

INFLUENCE OF BRANDING ON UNIVERSITIES UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS BUYING CULTURE IN ENUGU STATE

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of branding on universities undergraduate students buying culture in Enugu State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was over 50000 respondents in Enugu state. The sample size was 397 (201 males and 196 females) and it was arrived at using Taro Yamane sample size formula. The study used proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique. The instrument for the study was 24 item structured questionnaires of three clusters titled "Influence of Branding on Students Buying Habit Questionnaire (IBSBHQ)" were used for data collection. Using Cronbach Alpha, an overall reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained on the IBSBHQ instrument which was administered on only 50 students outside the study area. All the 397 questionnaires were used for the main analysis. Research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The findings show that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product. Also, the findings show there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product. The study recommended among others that manufacturer should maintain their reputation so that customers in return will be more loyal to their brand. Finally, conclusion was drawn.

Keywords: Branding, Undergraduate Students, Buying culture, Loyalty, Premium Price, Gender.

Introduction

In today's consumer-driven world, branding plays a key role in moulding purchase decisions across numerous industries, including education and manufacturing. The notion of branding extends beyond basic identification; it involves the full perception that customers, including students, have about a product, service, or institution. This view greatly influences their purchase culture, as well as their loyalty and involvement with the company (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of company, branding has grown increasingly crucial as industrial industries strive to attract and keep clients in a congested marketplace. In Enugu State, Nigeria, the effect of branding on students' buying culture is a crucial subject of research, considering the diversity of manufacturing enterprises and the diverse items they created for students and the broader population at large.

The educational sector in Enugu State is defined by a mix of public and private schools, while industrial enterprises are seeking to develop a distinct brand identity. These manufacturing enterprises employ a variety of branding techniques to attract potential students, including advertising campaigns, community participation, and campus sales promotion. The effectiveness of these branding activities is evident in the purchasing culture of students, including their decisions about which manufacturing company items to buy, their purchases of branded items, and their participation in on-campus sales promotion (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). Efficient branding of a product by a manufacturing company may foster loyalty among students towards the company's product.

Brand loyalty is a fundamental term in consumer behaviour, signifying a deep-seated commitment to repurchasing or persistently interacting with a single brand, despite rivals'

offerings or prospective changes in the market (Aaker, 1991). Numerous variables, such as personal experiences, societal influences, and the perceived value of the brand, typically influence brand loyalty among students. In the industrial environment, students may build loyalty to a company's product, like in the case of certain noodles, based on favourable experiences, such as a nice flavour. This loyalty can manifest in various ways, including persistent involvement with the company's product through continual purchases. Early exposure to various companies through classmates, social media, and other factors typically shapes students' brand loyalty. This devotion may be powerful, driving recurrent purchases of branded items, participation in company-sponsored activities, and even influencing future purchasing choices (Goolla, 2019). Developing brand loyalty among students is critical for manufacturing firms because it not only increases immediate engagement and income but also encourages long-term purchasing behavior, even when the company charges higher rates for its products. The perceived worth and status associated with a brand strongly influence the inclination to pay an additional cost for a product.

If students view a brand as having greater quality, exclusivity, or status, they are more likely to be willing to pay higher rates for its products or services. This phenomenon is apparent in several domains, encompassing technology, fashion, and education. For example, students might be inclined to spend a higher amount of money on university merchandise that carries a well-known brand name, such as clothing, accessories, or gadgets, if they perceive these items as boosting their social standing or reflecting their individual identity (Netemeyer, Krishnan, Pullig, Wang, Yagci, Dean, Ricks, & Wirth, 2004). Nevertheless, factors such as socio-economic position, availability of financial aid, and personal beliefs can influence the inclination to pay a higher price across different student demographics. Certain students may place more importance

on cost-effectiveness and usefulness than brand reputation, choosing items that provide the most value for their money. Comprehending these dynamics is vital for manufacturing companies and marketers as they develop price strategies and brand positioning, taking into account the probable attitude of students towards their product.

Attitude refers to a consumer's tendency to react positively or negatively to a brand, product, or service. The construct is intricate and includes cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Ajzen, 2011). Regarding student behavior, their attitude towards a brand may have a significant influence on their loyalty, purchase choices, and overall involvement with the company. The cognitive aspect of attitude encompasses students' beliefs and thoughts about a brand (Park et al., 2010). For example, students may perceive a specific company brand as being of superior quality, which can have a positive influence on their attitude towards the company's product. The affective component pertains to the emotional reactions that students connect with the brand, such as sentiments of pride, belonging, or enthusiasm. Typically, favourable encounters, efficient marketing, and peer influence develop these emotional connections (Solomon, 2022). The behavioural aspect of attitude pertains to the students' inclination to engage in specific actions towards the brand, such as buying branded products or participating in brand-related activities. Increased customer engagement and loyalty correlate with a favourable brand perception, while a negative brand perception can lead to reduced engagement and a preference for rival companies. However, there is a lack of research on the extent to which these branding methods influence students' choices, particularly when considering gender as a moderating factor.

Gender has a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour, influencing how people perceive and react to branding. Research has indicated that there are distinct differences in the priorities and preferences of men and women when it comes to making purchase decisions. Generally, males tend to place importance on practicality and prestige, whereas women may prioritise aesthetics and emotional connections (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006). In the education sector, these gender disparities could potentially lead to branding strategies that effectively attract one gender, but may not have the same influence on the other gender. For example, a manufacturing firm that positions itself as a frontrunner in technology products may have a greater appeal to male students, whereas a manufacturing company that places emphasis on cosmetics may be more likely to attract female students. Understanding these characteristics is critical for manufacturing organizations looking to create branding strategies that effectively appeal to both male and female students. The competitive nature of the manufacturing industry in Enugu State, where firms constantly seek to differentiate themselves and attract both students and the broader public, underscores the significance of this study.

The study aims to provide significant information for manufacturing companies by analyzing how branding influences students' purchase culture and how gender moderates this relationship. These findings can influence the creation of more successful branding strategies that are inclusive and attentive to the demands of both male and female students, thereby boosting the firms' attractiveness and competitiveness. The key problem this study tackles is the lack of complete understanding of how branding affects students' buying culture in Enugu State, with a specific focus on gender as a moderating element. While manufacturing companies engage extensively in branding initiatives, there is inadequate empirical research to assess whether these methods effectively affect student behaviour across different gender groups. The

lack of knowledge in this area poses a difficulty for manufacturing companies that want to attract a wide range of students and maximise their branding influence. The present study aimed to investigate the influence of branding on undergraduate students' purchasing behavior in Enugu State.

The aim of the study was to determine the influence of branding on universities undergraduate students buying culture in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Determine the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product.
- Determine the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product.
- Determine the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product.

The following research questions guided the study.

- What is the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product?
- What is the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product?
- What is the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product?

The following null hypotheses that were tested at 0.05 were used in the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product.

Methods

This study utilises a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for gathering and examining data to comprehend the influence of branding on the buying culture of students in Enugu State, with gender serving as a moderating variable. The choice of the descriptive survey design is based on its ability to gather data from a large number of participants, allowing the researcher to accurately characterise the current conditions and links between the variables being investigated. This design is specifically appropriate for investigating the views, attitudes, and behaviours of students in relation to branding and the influence of these aspects on their buying culture.

The research was carried out in Enugu State, situated in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Enugu State is renowned for its abundant cultural legacy and serves as a centre for educational establishments, encompassing both public and private universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The existence of these institutions renders the state a prime place for investigating the influence of branding on students' buying behaviour. The universities in Enugu State comprise the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Enugu State University of Science and Technology

(ESUT), as well as private institutions like Godfrey Okoye University and Renaissance University. The study population comprises undergraduate students currently enrolled at universities located within Enugu State. The reason for selecting this cohort is that undergraduate students are often dynamic customers who are susceptible to the influence of branding on their purchasing behaviour. The population comprises students of both genders across various academic levels and specialities. The projected aggregate number of undergraduate students in the chosen universities is around 50,000.

To run the study effectively and guarantee the data is representative, a sample is taken from the huge student population. The sample size is obtained using the Taro Yamane formula, a widely used method in social science research for calculating an appropriate sample size depending on the entire population. The sample size consists of roughly 397 (201 males and 196 females) students. The utilisation of a stratified random sampling approach guarantees the representation of various universities and gender groupings within the population. The categorisation is determined by the individuals' gender (male or female) and the type of educational institution they attend (public or private institutions). Following the process of stratification, random sampling is utilised to choose the ultimate participants from each strata.

The main tool used for gathering data is a standardised questionnaire named "Influence of Branding on Students Buying Habit Questionnaire (IBSBHQ)". It consists of 24 questions, each rated on a scale of highly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and severely disagree (1). All of the question items were arranged in a positive manner, and they were divided into three clusters. In order to verify the accuracy and reliability of the questionnaire, a process known as face validity was conducted. This involved having three professionals in the field of Business Education and

measurement and evaluation to review the instrument. The experts assessed the instrument's validity and applicability based on the suitable level of the instrument. A pilot study is conducted to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. A pilot research is carried out using a limited sample of 50 students who are not included in the primary investigation. Cronbach's alpha was employed to analyse the internal consistency of the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was trustworthy since the result exceeded the threshold of 0.70. Data collection was carried out by administering the questionnaire to the selected students.

The researcher and five research assistants disseminate the questionnaires to the participants in their different institutions. Out of the 397 questionnaires sent, only 363 were returned and completed accurately. Therefore, just these 363 questionnaires that were returned were utilised for the purpose of data analysis. The research questions were addressed by using the mean and standard deviation. The three hypotheses that led the investigation were examined using a t-test with the help of the statistical package for social sciences version 23. Any mean score above 2.5 were regarded as agreed while those below it were regarded as disagreed. Also, t-test values that were below 0.05 were rejected while those above 0.05 were accepted.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product

n = 395

Item Statement: Loyalty to Specific Product	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I consistently select products from my preferred brand due to its esteemed reputation.	2.92	..94	Agree
2. The primary determinant in my shopping decisions is the brand name, since it holds the utmost significance.	2.95	1.05	Agree
3. I have a profound emotional attachment to my preferred brand.	2.88	.96	Agree
4. I have never contemplated transitioning to an alternative brand due to my unwavering loyalty towards my preferred brand.	3.04	.95	Agree
5. The ideals and mission of my preferred brand are in harmony with my personal values.	2.74	.96	Agree
6. I have complete confidence in my preferred brand's consistent delivery of superior items.	2.80	1.04	Agree
7. I exhibit unwavering loyalty towards my preferred brand due to its distinctive attributes and advantages.	2.97	1.06	Agree
8. I would highly suggest my preferred brand to others due to its outstanding reputation.	2.72	1.00	Agree
Cluster Mean	2.88	1.00	Agree

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of the students responses on the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product. It shows that the mean ratings of the students on items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 2.88 with standard deviation of 1.00 indicates that branding has influence on undergraduate students` loyalty to specific brand of product

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	201	2.89	0.48	395	.459	.647	NS
Female	196	2.87	0.47				

NS = Not Significant

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product, $t(395) = .459$, $p = .647$. This implies that the null hypothesis formulated was accepted since the associated probability value of .647 was greater than the 0.05 significant level.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product

n = 395

Item Statement: Willingness to Pay Premium Prices	Mean	SD	Remarks
9. I am prepared to provide a premium price for a product from a reputable brand.	2.983	1.00	Agree
10. The prestige of a brand justifies the extra cost. I have confidence in premium brands to provide superior items.	2.71	1.02	Agree
11. I am prepared to allocate a higher budget for a product that accurately embodies my individual aesthetic preferences or societal standing.	2.89	.96	Agree
12. A robust brand name warrants a higher price tag.	2.67	.96	Agree
13. I have purchased a product at a higher price specifically due to its brand's esteemed reputation.	2.83	1.06	Agree
14. High-end brands have distinctive characteristics that warrant elevated costs.	2.75	1.13	Agree

15. Given the option, I would go for a premium brand instead of a generic one, even if it entails a higher price.	2.74	1.09	Agree
16. I am prepared to spend an additional amount for a product that is in accordance with my principles and beliefs.	2.99	.89	Agree
Cluster Mean	2.80	1.01	Agree

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of the students' responses on the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product. It shows that the mean ratings of the students on items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 2.80 with standard deviation of 1.01 indicates that branding has influence on undergraduate students' willingness to pay premium prices on a product.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	201	2.81	0.47	395	.305	.761	NS
Female	196	2.79	0.47				

NS = Not Significant

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product, $t(395) = .305$, $p = .761$. This implies that the null hypothesis formulated was accepted since the associated probability value of .761 was greater than the 0.05 significant level.

Research Question 3

What is the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product

n = 395

Item Statement: Attitude Towards a Product	Mean	SD	Remarks
17. I exhibit a heightened level of optimism when it comes to things originating from brand that I have confidence in.	2.74	1.03	Agree
18. The reputation of a company has a direct impact on how I perceive the quality of its products.	2.92	.98	Agree
19. If I have a favourable opinion of a brand, I am more inclined to suggest its products.	2.74	.97	Agree
20. The ideals and mission of a brand have a significant impact on my perception of its products.	2.84	1.04	Agree
21. I possess a heightened emotional attachment to things originating from my preferred brands.	2.69	1.06	Agree
22. Branding enhances the attractiveness of a thing to me.	2.75	1.06	Agree
23. I am less inclined to contemplate purchasing a product from a brand that is unfamiliar to me.	2.91	1.07	Agree
24. I exhibit a heightened level of optimism when it comes to things originating from businesses that I have confidence in.	2.60	1.16	Agree
Cluster Mean	2.77	1.05	Agree

Table 5 shows the mean ratings of the students' respondents on the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product. It shows that the mean ratings of the students on items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 8 are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 2.77 with standard deviation of 1.05 indicates that branding has influence on undergraduate students' attitude towards specific product.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude specific product

Table 6: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	201	2.70	0.51	395	-3.031	.003	S
Female	196	2.85	0.51				

S = Significant

Table 6 reveals that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product, $t(395) = -3.031$, $p = .003$. This implies that the null hypothesis formulated was not accepted since the associated probability value of .003 was not greater than the 0.05 significant level.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicated that branding had a significant influence on undergraduate students' loyalty to certain product brands in Enugu State. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the average answer ratings between male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students' loyalty to certain product brands. This conclusion aligns with Casidy and Wymer (2015), who discovered that all three dimensions of brand strength—brand familiarity, brand remarkability, and brand attitude—are strongly associated with WOM through the partial mediating effects of contentment and loyalty. Casidy's (2013) study also supports this discovery, showing a substantial correlation between students' perceptions of a university's brand orientation and satisfaction, loyalty, and post-enrolment communication activity. Branding's influence on customer loyalty may stem from the fact that a strong brand receives consistent patronage.

The findings indicated that branding had a significant influence on undergraduate students' willingness to pay premium prices on a product. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the average answer ratings between male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students' willingness to pay premium prices on a product. This conclusion aligns with Koschate-Fischer et al (2012), whose study results of the three complementary experimental studies reveal that branding indeed has a positive impact on willingness to pay. Branding's influence on buyers willingness to pay premium prices may stem from the fact that a strong brand produces quality products with high price.

The findings indicated that branding had a significant influence on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the average answer ratings between male and female students on the influence of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product. This conclusion aligns with Elseidi and El-Baz (2016), whose study revealed that brand image has a strong effect on the consumers' attitude toward a specific brand. Branding's influence on buyers attitude may stem from the fact that buyers mostly exhibit good attitude towards a good brand.

Conclusion

From the foregoing findings and discussion, it could be concluded that branding has influence on undergraduate students' loyalty to specific brand of product. Also, branding has influence on undergraduate students' willingness to pay premium prices on a product. Finally, the study concluded that branding has influence on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product as most undergraduate students shows positive attitude towards their favourite brand both on campus and out the school.

Recommendation

The listed below recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study.

- Manufacturer should maintain their reputation so that customers in return will be more loyal to their brand.
- Despite that customers are ready to provide a premium price for a product from a reputable brand; manufacturers should not see it as an advantage by continuously increasing the price of their products unjustly.
- Brand improvement should always be manufacturing priority in gaining buyers positive attitude towards the manufacturers' brand.

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