



Product branding and consumer buying behavioral patterns: Evidence from information and communication technology companies in Nigeria

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Abstract

In contemporary organization, one of the most valuable assets in era of competitiveness is product/service branding. Branding plays either positive/negative role on sales or image of organizations' products, hence it is considered to affect consumers' buying behavioural patterns. In this study, we assessed the relationship between product branding and consumer buying behavioural patterns among information and communication technology companies in South-South, Nigeria. The survey research design was used and sample of 500 respondents were obtained via the purposive sampling technique. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, and Pearson correlation) and inferential (multiple regression) statistical techniques. Result showed that product branding significantly and positively influence consumers' buying behavioural pattern. The study recommended that management of telecommunication companies should adopt product branding as a top priority in pursuant of customers' buying behaviour so as to increase customers' retention, organizational profitability and sustainability.

Keywords: Product branding, consumer buying behaviour, Information communication, technology, Nigeria

Introduction

Practically, product branding makes companies stand out among their pair. The branding of product is more than just marketing; the rationale behind this is that branding creates identity for a product for a lengthy period of time (Farayola & Adeleke, 2018^[6]). Branding serve as a vital cue to guide consumers' choice, particularly in fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) as in recent times, information and communication technology companies (Nadube & Oluwagbemiga, 2020^[10]; and Lekhanya, Olajumoke & Nirmala, 2017^[9]).

The success of a company's product/service is hinged on being perceived as unique from others. Thus, market leaders always come up with products/services aimed at increasing the consumer buying behavioral patterns (CBBP). According to Lekhanya, *et al* (2017)^[9], product branding positively differentiates a company's product from its competitors. For instance, information communication technology companies like MTN, Globacom and Airtel etc., have in one way or the other rebranded their products or services from other network providers in Nigeria

In Nigeria, recent happenings call for rebranding of IT companies' products because all networks providers in the country now uses the same service code. This goes to echo the vital role product branding plays in enhancing organizations' productivity, performance as well as CBBP. As opined by Inamullah (2012)^[7]; and Egberi and Samuel (2017)^[5], most industries are now shifting and expanding their markets internationally as globalization is the key thing.

In Nigeria, some brands stand supreme in the minds of consumers when it comes to IT consumption patterns and again, the notable role of IT companies in promoting economic growth cannot be undermined (Okoro & Egberi, 2019^[3, 12]; and Okoro, 2014^[13]). Kabuoh (2012)^[8] believed

that because consumers may be confused about which product to patronise but with product branding, it allows them to efficiently make selection from a huge array of products.

Consequently, product branding allows consumers to recognize familiar products (Egberi & Osio, 2019^[3]). According to Chaharsoughi and Yasory (2012)^[2], the most distinctive skill of marketers is their ability to create, maintain, promote and protect their brands. In light the above discuss, this study examined the link between product branding and consumer buying behavioral patterns among selected telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

Theoretical literature

Product branding refers to endowing a product with power of a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2006). It is a process via which companies discern their products from their competitors (Peter, Muhammad & Andrew, 2013)^[15]. According to Srangapani and Mamatha (2008)^[16], branding improves a product's value; it is a process of moving a product from an ordinary commodity to becoming a brand. On the other hand, consumer buying behavioural pattern (CBBP) shows the search for buying using evaluative methods in satisfying the needs and wants of consumers (Kabuoh, 2012)^[8].

According to Lekhanya, *et al* (2017)^[9], CBBP is a study of how people make their decisions on how they spend their resources on related items and their evaluation of such purchase decision. Similarly, Nadube and Oluwagbemiga (2020)^[10] see CBBP as activities people engage or use in deciding which product, they will purchase. Overall, CBBP is a product of psychology (P) and environment (E).

CBBP explains the logic underlying purchasing decision and consumption patterns of the consumers. Thus, in this study, we employed both the PE (Psychology and Environment) dynamics of CBBP and their relationship with

product branding. Aaker Brand Theory (ABT) is one of the most predominant paradigms describing how product branding affects CBBP. The main ideology in ABT is brand identity; brand identity shows how a firm wants her brand to be seen by public and the link the firm aspires to create in the market.

Aaker (1996) refers to brand identity as a unique set of brand link that a brand strategist aspires to maintain or create. There are numerous brand views like product, organization, person and symbol; each has its own role however all working to realize excellent service and market niche (Peter, *et al*, 2013) [15]. The ABT assumes that a strong brand identity is pivotal for brand value creation and increased CBBP.

Notably, there are other paradigms on product branding and CBBP like cultural, rational, consumer-based, personality, and community approaches. The theoretical perspective on product branding shows that behavior can be learned via internal (psychological) external (environment) events (Inamullah, 2012 [7]; Farayola & Adeleke, 2018 [6]; and Egberi & Osio, 2019 [3]). On the basis of the above, we hypothesized that product branding has insignificant influence on the consumer buying behavioural patterns (psychology and environment) of information and communication technology companies.

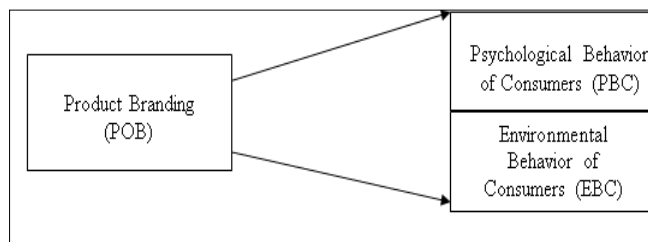


Fig 1: Conceptual Model of the Study Conceptualized by the Researcher (2023)

Fig 1 conceptualized the relationship between product branding and consumer buying behavioural pattern dimensions (psychological and environmental influencing behaviour of consumers); the conceptual model was used as groundwork for estimating the study’s empirical model.

Materials and methods

The survey design was used to obtain the perceptions of people on product branding and consumer buying behavioural pattern (CBBP). The population of the study consisted of employees of the most prominent telecommunication companies (MTN, Globacom and Airtel) in Nigeria out of which five hundred and six (506) were selected using purposive sampling technique out of which five hundred (500) were fully retrieved and completed.

Structured questionnaire was employed in obtaining the perceptions of the respondents on whether product branding influences CBBP. The questionnaire was designed on a 4-point scale of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree and was administered on the respondents by the researcher. Towards ensuring reliability of the instruments, a test-retest method was carried out on fifty (50) respondents who do not form part of the study

Furthermore, data collected in the pilot test were correlated using Cronbach alpha. The coefficients obtained (see Table 1) were considered good because they beat the 0.05 level as suggested by Cronbach (Egberi & Egberi, 2011) [4]

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Coefficients

Variable(s)	Coefficients	Remarks
Product Branding	0.76	Reliable
Psychological Behavior	0.74	Reliable
Environmental Behavior	0.68	Reliable

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

The independent variable is product branding while the dependent variable is CBBP with two dimensions such as psychological and environmental behavior of consumers. In view of the above, the multiple regressions were estimated:

$$CBBP = f(POB) \tag{eq. 1}$$

$$CBBP_i = a_0 + \delta_1 POB_i + \epsilon_i \tag{eq. 2}$$

Where: CBBP is a multi-dimensional variable comprising of psychological (PBC) and environmental (EBC) behaviour of consumers; CBBP is consumer buying behavioural patterns; POB is product branding, $\delta_1 - \delta_2$ are regression coefficients; ϵ is error term while i is individual respondents of the selected telecommunication companies. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, Pearson correlation) and inferential (multiple regressions) statistical tools.

Results

Table 2: Descriptive Result on Product Branding (POB) and Consumer Buying Behavioral Patterns (CBBP)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min. Value	Max. Value
Psychological Behavior	2.3317	.0372	1	4
Environmental Behavior	2.3840	.0423	1	4
Product Branding	2.1378	.0842	1	4

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

Table 2 showed the descriptive result on product branding (POB) and consumer buying behavioural patterns (CBBP – PBC & EBC) of the selected telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The results showed that dimensions of CBBP and product branding scored above 2.0 cut-off of the mean, suggesting that the items on POB are vital metrics for assessing and CBBP among the telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The standard deviation value is low; to an extent POB is predominant among the telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Result for Product Branding (POB) and Consumer Buying Behavioral Patterns (CBBP)

Variables	EMJOBSAT	GENDNEP	ETHNNEP
POB	1.0000		
EBC	.0722	1.0000	
PBC	.0823	.0674	1.0000

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

Table 3 showed the Pearson correlation result for POB and CBBP (PBC and EBC) among the telecommunication companies in Nigeria; the result showed that Pearson coefficients are 0.0722 (EBC) and 0.0823 (PBC). An indication that that there is a positive relationship between POB and the dimensions of CBBP (EBC and PBC); impliedly, product branding positively affects consumer buying behavioural patterns. According to Okoro (2016) [14];

and Okoro and Ekwueme (2021) ^[11], Pearson correlation coefficients that is below 0.8 suggests the absence of multicollinearity problem in empirical model; owing to the above assertion, the multiple regression results were presented as shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Multiple Regression Result for Product Branding (POB) and Consumer Buying Behavioral Patterns (CBBP)

Estimator	Predictors	t-values
R-Squared	.8006	
R-Squared Adj.	.7070	POB = 6.20
F-Value	7.22	t-Prob. 0.000
Prob. F	0.000	

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

Table 4 showed the multiple regression result of product branding (POB) and consumer buying behavioural patterns (CBBP) among the selected telecommunication companies in Nigeria. In Table 4, the R² is 0.8006, indicating that product branding explained 80% of the systematic variation in CBBP of the telecommunication companies. Consequently, the model of POB and CBBP provides a good fit to the data of the study.

More so, the f-value is 7.22; the result revealed that POB significantly affect CBBP. Impliedly, product branding plays a vital role in influencing consumer buying behavioural patterns (both psychological and environmental). In addition, the t-value suggests that product branding positively influence CBBP among the telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The findings corroborates with the views of Lekhanya, *et al* (2017) ^[9]; Farayola and Adeleke (2018) ^[6]; and Nadube and Oluwagbemiga (2020) ^[10] who showed that branding serve as a major tool for influencing the buying patterns of consumers.

Conclusion and recommendations

In modern organizations (particularly where competition is predominant), branding of products plays a major role in affecting how consumers spend their resources as well as the buying behaviour of consumers; however, whether product branding will positively or negatively affect consumers' buying behaviour of telecommunication companies has been under-researched in the management literature.

Most studies on product branding and consumer buying behavioural pattern has focussed on fast moving consumer goods (FCMG) and the banking sector, hence leaving a gap in the literature as it pertains telecommunication companies in Nigeria. Given this gap, this study was carried to assess the relationship between product branding and consumers' buying behavioural pattern among some selected telecommunication companies in Nigeria using a sample of five hundred (500) respondents.

Data obtained in the study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Findings indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between product branding and consumers' buying behavioural patterns. The study recommended that management of telecommunication companies should adopt product branding as a top priority in pursuant of customers' buying behaviour so as to increase customers' retention, organizational profitability and sustainability.

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