

EFFECT OF BRAND DIFFERENTIATION ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC, OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The paper investigates the effect of brand differentiation on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc, Ogun State. The broad objective of the research is to evaluate the effect of brand differentiation on competitive advantage. Primary source of data was used in carrying out this study. One hundred and sixty-six (166) completely filled and returned copies of questionnaire used as the sample size usable for the study. The data used in this study were generated using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 and conducted at 5% significance level. The finding indicates that brand logo has no significant effect on competitive advantage as reported by hypothesis one; was also revealed that brand name has no significant effect on competitive advantage as suggested by hypothesis two and lastly, it was also observed that brand symbol has no significant effect on competitive advantage. The study concluded that the brand differentiation has a significant effect on competitive advantage in Nigeria Breweries Plc. The study therefore recommends among other that firms must ensure that they improve upon their branding experience for customers, as this goes a long way to improve upon their competitive advantage.

Key Words: Brand Logo, Brand Name, Brand Symbol, Differentiation, Competitive Advantage

Introduction

As the business world becomes more complex and competitive, companies need to re-think their strategies to stand out from the competition. Branding is a crucial part of marketing that drives the success of an organization. An organization does create in the minds of customers and prospects the perception that there is no product or service on the market that is similar to the company's (Kamau, 2013). The organization's purpose is not only to win customers but to retain them. Developing a successful brand to gain a competitive advantage is essentially a marketing problem in the industry that requires reflection and a marketing approach. It helps to determine how a product or company can best develop an advantage and become superior to its competitors. Porter (2008) explained that it can be achieved by creating one or more value activities than competitors.

Differentiation is one of the main types of competitive advantage strategies that a company can effectively adapt. The concept of differentiation was first proposed by Edward Chamberlin in his theory of 1933 monopolistic competition (Kamau, 2013). Kotler (2013) considers differentiation as a process of adding a set of significant and valued differences in order to distinguish the company's offer from its competitors' offerings. Organizations face many challenges to stay competitive. Product differentiation is a competitive business strategy in which companies seek to gain a competitive advantage by increasing the perceived value of their products and services relative to the perceived value of other companies' products and services (Rahman, 2011). The differentiation of products is widespread in the financial world. In most production areas, a wide range of differentiated products is available on the market. This is obvious when you enter a store. There are different products, for example milk, which comes in different varieties such as fresh milk, mala and yoghurt, all sold by different companies. A seed sales unit, for example a seed agent, has different types of seeds that come from different companies.

According to Rodney (2010), a homogenous product is a product that cannot be distinguished from competing products even when they come from different suppliers. The opposite of a homogeneous product is a differentiated product.

Business competition is becoming increasingly difficult every day due to many organizational and environmental reasons such as globalization, deregulation, growing competition at the global and national levels, and new technologies. Despite its importance in creating and maintaining a competitive advantage in companies, the source of differentiation is not well understood. Companies are often different but undifferentiated because they are looking for forms of uniqueness that buyers do not like. Organizations need to adapt to the standalone customer by implementing strategies that can sustain them in this competitive environment, such as differentiation, cost management, diversification, and new product development, among others.

At the local level, studies have been conducted to establish the link between differentiation strategies and the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms. Kinyua (2010) conducted a study on the competitive strategies adopted by microfinance institutions in Kenya. Mwaura (2010) also conducted a study to determine the extent to which banks gain a competitive advantage through product differentiation focused on credit card users. This study therefore seeks to bridge the existing gap by establishing the effects of brand differentiation strategies on achieving the competitive advantage of firms.

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of brand differentiation on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc. The specific objectives are:

- a. To examine the effect of brand logo on competitive advantage;
- b. To examine the effect of brand name on competitive advantage;
- c. To examine the effect of brand symbol on competitive advantage;

The research questions available in this study include:

- a. Does logo name have effect on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc?
- b. Does brand name have effect on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc?
- c. Does brand symbol have effect on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc?

The research work will be testing the validity and significance of these hypotheses:

Ho¹ Brand logo has no significant effect on competitive advantage

Ho² Brand name has no significant effect on competitive advantage

Ho³ Brand symbol has no significant effect on competitive advantage

Literature Review

Concept of Branding

Brand image is never a new idea. The idea of the brand was developed over a period of several centuries. A brand indicates one of the most important assets of a company. Its name, slogan and logo describe how customers identify, remember and distinguish the brand. Over time and in the face of increasing competition, many companies are choosing to rebrand for a variety of purposes as a technique to achieve transformation, to be stimulated or to be fully reborn. Brands are viewed as intangible assets that have a big impact on the performance of an organization. A traditional description of a mark was the name, associated with one or more items in the product line that is used to identify the source of item(s) character (Kotler 2009).

Felicia (2016) states that technically, each distributor creates a new name, a new logo or a new symbol for a new product, it creates a brand. The brand represents something specific: it is the employees of the company who bring value, create trust and guarantee consistent quality and service, leading to repeat purchases and the loyalty of customers, users and of the whole world.

Brands are assets that constitute the value of intellectual capital, important drivers, and creators of market capitalization, reputation, and public integrity (Jaquier, 2016).

In many companies, branding is an instrument that conveys the benefits of objects to customers by giving those names or images, along with interesting and convincing affiliations. In addition to the multiform quality of articles, the brand strategy in the pharmaceutical industry is imperative and complex because of the official assignment in the article's profile, the designation, the need to avoid the direct promotion of drugs to ethical purposes for patients, and life cycles (Lim, 2010).

Concept of Branding Differentiation

Kotler (2010) defines brand differentiation and mentions the different aspects of differentiating a product by saying: brand differentiation is the introduction of differential characteristics, quality, style or brand image as the basis for ordering a premium. Brand differentiation refers to the art of marketing a particular product or service to differentiate it from other products or services. This involves differentiating it from competing products as well as product / service offerings from the company.

Brand differentiation is emerging while competition is growing more and more on the basis of product enlargement, which also leads the retailer to look at the user's total consumption system, how it performs the purchase and use of related products and services. Each increase increases costs, however, and the increased benefits quickly become the expected benefits and necessary points of the parties. For example, today's customers expect cable channels, remote control satellite television and high-speed Internet access or two phone lines, which mean that competitors must look for these other features and advantages (Jaquier, 2010).

According to Kotler (2009), vendors can be faced with many opportunities for brand differentiation, including form, characteristics, customization, performance quality, compliance quality, durability, reliability, style, and if a physical product cannot be easily differentiated. The key to successful competition may lie in adding valuable services and improving their quality. The main brand differentiation of services is ordering, ease of delivery, installation, customer training, customer advice, preservation and repair. Everything an organization can do to create value for buyers represents a potential basis for brand differentiation. Brand differentiation creates a competitive advantage by making customers more loyal, less price sensitive and less willing to consider other products (Jaquier, 2010).

Concept of Competitive Advantage

The rapid development of different markets, aided by increasingly rapid technological progress, has also been successful in attracting new participants to the market. As the number of new entrants continues to grow steadily, competition in the markets is also expected to increase (Prunea 2014).

Sekliuckienė & Langvinienė (2011) argue that competitive advantages include the advantage of position and performance over competition because of the commercial advantage and the advantage of distributed resources and capabilities. As a result, the competitive advantage is defined as a significant advantage over its competitors because of the allocation of costs and results of the operation that depend on the positioning strategy. With competitive wars continuing all the time, there is no guarantee that the competitive advantage will be maintained for a long time.

Besanko, Dranove, & Shanley (2010) also argue that when a firm achieves an economic profit rate higher than the average economic profit rate of other competing firms in the same market, the firm has a competitive advantage in that market. Saloner, Shepard & Podolny (2011) state that "most forms of competitive advantage mean that a company can produce a service or product that its customers value more than competitors, or that it can produce its own, service or product at a lower cost than its competitors. Competitive Advantage is the tool that allows a company to take a larger market share and

generate more sales. It is a key determinant of superior performance that ensures survival and prominence in the market (Porter, 2008). As each company ultimately aims for superior performance, its competitive advantage is the foundation that highlights the critical importance of developing it.

2.4 Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Theory

Brand management is never new in many companies. The brand is similar to the intangible asset in an organization, as a strong brand can benefit from consumer behavior, high price and consumer loyalty, as well as an improved image and sound competitive advantage (Keller, 2012). As a result, most brand management work is fully focused on the consumer-focused branding strategy, which leads to the advancement of the Customer-Oriented Brand Equity Theory (CBBE) (Keller, Heckler & Houston, 2012). In line with this development, practitioners had structured their marketing program to create and maintain brand equity. This development is based primarily on the argument that the organization can optimize the performance of its brand once it has better understood the attitude and behavior of customers than its competing brand.

Current marketing has evolved considerably. Businesses are now using consumer-driven methods to build their skills and meet the many needs and emerging needs of the modern customer. Of these consumer-driven approaches, branding has become one of the crucial activities required to create a loyal customer base and create an effective brand. According to Michael (2010), there is no product or service that exists by itself in space, regardless of the consumer. For a product to exist, it must find a place in the buying behavior of the consumer of the world of products that surrounds it. This buying behavior is subjective and governed by the values, beliefs, needs, experience and environment of each consumer. It can be difficult to influence or change deeply held perceptions about brands established in the minds of consumers (Keller, Heckler & Houston, 2012).

Traditionally, brands were used to show the consumer who was the manufacturer and to prevent substitution of cheaper products (Rahman, 2011), but modern times reflect the major changes in marketing strategies of companies seeking to maintain a competitive advantage, their financial health being dependent on the amount of information collected about consumers' buying habits. These companies have used sociological and behavioral studies to collect relevant data and deepen their understanding of customers' buying habits. Indeed, customers can maintain deep and meaningful relationships with a brand (Dirisu, Oluwole & Ibidunni, 2013), resulting in increased brand purchases (Park, 2010), lower price sensitivity to customers and reduce marketing costs. However, the reality of business is that customers consider many brands as ordinary and identical.

Empirical Review

Atikiya, Elegwa & Waiganjo (2015) examined the effect of competitive strategies on the performance of manufacturing enterprises in Kenya. The study measured the extent to which the differentiation strategy influences the performance of manufacturing enterprises in Kenya. The study adopted survey research design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample size determination formula was used to select 189 companies for intensive study. In this study, data were collected using a questionnaire. The correlation moment produced by Pearson was used to determine the effect of competitive strategies on manufacturing performance, while linear multiple regression analysis was used to explain in how competitive strategies, i.e. the costs of leadership, differentiation and development strategies (independent variables), explain the change in the company's performance (dependent variable).

Felicia, (2016) conducted a research on brand building for a competitive advantage in the Ghana jewelry industry. She said that developing a successful brand to achieve a competitive advantage is essentially a marketing problem in the Ghana jewelry industry. Globalization and competition, particularly in Asia and other developed regions of the world, have resulted in a decline in market share,

business failure and job losses in the Ghana jewelry industry. The objective of this paper was to study the branding strategies of the precious minerals marketing company (PMMC) and ERNIE's classic jewelry and how this influences their competitive advantage. Primary data were obtained from the management and clients of these two companies through interviews and questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the survey data. The results indicate that research and development, the internal brand, brand positioning/promotion and customer orientation are the critical factors of the brand for the competitive advantage adopted by companies. However, the PMMC has proven to be more competitive compared to ERNIE's classic jewelry through brand building. The results have several implications and recommendations for the development of companies by branding.

Hadjer, (2015) investigated the effect of product differentiation on the brand's local positioning. Due to the high development of world markets and the growing number of competitive competitors, product differentiation has become the solution to position rival offerings differently. This research aims to examine the effect of product differentiation on the positioning of the brand of competing companies in the market of Algerian shampoo, with a highlight on the brand coming because it is the only producer of shampoo local in Algeria. The multidimensional scale (MDS) technique using factorial analysis is used for data analysis to plot a perceptual map that displays the relative position of twelve shampoo brands including Venus. The results show a significant difference between the position of the standard Venus shampoo and Venus differentiated product. The differentiation strategy illustrated in our case, allowed the company to improve its brand positioning, which brought it closer to the different segments of the market.

Nolega, Oloko & Oteki (2015) analyzed how product differentiation affects a company's performance. The study adopted a descriptive design of the research. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of customers and company staff, while sampling was used to select 140 agents. The results showed how product differentiation influences market dominance using descriptive analysis. The study recommended that the company should increase its variety of products and brand in order to have a competitive advantage and increase its sales performance.

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for this research study. However, this method of research design was adopted to determine the relationship between brand differentiation and competitive advantage in Nigeria breweries with respect to the focus area of study. This study was conducted at Nigeria Breweries Plc in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

The target population of study comprises of the entire staff ranging from top level, middle level and lower level cadres. Therefore, the population of study for this research work includes two hundred and eighty-five (285) respondents according to Human Resources Department as at year 2019. From the two hundred and eighty-five (285) respondents in the study area, a total of one hundred and sixty-six (166) respondents are selected using Taro Yamane's (1998) formula for sample size determination. The study adopted only a cross-sectional analysis through primary source of data.

The research instrument used for this study is questionnaire designed by the researchers. Questionnaires were administered to elicit direct information from the respondents based on the researcher's need. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section seeks to obtain the personal information (demographic profile) of the respondents while the second section contains the questions that relate to the subject matter. The questionnaire, administered by the respondents, contained twenty-five (25) items, which sought information from the respondents on the effect of brand differentiation on firm's competitive advantage.

Results and Discussion

Table I: Descriptive Statistics of the Data

Gender	Male	Female			
	56.0%	44%			
Age of Respondents	18-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	36-40 years	41 years & above
	25.3%	33.7%	18.7%	17.5%	4.8%
Marital Status	Single	Married	Divorced		
	30.7%	66.3%	3.0%		
Education	No Formal Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Tertiary Education	
	4.2%	53.6%	31.9%	10.3%	
Position	Junior Staff	Senior Staff			
	41.6%	58.4%			

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

Hypotheses Testing

Ho¹: Brand logo has no significant effect on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc

**Table II:
Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.886 ^a	.785	.781	.41379

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Logo

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

**Table III:
Coefficients^a**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.255	.281		2.757	.000
Brand Logo	.707	.055	.886	15.312	.029

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

Regression of aggregate mean scores of competitive advantage against brand logo produced an R² value of 0.785. This implies that brand logo explains 78.5% of the variation on firm's competitive advantage. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected since the p value is less than 0.05 level of significant ($p < 0.05$) and conclude that there is a significant relationship between brand logo and firms' competitive advantage.

H0₂: Brand name has no significant effect on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries, Plc

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.713 ^a	.508	.589	.11795

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Name

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.735	.386		1.974	.000
	Brand Name	.352	.123	.713	.914	.013

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

Regression of aggregate mean scores of competitive advantage against brand name produced an R² value of 0.508. This implies that brand name explains 50.8% of the variation on firm's competitive advantage. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected since the p value is less than 0.05 level of significance (p < 0.05) and conclude that there is a significant relationship between brand name and firm's competitive advantage.

Ho³ Brand symbol has no significant effect on competitive advantage in Nigerian Breweries Plc;

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.764 ^a	.583	.801	.57651

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Symbol

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.319	.101		3.112	.000
	Brand Symbol	.406	.375	.764	2.234	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

Regression of aggregate mean scores of competitive advantage against brand symbol produced an R² value of 0.583. This implies that brand symbol explains 58.3% of the variation on firm's competitive advantage. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected since the p value is less than 0.05 level

of significance ($p < 0.05$) and conclude that there is a significant relationship between brand symbol and firms' competitive advantage.

The measure of product differentiation was found to have positive and influence on organizations' competitive advantage. At overall level, regression analysis results showed that the influence of product differentiation strategy on organizations' competitiveness of Nigeria Breweries Plc was statistically significant in that the p-value was greater than the set value of .05. The results concur with the study of Khaled (2012) who empirically examined how differentiation strategy influences organizational performance of industrial companies.

The result is also in line with study done by Dirisu (2013) on differentiation practices adopted by industries. He concluded that organizations need to pay more attention on product innovation and quality designs of the products their firms were manufacturing. Differentiation strategy needs to be used as an instrument for enhancing competitive advantage for a company. In order to remain viable, manufacturing companies should embrace a strategy for product differentiation based on efficiency and price.

The current findings also corroborated with a study by Dirisu, Oluwule & Ibidunni (2013) who found out that product differentiation is a tool of competitive advantage and optimal organizational performance in Nigeria. Their analysis proved the existence of a positive significant relationship between product differentiation and the sales growth of an organization. To differentiate a product, businesses need to identify customers' needs and to address how their products are compared with those of their competitors, this concurs with the study of Adinan & Abukari (2013). Also, Maina & Wairimu (2016) in their study concluded that product differentiation is key element of a successful business and that the businesses struggle to improve products so as to retain customers.

From the first hypotheses brand logo explains 78.5% variation on firm's competitive advantage by producing aggregate mean score of R^2 value of 0.785 as logo act as the main visual illustration of a brand's overall meaning and image. Therefore, there is significant positive relationship between brand logo and firms' competitive advantage. Second hypotheses stated that brand name and firms' competitive advantage are significantly related ($R^2 = 0.508$; $p\text{-value} > 0.05$). It further shows that brand name is often revealing the brands intention. It is a powerful source of identity and helps to project the image of the product against the competition and in the process of positioning a brand in the midst of target audience. Third hypotheses result indicated a positive relationship between brand symbol and firms' competitive advantage. Brand symbol explains 58.3% of the variation on firm's competitive advantage ($R^2 = 0.583$; $p\text{-value} > 0.05$). Brand symbol are visual characteristics of a brand, they represent the brand personality and contribute to its recognition rate.

Conclusion

Based on the survey, the study concluded that, brand differentiation has a significant effect on competitive advantage in Nigeria Breweries Plc. This study has to a large extent achieved its objective by examining the effect of brand logo, brand symbol and brand name as a brand differentiation strategy used by firms to achieve competitive advantage. This means that manufacturing organizations must pay greater attention to the products they manufacture in terms of differentiating them from others. Brand differentiations are designed to appeal to customers with a special sensitivity for a particular product attribute. The study also concluded that:

- a. Product differentiation is good tool for pursuing competitive advantage as it fosters and strengthens the buyer's identification with the brand.
- b. Product differentiation should be the primary focus in long-term competitive advantage
- c. Brand logo, symbol and name are strongly correlated to competitive advantage while others differentiation strategies are relatively positively correlated.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- a. Firms must ensure that they improve upon their branding experience for customers as this goes a long way to improve upon their competitive advantage.
- b. Companies must ensure that they put in measures to ensure that their brand differentiation strategies activities meet the needs of their customers.
- c. Firms must improve upon their branding activities while strengthening their customer service activities in order to maximize/ optimize competitive advantage.
- d. Organizations must strive to improve upon the brand of their companies as this affects the performance and competitive advantage of the company.
- e. Firms must consider other means to differentiate their brands in order to gain a more competitive advantage to others.

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Appendix

Section A

Please tick the option in the space provided

1. Gender: Male () Female ()
2. Age: under 20 years () 21 – 30 years () 31 – 40 years () 41 – 50 years () 51 – 60 years () above 60 years ()
3. Educational Qualification: O' level () OND/NCE/B.SC. () Masters () others ()
4. Marital Status: married () single () divorced ()
5. Working Experience: 1 – 5 years () 6 – 10 years () 10 years and above ()
6. Preset Position: Junior Staff () Senior Staff ()

Section B

Please read this statement carefully and tick the option that best reflect the feeling for each statement.
SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, U – Undecided, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree

S/N	Statements on Brand Name	SA	A	UD	D	SD
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Our brand name is an extremely means of communication					
2	Our brand name is clearly defined to our customers					
3	Our brand name is easily memorized					
4	Our brand name enhances product identification					
5	Our brand name indicates the essence of our product or service					
	Statements on Brand Logo					
6	The brand logo of our product is the best					
7	Brand logo differentiate our product from others					
8	Brand logo reflect the positioning of the organization adequately					
9	Our brand logo has a significant meaning					
10	Our brand logo communicates consistency					
11	Our brand logo is the first visual a customer gets about our company					
12	Our logo indicates a strong passion for our product and services					

	Statements on Brand Symbol					
13	Our product symbol is designed in a unique way from the rest					
14	Our symbol is easy way to recognize our product					
15	Our symbol gets a better place in customer mind					
16	Our symbol is easily distinguished from others					
	Statements on Competitive Advantage					
17	The firm enjoys a larger customer base than its competitors					
18	Our Customer satisfaction has exceeded that of our competitors					
19	Our firm earns a higher rate of economic profit than our competitors					
20	Our firm market share is higher than other firms in the industry					
21	Our firm enjoys higher economies of scale					
22	The firm sales have increase overtime					
23	The firm delivers more value and satisfaction to target consumers than competitors do					
24	Our firm has a higher reputation than other competitors					
25	Our firm's services are effective and efficient than others					