery in 1963, and Ibadan Brewery in 1982. In 1993, NBPLC expanded further by acquiring a fifth brewery in Enugu state, followed by the inauguration of its sixth brewery in Ama, Enugu, in 2003 (Eneh, Ghasi, Onyejiaku, Ohanagorom, & Isijola). Ama Brewery, distinguished as one of Nigeria's largest and most modern breweries, solidified the company's position in the market. The Enugu brewery ceased operations in 2004, leaving NBPLC with five operational breweries (Akinyoade, Ekumankama, & Uche, 2016). The company boasts a diverse portfolio of high-quality brands, with notable offerings including STAR Lager Beer (launched in 1949), Gulder Lager Beer (1970), Maltina (1976) with its variants - Maltina Classic, Maltina Strawberry, and Maltina with Pineapple, Maltina Sip-it (2005) packaged in Tetrapaks, Legend Extra Stout (1992), and Amstel Malta (1994). Additionally, the company re-introduced Heineken Lager to the Nigerian market in June 1998.

Noteworthy achievements characterize NBPLC's standing in the Nigerian business landscape. It holds the distinction of being the most capitalized company listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) and stands as the first entity, across all sectors, to declare N12 billion in Profit Before Tax (PBT). Furthermore, it achieved a historic milestone by declaring a dividend of N8 billion, a feat heralded in Nigerian history (Ekhayemhe, 2017).

Apart from its core operations, NB PLC operates a network of related companies encompassing those involved in the manufacture of beverage-related items such as corks, labels, bottles, and packing crates. This expansive network also extends to logistics, encompassing transport companies, warehousing entities, and retail sales management. In 1949, STAR Lager Beer was introduced to the Nigerian market, marking a pioneering stride in locally brewed beer within a landscape previously dominated by imported brands. Overcoming initial challenges in a market accustomed to foreign beer, STAR embarked on a trajectory of remarkable growth. In the 1960s to 1990s, STAR achieved market leadership, evidenced by sales figures of approximately 2,191,376 crates in 1962 and a substantial rise to 11,266,000 crates by 1975. This iconic brand played a pivotal role in shaping the indigenous Nigerian beer industry, paving the way for other successful brands such as Gulder, Maltina, Heineken, and Legend Extra Stout.

The 2000s witnessed a significant escalation in STAR's sales, with figures reaching approximately 40 million crates in 2003 (Akinyoade et al., 2016). In 2007, this growth surged to over 49 million crates, solidifying STAR's position as a premier West African beer brand. This success prompted an innovative move in 2007 when STAR became the first Nigerian beer packaged in cans. This transition opened new avenues for consumption, and within the first year alone, over 1.5 million trays were sold. This pioneering move further exemplified STAR's commitment to delivering its consumers a unique and vibrant experience. In 2009, STAR celebrated 60 years of "Sharing Brightness" in the Nigerian market. As part of this commemoration, the brand transformed, sporting a modern identity and packaging that resonated with its distinctive character. This rejuvenation reaffirmed STAR's enduring relevance and standing as a frontrunner in the years ahead.

This study holds significance in illuminating the essence of Brand Management for brand and general managers within the alcoholic beverage industry. This research inspires the cultivation of enduring brands by underscoring the role of brand management and advocating adherence to its principles despite intense competition or economic fluctuations. A brand's failure can precipitate business collapse, impacting livelihoods, engendering societal repercussions, and negatively affecting the economy and national reputation. A robust brand management strategy ensures a brand's triumph even amidst ferocious rivalry, translating to favorable returns on investment, business expansion, and organizational development. Ultimately, this fosters contentment among stakeholders and uplifts the economy, as exemplified by the trajectory of Star Lager and Nigeria Breweries Plc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Management in Marketing: A Brief Historical Overview

The concept of brands in the field of marketing has its roots in the nineteenth century, coinciding with the emergence of packaged goods. Around the turn of the twentieth century, James Walter Thompson published an early advertisement discussing trademark advertising, a precursor to what we now understand as 'branding.' During this period, companies began incorporating slogans, mascots, and jingles, which were disseminated through radio and early television broadcasts.

By the 1940s, manufacturers, such as those associated with Mildred Pierce, recognized that customers were forming profound social, psychological, and anthropological relationships with their brands. This realization prompted manufacturers to associate various brand values, including youthfulness, fun, and luxury, with their products. Thus, the practice of branding emerged, whereby customers began to buy into the brand itself rather than just the product it represented. This trend reached its zenith during the 1980s in what can be referred to as the 'brand equity mania.' A notable instance of this phenomenon occurred in 1988 when Phillip Morris purchased Kraft for six times its paper value. Interestingly, it is widely believed that this acquisition was driven by Phillip Morris' desire to acquire the Kraft brand rather than the company and its products as a whole (Davis, 2017; Heding et al., 2020; Nah, Eschenbrenner, & DeWester, 2011; Rajaram & Shelly, 2012).

Evolution of the Brand Concept

To provide context for our study, this literature review segment traces the evolution of the brand concept from its etymological origins to its contemporary application in brand management, with a specific focus on Star Lager Beer.

Brand Etymology

The term 'brand,' along with words in various modern languages such as 'burn' and 'brandy' in English, 'brennen' in German, and equivalents in numerous European languages rooted in the therm- prefix, all trace their ancestry to the notions of warmth, heat, burning, and the like, descending from an Indo-European root.

In Old English, the noun 'brand' was first documented in the epic poem 'Beowulf' (circa 1000), where it signified 'destruction by fire' (Alexander, 2017). Over the centuries, 'brand' assumed figurative and transferred meanings, denoting 'a person saved from imminent danger,' 'the torches of Cupid and Furies,' and 'Jove's or God's or Phoebus' brand.' Moreover, it has been figuratively applied since the 16th century to stigmatize individuals (as a mark of disgrace or infamy) and, in the sense of 'firebrand,' since the 17th century.

The notion of marking people or animals by burning identifying marks on them represents an ancient practice. While hot-iron branding for livestock and cauterization of wounds was described as 'brands' from the mid-17th century, the modern sense of 'brand' concerning business began to take shape in the 19th century. During this period, brands started to be figuratively extended to encompass trademarks and logos. Brands were imprinted on various goods, including wine casks and timber, although textile fabrics remained an exception (Cantor, 2019).

Definition of Brand

Matlovičová (2008) defined a brand as "the aura of belief and expectations about a product (or service) which makes it relevant and distinctive." This aura transcends the purely psychological realm and wields significant influence. According to Davcik, Vinhas da Silva, and Hair (2015), a brand is more than just a name; it is an entity that identifies and represents a product. It comprises an image in the minds of consumers that reflects their thoughts and feelings about a product and its perceived value. Brand image constitutes a mental construct that mirrors how consumers perceive the brand (Lee, James, & Kim, 2014). It encompasses all identification elements, the product's personality, and the emotions it elicits in consumers' minds. Product personality, for instance, relates to the idea that a product can embody human characteristics like friendliness and trustworthiness. A brand also promises value, establishing an expectation level among consumers (Bryan Hayes, Alford, Silver, & York, 2006).

Keller and Lehmann (2006) explain that while firms initiate brand creation through marketing initiatives and other activities, a brand ultimately resides in consumers' minds. A brand is an enduring entity rooted in reality but shaped by consumers' perceptions and idiosyncrasies. Branding is the process of imbuing products and services with the power of a brand, which entails creating distinctions. To brand a product effectively, it is imperative to impart information about "who" the product is by giving it a name and utilizing other brand elements for identification. Additionally, branding involves communicating "what" the product does and "why" consumers should care. It entails creating mental structures that assist consumers in organizing their knowledge about products and services, thereby facilitating their decision-making process and delivering value to the firm.

Brand Equity

Brand equity refers to the added value bestowed upon products and services. This value is reflected in how consumers think, feel, and act concerning the brand and the prices, market share, and profitability commanded by the brand for the firm. Brand equity constitutes a significant intangible asset with both psychological and financial value for the firm. It measures the total worth of the brand to the brand owner and reflects the extent of brand franchise (Haudi et al., 2022).

Brand recognition is vital to brand equity, referring to identifying a brand without the company name. "DNA" is a term borrowed from biology, denoting a brand's unique attributes, essence, purpose, profile, and, by extension, a company. In business, this concept aligns with the idea of a brand's unique characteristics that set it apart (Vuong & Bui, 2023).

Brand Architecture: Understanding Organizational Brand Structure

Brand architecture refers to the organizational arrangement of brands within an entity. It delineates how brands within a company's portfolio are interconnected and set apart from one another. This framework outlines the organization's branding hierarchy, the symbiotic relationship between the corporate brand and sub-brands, and how these sub-brands mirror or fortify the fundamental essence of the overarching corporate brand to which they belong. Rajagopal and Rajagopal (2019) define brand architecture as a comprehensive process of establishing brand relationships amid various branding options within the competitive landscape. Past management decisions and the market's competitive dynamics significantly shape an organization's brand architecture (Balmer, 2006).

The constellation of brands owned by a company is interlinked through brand architecture. Under the umbrella of "product brand architecture," the company supports an array of distinct product brands, each bearing its own identity and expression. In contrast, the company itself remains concealed from consumers. Nigerian Breweries serves as an illustrative case, boasting an array of unrelated consumer brands such as Star, Gulder, Maltina, Amstel, and Heineken.

In contrast, "endorsed brand architecture" involves a parent brand affiliated with product brands. An instance of this can be seen in The Courtyard Hotels, a product brand associated with the mother brand Marriott. Endorsed brands gain from the established reputation of their parent brand, effectively streamlining marketing efforts and costs by capitalizing on promoting all linked brands whenever the mother brand is promoted.

Types of Brand Architecture

Three distinct levels of branding prevail (Rossiter, 2014):

1. Corporate Brand, Umbrella Brand, and Family Brand: Examples encompass Guinness Group and Heinz. These brands are consumer-facing and encompass all the firm's endeavors. They are recognized by all stakeholders, including consumers, employees, shareholders, partners, and suppliers. Corporate brands may integrate with product descriptions or sub-brands, as in Guinness Stout and Guinness Malta (Lubin, 2022).
2. Endorsed Brands and Sub-Brands: Examples include Nestle KitKat, Cadbury Dairy Milk, Sony PlayStation, or Polo by Ralph Lauren. These brands involve a parent, corporate, umbrella, or family brand endorsing a sub-brand or specific product brand. This endorsement enhances the credibility of the sub-brand in consumers' eyes (Martin & Stephens, 2019).
3. Individual Product Brand: Examples encompass Procter & Gamble's Pampers, Unilever's Dove, or Nigerian Breweries' Star Beer. These brands are presented directly to consumers; the parent company's name assumes a secondary role. Other stakeholders, like shareholders and partners, are more acquainted with the producer's company name (Brown, 2016).

The Brand Value Chain

Keller and Lehmann (2006) introduce the brand value chain as a systematic approach to assessing the origins and outcomes of brand equity, coupled with how marketing activities generate brand value. The brand value chain revolves around several fundamental pledges.

This journey commences when a company invests in marketing initiatives aimed at existing or potential customers. Any marketing investment that contributes to brand value development, whether intentional or incidental, falls within this category. The primary contributors are marketing programs encompassing product research, development, design, trade support, intermediary support, and marketing communications.

These marketing activities influence customers' perceptions of the brand. The key question is how customers have changed due to these marketing endeavors. These collective perceptions across a brand's customer base subsequently translate into outcomes for the brand's market performance. This manifests as the cumulative effect of individual customer actions – their purchasing behaviors, price considerations, and more. Ultimately, the investment community assesses market performance and other factors to determine shareholder value, including brand value (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Building Brand Equity

Kotler and Keller (2012) assert that marketers cultivate brand equity by constructing the appropriate structures of brand knowledge within the right consumer segments. This process hinges on all brand-related interactions, whether initiated by marketers or not.

From a marketing management perspective, three core sets of brand drivers emerge (Kapoor & Kulshrestha, 2014; Keller, 2015; Muhumud & Dang, 2012; Singh, 2021; Ugur, 2013):

1. Initial Brand Element Selection: This pertains to the choice of brand elements – brand names, URLs, logos, symbols, characters, spokespeople, slogans, jingles, packages, and signage.
2. Product, Service, and Marketing Activities: This includes the product or service, ancillary marketing activities, and supporting marketing programs.
3. Indirectly Transferred Associations: This links the brand to other entities, such as people, places, or objects, to indirectly convey specific attributes.

Strong Brand Attributes

The world's most robust brands share ten key attributes (Aaker, 2012; Keller, 2000; Keller, Apéria, & Georgson, 2008; Kotler, 2003):

1. Excellence in delivering desired consumer benefits.
2. Relevance to current market trends and conditions.
3. Strategy anchored in consumer perceptions of value.
4. Proper positioning in relation to competitors.
5. Consistency across marketing messages.
6. A coherent brand portfolio and hierarchy.
7. Utilization of a full range of marketing activities to build equity.
8. A deep understanding of the brand's meaning to consumers.
9. Consistent and sustained support.
10. Vigilant monitoring of sources of brand equity.

These attributes collectively contribute to the potency of a brand and its ability to resonate with consumers and stakeholders.

Marketing Advantages of Strong Brands: An Analysis

Strong brands offer a multitude of advantages, as outlined by (Kotler, 2003):

a) Improved Perception of Product Performance: Strong brands evoke a sense of reliability and quality in consumers' minds, enhancing their perception of the product's performance.
b) Greater Loyalty: Strong brands foster a sense of loyalty among consumers, leading to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth advocacy.
c) Less Vulnerability to Competitive Actions: Robust brands are less susceptible to the influence of competitive maneuvers due to their established market position and customer loyalty.
d) Less Vulnerability to Marketing Crisis: Strong brands are more resilient during marketing crises, as their loyal consumer base protects against adverse events.
e) Larger Margins: Brands with a strong reputation can command premium pricing, enabling companies to enjoy larger profit margins.

f) More Inelastic Consumer Response to Price Increase: Consumers are less likely to react negatively to price increases for solid brands, allowing for pricing flexibility.
g) More Elastic Consumer Response to Price Decrease: Strong brands can stimulate higher demand with price reductions.
h) Greater Trade Cooperation: Distributors and retailers are more inclined to collaborate with solid brands due to their popularity and reliability.
i) Increased Marketing Communication Effectiveness: Marketing efforts are more effective for strong brands, as consumers are already receptive to the brand's message.
j) Possible Licensing Opportunities: Strong brands may create opportunities for licensing agreements, expanding their reach to new product categories.
k) Additional Brand Extension Opportunities: Strong brands can more easily venture into new product lines or segments, leveraging their established reputation.

Brand Loyalty: A Closer Look

In the realm of marketing, brand loyalty refers to a consumer's commitment to repeatedly purchase or use a particular brand. This loyalty is demonstrated through consistent buying behavior or other favorable actions, such as endorsing the brand through word of mouth.

However, brand loyalty goes beyond mere repurchasing (Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat, & Aslam, 2011). While customers may repurchase a brand due to factors like convenience or limited alternatives, true brand loyalty is marked by a strong positive attitude toward the brand, driving consistent repurchase behavior. For instance, customers loyal to a brand may choose it even when alternatives are cheaper or of better quality.

Brand loyalty programs, like Pepsi Stuff, highlight the significance of brand loyalty. Contemporary examples, such as the dedication of Mac users to Apple products, underscore the impact of brand loyalty on profitability and market presence (Ferguson & Brohaugh, 2008).

Factors Influencing Brand Loyalty

Several factors influence brand loyalty (Itani, Kassar, & Loureiro, 2019; Kim, Kim, Holland, & Townsend, 2021; Servera-Francés & Piqueras-Tomás, 2019):

- Perceived Value: Customers' perceived value of the brand's offerings and experiences.
- Brand Trust: Consumers' trust in the brand's reliability and quality.
- Customer Satisfaction: The degree to which customers are content with their interactions and experiences with the brand.
- Repeat Purchase Behavior: The frequency of repeat purchases of the brand's products or services.
- Commitment: The extent of customers' emotional and psychological attachment to the brand.

Studies suggest that enhancing customer loyalty can significantly impact profitability, with long-term customers displaying reduced sensitivity to price increases.

Brand Orientation: A Strategic Approach

Brand orientation denotes a deliberate approach to handling brands both internally and externally. This strategy has gained prominence due to the intensifying global competition, which demands lasting competitive tools like brands. Brand orientation signifies an organization's emphasis on building brand capabilities and aligning practices to enhance brand value (Reid, Luxton, & Mavondo, 2005).

Competitive Marketing Environment

The marketing environment encompasses external forces that influence an organization's activities. Factors such as political, economic, social, technological, and competitive elements impact an organization's operations and strategies. Nigerian Breweries Plc operates within a competitive marketing environment, where it contends with various external forces that shape its business landscape.

Nigerian Breweries faces competition primarily from Guinness Nigeria Limited, with its "Harp" brand. While Guinness Nigeria Limited operates various brewing units across Nigeria, including Agbara, Benin, Aba, and Ikeja, Nigerian Breweries maintains an edge due to its extensive brand loyalty and over six decades of brewing experience. Its widespread branch network and market reach further contribute to its competitive advantage (Abosede & Luqman, 2014).

Marketing Strategy for Star Lager Beer: A Comprehensive Approach

Nigerian Breweries employs an effective marketing strategy for its Star Lager beer, comprising market segmentation, targeting, and positioning.

Segmentation: Nigerian Breweries serves a diverse consumer base across various age and social groups, thanks to its product's affordability and appeal. The company enhances its market sales by crafting advertisements and sponsorships that resonate with all segments.

Targeting: Nigerian Breweries tailors its products to distinct market segments through a differentiated targeting strategy. Star beer targets the youth, while Gulder caters to an older and more sophisticated demographic.

Positioning: Star and Gulder, Nigerian Breweries' primary beer brands, are positioned to align with their respective target audiences. Star appeals to the younger generation, portraying itself as a drink for enjoyment and celebration, while Gulder targets an older, discerning audience (Ikon & Okolie-Osemene, 2017).

Brand Management Skill for Star Lager: Ensuring Sustained Success

Nigerian Breweries employs a skilful approach to brand management for Star Lager beer, leveraging the marketing mix principles:

Price: The affordability of Star beer is maintained by using locally sourced ingredients, which ensures profitability and satisfies a wide range of consumers.

Product: Star Lager beer is at the core of Nigerian Breweries' product portfolio, continuously adapting to consumer preferences and promoting itself through consistent advertising.

Place: Nigerian Breweries ensures Star beer's availability and visibility through an extensive distribution network, making it accessible across Nigeria.

Promotion: Star Beer benefits from extensive promotion efforts, including advertising, public relations, sponsorships, and lotteries. Notably, the "Star Trek" music carnival targets the youth, bolstering brand engagement.

In conclusion, Nigerian Breweries successfully leverages marketing strategies and brand management skills to uphold Star Lager beer's market position and prominence. Continuous adaptation and innovation further solidify its competitive advantage in the brewing industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods and procedures adopted for the study.

Research Design

The research design employed for this study was the descriptive research design. This design was deemed appropriate as it facilitated the collection of data with the aim of interpreting prevailing phenomena, attitudes, and opinions held by the respondents.

Population

The study's population consisted of both male and female individuals selected from the Surulere area of Lagos.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of 200 individuals was selected from the population in the designated geographical area using a simple random sampling technique. The probability sampling approach was executed with the utilization of a sampling frame comprising numbers 01 to 200. By employing a statistical table of random numbers, the desired sample size of 120 was selected.

Instrumentation

The primary data collection instrument employed was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, denoted as Section A and Section B. Section A gathered demographic information from the respondents, including details such as age, gender, and class. Section B was designed to elicit responses regarding the impact of brand management on customers' loyalty. Response options were presented as "Agree" or "Disagree," along with narrative questions for further insights.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the questionnaire's validity and reliability, it underwent face and content validation. Additionally, the instrument's reliability was assessed using the test-retest method, whereby data collected were subjected to coefficient correlation testing.

Method of Data Collection

After incorporating the necessary revisions from the validation process, the final version of the questionnaire was prepared. This final draft was then administered to the targeted respondents. Filled and completed questionnaire forms were collected promptly to prevent any loss of data.

Data Analysis

The collected data were systematically tabulated and subjected to rigorous statistical analysis. To present the demographic information of the respondents, simple percentages were utilized. Respondents' responses and hypothesis testing were analyzed using the chi-square analysis technique.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Analysis

The study was designed to examine the impact of effective branding and brand management on product performance in a competitive market using the Star Larger beer as a case study.

The following data presented in the tables were obtained from the study through the distribution of questionnaires. A total of 200 feedback forms (questionnaires) were distributed, and 120 were returned completed. The descriptive statistics of frequency and simple percentages were used to analyze the data from respondents.

Table 1: Sex

Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	87	72.5%
Female	33	27.5%
Total	120	100%

Table 1 shows that our respondents comprised 87 males, which represents 72.5% of the respondents, with 33 females representing 27.5% of the respondents. This implies that we had more males than females in the study; we can conclude that more males prefer Star Larger beer than females.

Table 2: Age Bracket

Age Bracket	**20-30**	**31-45yrs**	**Above 45**	**No Response**	**Total**
Frequency	18	57	36	9	120
Percentage	15%	47.5%	30%	7.5%	100%

Table 2 shows that our respondents were more people between the ages of 31 and 45. This implies that more alcoholic beverage patronage peaks from people of this age bracket. If a graph is plotted on this, it will show that it rises from (20-30 yrs) then starts dropping as the people age over 35years.

We shall look at the various questions as presented in the feedback form and analyze them;

a) Do you drink Star Larger beer?

Table 3 indicated that 90% of our respondents prefer Star Larger beer as against 10% who prefer competing brands. From the table above, our population sample has reduced from 120 to 108 people, which we shall be working with to determine how effective branding of star products has influenced their decisions.

Table 3: Do you drink Star Larger beer?

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	108	90%
No	12	10%
Total	120	100%

b) How would you classify your level of patronage?

The analysis in Table 4 shows that out of the respondents who prefer Star, those who are Indifferent are 33, representing 27.5% of the respondents. Moderate drinkers (35.2%) are more in numbers.

Table 4: How would you classify your level of patronage?

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Heavy Drinker	26	21.7%
Moderate	42	35.0%

Light	19	15.8%
Indifferent	33	27.5%
Total	120	100%

c) Do you agree that taste determines your brand preferences?

Table 5: Do you agree that taste determines your brand preferences?

Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
98	13	9	—	—	120
81.7%	10.8%	7.5%	—	—	100%—

The taste of any product is an essential branding tool; for this reason, this particular response in Table 5 supports our hypothesis.

d) Do you agree that product availability determines your beer brand preference?

Table 6 reveals that product distribution has little impact on the preference for Star Larger beer.

Table 6: Do you agree that product availability determines your beer brand preference?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Frequency	20	12	30	22	36	120
Percentage	16.7%	10.0%	25.0%	18.3%	30.0%	100

e) Do you agree that you can buy your brand because of its price?

Table 7: Do you agree that you can buy your brand because of its price?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Frequency	39	32	28	7	14	120
Percentage	32.5%	26.7%	23.3%	5.8%	11.7%	100%

Table 7 shows that competitive pricing plays a significant role in product branding and patronage, as 32.5% and 26.7% strongly agree and agree that they prefer Star beer due to the price.

f) Do you agree that brand promotional gifts (e.g., T-shirts, umbrellas, etc.) determine the beer preference?

Table 8: Do you agree that brand promotional gifts determine the beer preference?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Frequency	6	12	35	41	26	120
Percentage	5%	10%	29.2%	34.2%	21.7%	100%

Table 8 shows that promotional items have little or no impact on the respondent's preference for Star Larger beer.

g) Do you agree that the packaging of the beer would determine its preference by consumers?

Table 9 shows that more of our respondents (43.3%) do not care much about the product (Star) packaging, As it does not determine their choice of beer.

Table 9: Do you agree that the beer's packaging would determine consumers' preference?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Frequency	10	28	52	12	18	120
Percentage	8.3%	23.3%	43.3%	10%	15%	100%

h) Do you agree that social group or association influences beer brand preference?

Table 10 shows that 29.2% of our respondents either agree or disagree that social group influences their choice of the Star.

Table 10: Do you agree that social group or association influences beer brand preference?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Frequency	15	28	35	19	13	120
Percentage	12.5%	23.3%	29.2%	15.8%	10.8%	100%

i) Do you agree that radio jingles for the beer brand determine its preferences by consumers?

Table 11 shows that most respondents believe that brand management elements like radio jingles are effective in gaining brand preference.

Table 11: Do you agree that radio jingles for the beer brand determine its preferences by consumers?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Frequency	36	53	30	—	1	120
Percentage	26.7%	44.2%	25.0%	—	0.8%	100%

j) Do you agree that TV adverts for the beer brand determine its preferences?

Table 12 shows that TV adverts could be the most effective brand management tool in determining consumers' choice of Star Larger beer. 47.5% of respondent agrees with it, while 38.3% strongly agree, making a total of 85.8% believes in the TV adverts (used as a test for hypothesis)

Table 12: Do you agree that TV adverts for the beer brand determine its preferences?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total

Frequency	46	57	15	—	2	120
Percentage	38.3%	47.5%	12.5%	—	1.7%	100%

k) Do you agree that corporate social responsibility by the beer brand determines its preferences?

Table 13 shows that CRS is also effective in determining consumers' preferences.

Table 13: Do you agree that corporate social responsibility by the beer brand determines its preferences?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Frequency	22	38	42	6	12	120
Percentage	18.3%	31.7%	35.0%	5%	10.0%	100%

l) Do you agree that effective customer relationship management (CRM) will determine the beer brand preferences of consumers?

Table 14 shows that effective customer relationship management could be very effective in determining the beer preference of consumers, as 40.7% agree on CRM.

Table 14: Do you agree that effective customer relationship management (CRM) will determine the beer brand preferences of consumers?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Frequency	34	48	36	—	2	120
Percentage	28.3%	40.0%	30.0%	—	1.7%	100%

m) Do you agree that sales promos determine the beer brand preference?

Table 15 shows that sales promo is highly effective in determining the preference for Star Larger beer, as 62.5% of our respondents strongly agree.

Table 15: Do you agree that sales promos determine the beer brand preference?

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Frequency	75	31	8	—	2	120
Percentage	62.5%	25.8%	6.7%	—	1.7%	100%

n) Do you agree that public relations events (e.g., music festivals, reality TV shows, etc.) by the beer brand determine its preferences among consumers?

Table 16 shows that a large percentage of our respondents (42.5%) are unsure of the impact of PR events on their choice of Star Larger beer.

Table 16: Do you agree that public relations by the beer brand determine its preferences among consumers?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Frequency	20	21	51	5	23	120
Percentage	16.7%	17.5%	42.5%	4.2%	19.2%	100%

Data Contingency Table

Using the Chi-square test, we will examine six aspects of our question to see if our study is generally accepted.

Table 17 shows the observed figure from our study. However, to calculate for the Chi-square, we need to get the expected of the contingency table by applying Equation 1 to calculate the expected of both agreed and disagreed.

$$\frac{(a + b)(a + d + g + j + m + p)}{N} \quad (1)$$

Where N is the sum total.

Table 17: Observed figure from the present study

Question No	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Q3 (Taste)	111 a	— b	**111 c**
Q5(Price)	71 d	21 e	**92 f**
Q6 (Promotional Items)	18 g	67 h	**85 i**
Q10 (TV Adverts)	103 j	2 k	**105 l**
Q13 (Sales Promo)	106 m	2 n	**108 o**
Q14 (PR Events)	41 p	28 q	**69 r**
Total	**450**	**120**	**570**

Therefore, the expected contingency table is presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Expected Contingency Table

Question	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Total**
Q3:Taste	87.6	23.4	**111**
Q5:Price	72.6	19.4	**92**
Q6:Promotional items	67.1	17.9	**85**
Q10:T.V Adverts	82.9	22.1	**105**
Q13:Sales Promo	85.3	22.7	**108**
Q14:PR Events	54.5	14.5	**69**
Total	**450**	**120**	**570**

Showing expected figures from our study applying the Chi-square formula presented in Equation (2):

$$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} \tag{2}$$

Where: O= Observed

E= Expected

The Chi-square = 16.23

Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

DF = (6-1) (2 – 1)

DF = 5

The probability = 0.005

Since the calculated chi-square value of 263.53 (or 16.22, which is the square root) and the degree of freedom are both 5, when these values are entered into the chi-square distribution table with 5 degrees of freedom and read along the row, we discover that the chi-square value at the 0.005 probability level will be reading 16.75 (or 4.09, which is the square root), which is less than the calculated chi-square value, leading us to reject the entire null hypothesis "Ho."

Test for Hypothesis

The hypothesis for the study is:

- **H_o-** Brand management, as shown by some key and easily tested elements and factors like TV adverts, Radio jingles, sponsorships, effective pricing, Taste, PR events, sale promos, etc., has no significant role to play in the success of Star Larger beer market performance.

  H_1- Brand Management factors and elements, as shown above, have a significant role in the success of Star Larger beer market performance.
- **H_o-** Brand management factors and elements do not affect customers' loyalty

  H_1- Brand management factors and characteristics do affect customer loyalty.

With the help of the chi-square contingency table, the two hypotheses were handled.

Six questions were chosen at random from the distributed questionnaire that address the essential components of brand management and customer loyalty;

The inquiries include taste, price (deals on customer loyalty), promotional products, TV commercials, sale promotions (enhances brand performance), and PR events. Chi-square analysis was used to analyze these questions. The Chi-square results demonstrate a correlation between brand attributes and customer loyalty and the performance of Star Larger beer on the market. This is obtained by presenting that, with a degree of freedom of 5, the chi-square calculation is greater than the value on the chi-distribution table and that, as a result, both null hypotheses, "Ho," were rejected. Therefore, the chi-square analysis findings support our claim that brand management factors and components are crucial to the commercial success of Star Larger beer. The factors and components of brand management do impact customer loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

In the course of our study, it became evident that Nigerians possess a solid understanding of brand management, its various factors, and its elements. These seemingly simple yet crucial factors and elements have significantly shaped product performance within the marketplace.

Our findings illuminate the determinants of loyalty among Nigerians towards products, particularly in the alcoholic beverage sector. Customers place considerable importance on factors such as taste, price, and the producer's image, as exemplified in our Star Lager beer case study.

Furthermore, our study sheds light on how Nigerians perceive key brand elements like television advertisements and sales promotions. The responses regarding these aspects, particularly in the context of our case study, were overwhelmingly positive. Although Star Lager beer engages in numerous public relations events, Nigerians do not consider these events as pivotal determinants of their patronage. It is also notable that our findings underscore the role of consumerism in determining a product's viability. Generally, consumers express satisfaction with the price, promotions, taste, and television advertisements associated with Star Lager beer. However, promotional items were not deemed significant tools for market acceptability.

In summation, our findings affirm our hypothesis, asserting that the factors and elements of brand management play a significant role in driving the success of Star Lager beer's market performance.

Conclusion

This study was designed to assess the influence of effective brand management on product performance within the marketplace, using Star Lager beer as a case study. Based on our survey findings, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- Nigerians exhibit familiarity with brand elements and factors, comprehending their impact on product choice.
- Brand factors like taste and price wield influence over customer loyalty.
- Brand elements such as television advertisements and sales promotions are pivotal in brand projection and market acceptance.
- Few Nigerians are inclined to switch to alternative products if their preferred choice is unavailable.
- Contrary to widely held assumptions, promotional items like T-shirts, umbrellas, and pens hold minimal effect on customer patronage, ranking among the least influential factors.
- A predominant belief exists among Nigerians that effective brand management is instrumental in achieving heightened competitive advantage.

Recommendations

In light of our study's conclusions, we put forth the following recommendations:

- Manufacturers should continually enhance crucial brand elements such as television advertisements, sales promotions, customer relationship strategies, and management.
- Consistency in brand factors like taste is crucial. At the same time, careful pricing monitoring should align with market demands, mirroring the case of Star Lager Beer.
- Manufacturers must recognize the discerning and quality-conscious nature of the market they serve.
- While Star Lager Beer currently holds a prominent position in the alcoholic beverage market, the intensifying competition necessitates a sustained focus on brand management.

- Manufacturers should prioritize product development, innovative packaging, and consumer satisfaction, as these factors have contributed to Star Lager Beer's continued market leadership.

As we conclude, we advocate for further studies and research in this domain, believing that this work will serve as a valuable reference for future endeavors.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.