

**INFLUENCE OF BRAND EQUITY ASSETS ON CONSUMER PURCHASE
CHOICES: THE CASE OF BREASTFEEDING PILLOWS IN NAIROBI**

By

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in another university.

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Date: _____

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

Signature: _____

Name: DR. R.M Musyoka

Date: _____

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I wish to acknowledge the support of many who contributed to my success in completing this project.

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to look at the influence of brand equity assets on Consumer behavior with the product in study being the breastfeeding pillow. There are four major brand equity assets categories – brand awareness, loyalty, brand association and perceived quality. Amongst all the other factors that could influence consumer purchase behavior – the social, psychological, cultural and personal factors, this study seeks to look at how each of the brand assets above influence the purchase decisions of consumers in Nairobi for the breastfeeding pillow.

This study is a descriptive study that also incorporates explanatory research. The population of interest is mothers found in Nairobi. The sampling frame consists of 52 hospitals, which drawn from private, public and mission hospitals all with different bed capacities. Data was collected using a questionnaire which had close ended questions and was administered by a research assistant to expectant mothers who would be selected systematically at the antenatal waiting area.

Key findings showed that the brand equity assets do have significant influence in the purchase of the breastfeeding pillow in Nairobi. The findings were interesting showing how each of the equity assets influenced the purchase choices. Of significant note was the relationship between the brand equity assets and the variables measuring the assets. The study also brought out the influence of other contextual factors that were worth noting and their respective influence on purchase choices.

In conclusion, the study showed the importance of brand equity as far as the area of study is concerned. On the other hand, it also brought out areas that need to be invested in to further build on brand equity. The study also highlighted relationships between variables found within brand equity assets that can be studied and analyzed further.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The external environment that we live in is constantly changing. This environment consists of interrelated variables, which include political, technological, economic and social that help organizations or governments to understand the opportunities, threats and constraints that exist. As players within the global economy, it has become imperative for Kenyan marketers to anticipate, understand and appreciate the changes in the external environment. The benefits of this are of great strategic value for competitive advantage and business growth.

On the economic front, the current financial crisis has taken center stage with prospects for global growth declining (www.imf.org). This situation has resulted in massive job losses, decreased global trade, low commodity prices as well decreased consumer spending. The effect of this downturn has been felt locally with organizations downsizing staff numbers and re-organizing budgets.

On the flip side, technology by itself has been a major driver for business growth and social change. Technological improvements have meant better efficiency for businesses, growth of markets, more competitive advantage, faster and better communication amongst other gains. The advent of the ubiquitous Internet has in major way leveled the playing ground for both big and small businesses they all compete on one front and their markets are not defined by geographical boundaries. The technology front in Kenya has witnessed tremendous growth in the last ten years as we have sought to move at the same pace as the rest of the world. Today in Kenya, the combined subscriber base of the two leading mobile networks has risen to 12,933,653 as at 2007/2008. Further, forecasts on Internet usage state that in the next five years, Internet users will reach approximately seven million (CCK Website)

Our culture and social structures today have not remained impassive to the influences from the external environment. Culture, defined as everything in the surrounding that is made by human beings and consists of both tangible things – such as food, furniture, clothing and tools and intangible concepts such as education, the legal system, our value system, healthcare and religion (Shiffman,& Kanuk 2008).

Our Kenyan culture has experienced influences from several fronts. The concept of the traditional family is being challenged with external concepts such as being “gay” surfacing in some African cultures. Family structures are changing and issues of “divorce” and “single parenting” are becoming commonplace. The growth of the Internet and other electronic information channels has enabled today’s consumer to be a lot more informed. Attitudes and beliefs, lifestyles, our purchase choices and value system are constantly being redefined by the world around us (Shiffman,& Kanuk 2008).

Today, a lot more women support their homes financially. The traditional role of women of being mothers and housewives is changing. The woman has become more educated hence able to secure employment. Further, the cost of living today has made a demand for a second income in the home necessitating the woman to work. Family units have also decreased in size meaning that the traditional support both social and economic has been gradually diminishing (Tumuti, 1982)

The lifestyle changes above have been gradually affecting different aspects of family life. Child nutrition and specifically, breastfeeding as a practice in Kenya has been greatly affected by the socio-cultural changes in today’s society. According to research, the underlying causes of the difficulties in breastfeeding are the pressure of modern urban life, lack of support from close female relatives and delivering of babies in hospitals (King, 1992).

1.1.1 The Concept of Brand Equity

Brand Equity is a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/ or that firms’ customers. The major asset categories are: Brand name awareness, Brand loyalty, Perceived quality and Brand associations (Aaker, 1996). The last category worth mentioning includes other proprietary brand assets such as trademarks, patents and copyrights.

Aaker (1996) has elaborated on the assets and suggested that firms need to create and enhance these assets, as that is the only way a firm will gain value from them. Further, he mentions that value is created in different ways and in order to manage brand equity assets effectively and to

make informed decisions about brand building activities, it is important to understand how strong brands create value. The value created by brand equity assets is not only for the firm but for the customer as well, the word customer here referring to both end users and those at the infrastructure level.

Aaker (1996) also observes that for assets or liabilities to underlie brand equity, they must be linked to the name and symbol of the brand. Further, he says that if the brand's name or symbols should change, some or all the assets or liabilities could be affected and even lost, although some might be shifted to the new name and symbol.

1.1.2 Infant Nutrition

Children have the right to access safe and nutritious food and nutrition is a universally recognized component of the child's right to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Poor nutrition among infants and young children results primarily from inappropriate feeding practices where the timing, quantity and quality of foods given to infants are often inadequate. Optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices are essential to meet the nutritional needs of children in the first years of life (GOK, 2007)

Breastfeeding a baby exclusively for the first six months and continuing thereafter until the child is two years is recommended as foundational and essential to child nutrition and survival. Evidence for promoting child survival demonstrates that breastfeeding saves lives and that exclusive breastfeeding protects against common childhood diseases such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections. Further breastfeeding has important long-term benefits that include reduced risks of obesity, allergies, heart disease, diabetes, breast and ovarian cancer in women, as well as anaemia in women. It also facilitates child spacing. Support for breastfeeding will be essential to achieve Kenya's targets for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and child survival (GOK, 2007).

The challenges for child survival in Kenya remain enormous. Kenya ranks among countries with the highest rates of under-five mortality with less than three in every hundred Kenyan infants being exclusively breastfed for the first six months. The implication is that 97% of

Kenyan infants are being exposed daily to an increased risk of disease and have lowered immunity because they are given foods and drinks other than breast milk before six months of age (GOK, 2007).

The statistics above are startling and it is clear that it is only through concerted efforts that any progress will be made. In the year 2006, breastfeeding pillows were introduced in the Kenyan market as one way of mitigating some of the challenges associated with the practical challenges of breastfeeding for today's mother. The breastfeeding pillows were designed to ease off the discomforts associated with poor posturing during breastfeeding and to enable a mother breastfeed with ease. Further they were a welcome relief for mothers who with changing lifestyles and increasing demands on their time could use a product that would provide both convenience and comfort. Through an aggressive consumer education effort coupled with market penetration in Nairobi, both health providers and mothers have embraced the pillows for the practical support they give. The Product has also sought to create awareness through print advertising and build associations through involvement in functions targeted to mothers.

There are huge sales opportunities for these pillows both in Kenya and neighboring countries demonstrated by the sales trends that have increased over 100% in less than two years. Current birth rates indicate that there are 38 births per 1000 people, statistics as at 2008 (Index Mundi Website). From a study done on population trends, statistics show that Kenya's population is still concentrated in the younger ages. Our population growth rate stands at 2.758% and the population is expected to increase significantly almost by another 5 million people by 2020. Bearing in mind this growth, it is projected that the population in working ages will grow fast and the women in childbearing ages will increase to more than 15 million by 2020 (Adhlaka, 1992).

The competitive landscape however has changed in the last two years. Currently three types of breastfeeding pillows dominate the market. The products are similar in nature but have distinct differences to a keen eye. Competitor activity has included product imitation, price undercutting and in some instances brand name infringement.

Against this backdrop, the company that introduced breastfeeding pillows in the market introduced a family brand name – Baby Banda – which was launched in the market in 2008. Since its launch, Baby Banda has actively invested in creating and building its brand equity assets with a keen focus on the family brand name. However, it is a young brand within an industry niche that has huge opportunity. It needs to be nurtured because the future holds promise and understanding how consumers are interacting with the brand will be very critical for its success.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The four major brand equity asset categories and how they co-relate as mentioned above are fundamental for the success of any brand. Indeed it can be said that through investing in each of the assets – awareness, loyalty, associations and perceived quality – a firm has the opportunity of creating competitive advantage for its brands and in turn generating value that can be measured tangibly. Brand equity assets are created and managed and are fundamental for the success of any brand in today's dynamic and competitive marketplace (Aaker, 1996)

Kenya's birth rate stands at 37.89 births/1,000 population as at 2008. Kenya ranks as the 29th country worldwide (Index Mundi Website). The birth rate has been on an increase over the last three years and the government has initiated a drive to encourage breastfeeding and there lies a growing market potential for breastfeeding pillows. The Baby Banda breastfeeding pillow has been the oldest breastfeeding pillow in the market. Beginning as the only such product in the market a couple of years back, the competitive landscape has changed with the brand facing competition from similar cheaper products. The brand is seeking to grow in the midst of this competition both in terms of market share and market size. It is imperative therefore to understand how consumers are buying and whether the brand equity assets are influencing this relationship.

Studies on brand equity in Kenya have been done covering different industries. The more recent studies have touched on the financial industry (Wambua, 2006), Consumer Based Brand equity and financial performance and Kamiri (2005), A survey of creation and application of brand equity by Insurance companies in Kenya. The fast moving consumables industry has

also received some research interest, Kisese (2006) through the study of the determinants of brand equity in the bottled water industry.

In light of the above, this research seeks to establish whether out of all the things that could possibly influence the purchase of a breastfeeding pillow by a mother in Kenya, if the brand equity assets play any role and if so, to what significance. This proposed study therefore seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- i. Do Brand Equity assets in anyway influence a consumer's purchase decision of a breastfeeding pillow?
- ii. To what extent do brand equity assets influence a consumer's purchase decision for a breastfeeding pillow?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research hopes to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To determine whether brand awareness influences the purchase choice of a breastfeeding pillow
- ii. To determine the influence of brand loyalty on a consumers purchase choice of a breastfeeding pillow
- iii. To find out to what extent perceived quality will influence the purchase of a breast feeding pillow
- iv. To determine whether brand associations influence the purchase choices of breastfeeding pillows by consumers in Nairobi

1.4 Importance of the Study

Babies are born everyday and mothers must buy baby products. The industry for baby products is dominated by a few local products and several international brands and imports. Industry players need to understand how consumers make their purchase choices and whether there is any relevance in brand equity assets.

Secondly, future investors in this industry both local and international would find the research findings of this study important for either launching new brands or repositioning existing

brands because they would be able to understand whether there is any pay off in investing in a brand.

Thirdly, policy makers such as the Ministry of Health, Breastfeeding support groups and others may find this research beneficial. It is hoped that through this research, there will be general indicators of the degree of usage of this product by mothers hence an appreciation of the contribution of the breastfeeding pillow to supporting the breastfeeding campaign. It could be a good indicator for the need for the policy groups to adopt these pillows in future breastfeeding campaign efforts. Last but not least, the academicians and researchers may use the results as a source of reference.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of Consumer Behaviour

The term consumer behavior is defined as the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs (Shiffman, Kanuk 2008). These scholars also point out that consumer behaviour focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption-related items and that would include what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, how often they use it, how they evaluate it after the purchase, the impact of such evaluations on future purchases and how they dispose of it

Individuals are all unique as persons but one thing we have in commonality is that we are all consumers – of various things – food, shelter, clothing, housing and even ideas. The choices we make as consumers are very significant- they can determine the health of an economy, the success or failure of an organization or product or industry for that matter. It is for this reason that marketers need to understand and know all they can about the consumer.

The field of consumer behaviour is rooted in the marketing concept (Shiffman, Kanuk 2008). The marketing concept is best illustrated when marketers choose to first understand the consumers' needs through research and as a result make products that the consumer need and buy.

Consumer buying behavior refers to the buying behavior of the ultimate consumers, those who purchase products for personal or household use (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997). Consumer buying behavior therefore seeks to look at the actions and decisions of the end consumer (not a business user as they buy and use products).

2.1.1 Major factors that influence Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer behaviour can be viewed as a complex decision process and as such, there are various factors that influence it. Broadly, consumer-buying behavior is influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Cultural factors exert the most influence (Kotler 1999).

Culture can be defined as everything in our surroundings that is made by human beings (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997). This would include tangible items such as food, furniture, buildings, clothing and tools and intangible concepts such as education, the legal system, healthcare and religion. Culture is such a part of our everyday lives that it invariably influences our buying behavior. According to Kibera and Waruingi (1988), an important characteristic of culture worth noting is that it is constantly changing to adapt to new situations and new sources of knowledge. This characteristic is very apparent in our society today and is reflected in areas such as our eating habits, dressing manner or even the dynamics of family life. A culture can be divided into sub-culture according to geographic regions or human characteristics such as age or ethnic backgrounds (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997). Social class is another important aspect that marketers take into consideration when making marketing programs. All societies do exhibit stratification with status systems being defined or based on considerations such as age, sex, occupation, economic situation and political station. Kotler (1999) further defines social classes as relatively homogenous and enduring divisions in a society which are hierarchically ordered and whose members share similar values, interests and behavior. Worth noting is that social classes are “open” because people can move in and out of a social class (Kibera and Waruingi 1988).

In addition to the various Cultural factors, a consumer’s behavior is influenced by Social factors such as reference groups, family, social roles and statuses. A reference group can be defined as any person or group that serves as a point of comparison or (reference) for an individual in forming either general or specific values, attitudes or a specific guide for behavior (Shiffman, Kanuk 2008). Another key social factor influencing consumer behavior is the Family. According to Kotler (1999), the family is the most important consumer-buying organization in society. He says that family members constitute the most influential primary

group. It is important for marketers to understand the various roles within a family setting and the respective influences they have on a purchase decision in the purchase of products and services.

Roles and statuses also fall under the category of social factors. A role consists of the activities that a person is expected to perform. Each role carries with it a status. People choose products that communicate their role and status in society (Kotler 1999).

The third set of factors that influence consumer behaviour are referred to as Personal factors. Personal characteristics such as age, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, personality, self-concept and an individual's stage in their life cycle will determine their buying decisions.

People buy different goods and services at the different stages of their life cycle and consumption is shaped by a family's life cycle. In terms of occupation, depending on an individual's nature of work, certain consumption habits can be identified. Marketers try to identify the occupational groups that have above-average interest in their products and services. Product choice is also greatly affected by economic circumstances. Kotler (1999) has defined lifestyle as the person's pattern of living in the world as expressed in activities, interests and opinions. Through psychographics – which refers to the science of measuring and categorizing consumer lifestyles, Marketers try to search for relationships between their products and lifestyle groups in order that they aim the brand more clearly to the respective lifestyle group. Personality refers to the distinguishing psychological characteristics that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to behaviour (Kotler 1999). Personalities can be described using certain traits hence the development of personality types. Marketers seek to understand the strong co-relations between personality types and the choice made for certain brands/ products.

The fourth set of factors affecting consumer behavior are referred to as Psychological factors, the four types which are motivation, perception, learning and beliefs and attitudes.

A motive is an internal energy giving force that directs a person's activities towards satisfying a need or achieving a goal. Motivation is then defined as a set of mechanisms for controlling movement towards goals (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997). A buyer's action at any time is affected by a set of motives rather than just one. A motivated person is ready to act and how the motivated person actually acts is influenced by his or her perception of the situation. Perception has been defined as the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting information inputs to produce meaning. Perception depends not only on the physical stimuli but also on the stimuli's relation to the surrounding field and on conditions within the individual. It is important to note that people can emerge with different perceptions of the same object.

Learning involves changes in an individual's behavior arising from experience (Kotler 1999). Shiffman and Kanuk (2008) have further expounded on the aspect of learning by defining consumer learning as a process that continually evolves and changes as a result of the acquisition of new knowledge of from actual experience. Both of these serve as feedback to the individual which then determines future behavior in similar situations. They further mention that experience in the learning process doesn't mean that the learning is deliberately sought but rather that it can be incidental, acquired by accident or without much effort. Through doing and learning, people acquire beliefs and attitudes. Kotler (1999) defines beliefs as a descriptive thought that a person holds on something. He says that beliefs can be based on knowledge, opinion or faith and manufacturers often want to determine what beliefs consumers have about their brands or products as that may encourage or inhibit purchases.

Attitude refers to an individual's enduring evaluation, feelings and behavioral tendencies towards an object or activity (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel, 1997). They note that the objects towards which we have attitudes may be tangible or intangible, living or non-living and that some attitudes relate to things that have a major impact on our lives, while others are less important. Attitudes are a learned predisposition. An individual learns attitudes through experiences and interaction with other people. Attitudes relevant to purchase behavior are formed as a result of direct experience with the product, information acquired from others and exposure to mass media (e.g. Advertising). While attitudes may result from behavior, they are

not synonymous with behaviour. Instead they reflect either a favourable or an unfavourable evaluation of the attitude object. Shiffman and Kanuk (2008) have noted that as a predisposition, attitudes have a motivational quality: they might propel a consumer toward a particular behaviour or repel the consumer away from a particular behaviour. Just as attitudes are learned, they can be changed. Kotler (1999) and Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel (1997) agree on this and mention that an individual's attitudes remain generally stable and do not change from moment to moment.

2.1.2 Types of Consumer Buying Behavior

People engage in decision making on a daily basis for things ranging from food to clothing to larger purchases such as cars or houses. The amount of time and effort - mental and physical - expended varies from one consumer to another and from one situation to another. Consumer decisions can thus be classified into one of the three broad categories: Routine response behavior, limited decision making and extensive decision-making.

A consumer practices routine response behavior when buying frequently purchased low cost items that need very little search and decision efforts such as bread or milk. In situations such as these a consumer may prefer to purchase a particular brand though he/ she may be familiar with more than one brand in that product class and views more than one brand as being acceptable (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997).

Limited decision-making refers to a situation in which a consumer buys products occasionally and when they need to obtain information about an unfamiliar brand in a familiar product category (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997). This type of decision-making requires moderate amount of time for information gathering and deliberation.

The most complex decision-making behavior is referred to as extensive decision-making. This type of behavior comes into play when a purchase involves unfamiliar, expensive or infrequently bought products such as cars, homes, holidays or insurance schemes. The consumer uses many criteria to evaluate alternative brands and spends much time seeking

information and comparing the alternatives before deciding on the purchase (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, Ferrel 1997).

2.1.3 The Consumer Buying Decision Process

Various models have been developed to explain the various stages consumers go through when making purchases. One common model described as the “five-stage model” (Kotler 1999). This model represents the typical five steps that a consumer may go through when making a purchase decision: problem recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. It is important to note that a consumer does not necessarily sequentially go through all of the five stages when buying a product. A woman buying a regular brand of oil will skip information search and evaluation of alternatives and go straight to the purchase decision.

The buying process begins when a buyer recognizes a problem or need. The need can be triggered by an external or internal stimuli. An aroused consumer will then be inclined to search for information. Consumers will then make a value judgement as to which brand is preferred to another based on the product attributes and the importance they attach to the respective attributes.

The purchase decision follows which defines the actual transaction. Kotler (1999) however points out that this decision can be influenced by two factors: the attitudes of others or unanticipated situational factors that may erupt to change the purchase intention. If a purchase is actually made, a consumer will experience some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which Kotler says, is important information for a manufacturer because it can make a difference between whether a customer will buy the product again, recommend to others or speak unfavourably about it.

The Five-Stage Model Consumer Buying Decision Process

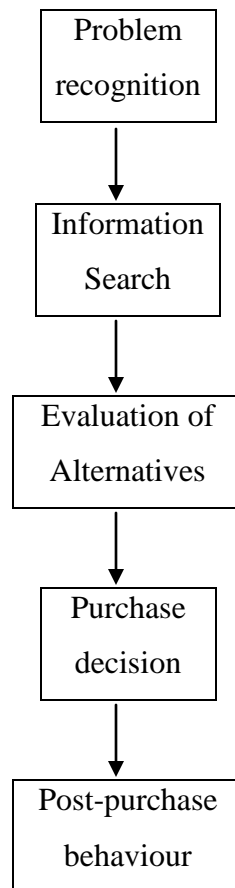


Figure 1

Source: Kotler Philip (1999) Marketing Management, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi Millennium Edition

2.2 The Concept of Brand Equity

A Brand has been defined as a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitors (Kotler 1999). A Brand identifies a seller or manufacturer. It can be a name, logo, trademark or other symbol. A brand promises to deliver a certain set of features, benefits and services consistently to consumers.

Brand equity has been defined as the added value to the firm, the trade or the consumer with which a given brand endows a product (Farquhar, 1989). It has also been defined as the measurable financial value in transactions that accrues to a product or service from successful programs and activities (Smith, Schulman, 1991).

One underlying concept with regards to the definition above is that brand equity is defined with respect to the value it generates. Aaker (1996) elaborates on this fact through his definition that states that Brand equity is a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers. The major asset categories are Brand name awareness, Brand loyalty, Perceived quality and Brand association.

Brand equity can also be defined as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on customer response" (Brand Channel Website). One emphasis of this definition is on "differentiation" because without this differentiation, one brand is not different from the next one and therefore can never seek a premium. Brand knowledge within this definition refers to customers knowing about the differentiation. Customers should be aware of the differentiation and should appreciate that the differentiation is meaningful for them and as a result, customers should respond favorably to this differentiation. Kohli and Leuthesser (Brand Channel Website) further add that the response should hopefully be reflected in the customers desire to demonstrate some loyalty towards the product and in their willingness to pay a premium for their preference.

According to Aaker (1996) brand equity assets are critical because they generate value for an organization. He further adds that each asset generates value in a different way, and generates value for both the customer as well as for the firm. These assets/ liabilities must be linked to a brands symbol or name to consolidate the gains made through the assets.

2.2.1 Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness can be defined as the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker 1991). Awareness can also be used to refer to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumers mind. Aaker (1996) says that awareness is measured according to the different ways in which consumers remember a brand ranging from recognition (which refers to whether the consumer has ever been exposed to the brand) to recall (which refers to the brands within a certain product class that a consumer can recall) to "top of mind" (refers to the first brand recalled) to dominant (the only brand recalled).

Rossiter (1993) introduces definitions on brand awareness and acceptance. He emphasizes on what he refers to as "the recognition set" and "the recall set" which he says define brand awareness and he also introduces the concept of brand acceptance. He mentions that awareness can occur either by recognition or recall. He refers to brand recognition as "aided recall" and brand recall as "unaided recall" and that both are needed to distinguish recognizable brands from recallable brands and to distinguish both of these categories from truly unknown brands.

Brand recognition reflects familiarity gained from past exposure. Recognition does not necessarily involve remembering where the brand was encountered before, why it differs from other brands or even what product class it falls under. It is simply remembering that there was a past exposure to the brand. Aaker (1996) says that research in psychology has shown that recognition alone can result in more positive feelings toward nearly anything because consumers prefer an item that they have previously seen to one that is new to them. Familiar brands always have an edge to unfamiliar ones. Kohli and Leuthesser (Brand Channel Website) add to this thought by saying that repetition of a certain brand to consumers brings familiarity and eventually liking. Thus even in low-risk buying situations, consumers are attracted to brands with which they are familiar and tend to shy away from brands they view as strangers.

Aaker (1996) points out that further research on recognition says that consumer affinity for a familiar brand is not instinctive response. It reveals that when consumers see a brand and remember that they have seen it before (perhaps even several times) they realize that the company is spending money to support the brand. Since it is generally believed that companies will not spend money on bad products, consumers take that as a “signal” that the brand is good.

The Graveyard model (Aaker 1996) developed by Young and Rubicam Europe under the guidance of Jim Williams demonstrates the relative power of recall. In this model, brands in a product class (motor vehicles) were plotted on recognition versus recall graph. These variables (recall and recognition) could be measured and these measurements could be used to position each brand on the graph a finding that was consistent across product classes was that brands tended to follow the curved line as shown in the figure below

The Graveyard Model

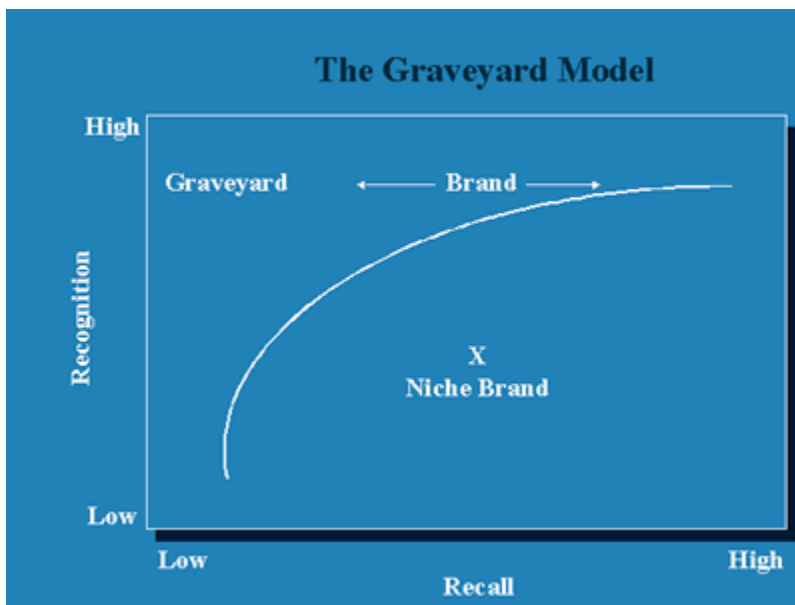


Figure 2

Source: Aaker David (1996) Building Strong Brands, The Free Press

There are two exceptions to the findings above, each of which reveals the importance of recall. One exception is healthy niche brands, which fall below the line because they are not known to a substantial group of customers and therefore have relatively low overall recognition. These brands however have a high recall among respective loyal customer groups and their low

recognition is not necessarily an indication of poor performance. It's important to note that healthy niche players sometimes have the potential to expand recognition and thus the scope of their customer base.

The second exception is the graveyard, an area in the upper left hand corner populated by brands with high recognition but low product recall. This means that customers know about the brand but it will not come to mind when considering a purchase. Breaking out the graveyard can actually be hindered by the high recognition because there's little reason for people to engage in a story (however new) about a familiar brand.

One point that the graveyard model proves is that high recognition is not necessarily the mark of a strong brand – it is associated with weak ones as well. The dynamics of brands located in the upper middle or upper right can be important predictors of future brand health. Movement towards the graveyard is associated with sliding sales and market share. If a brand however is moving away from the graveyard sales and market share can be expected to increase. The graveyard model is proof that recall is as important as recognition.

Brand name dominance represents the essence of ultimate awareness where in a recall task, most customers can only provide the name of a single brand. This ultimate success can be tragic if the brand name becomes a common label for the product that it is not legally protectable and is lost. It is therefore that a company makes careful selection on brand names and begins protecting them early.

Brand awareness works to help the brand in certain ways. Aaker (1991) says that brand awareness is an anchor to which other associations can be attached. This is because a name has to be established first and then feelings can be associated with the name thereafter. Brand recognition he says is always the first step in the communication task. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, recognition provides the brand with a sense of familiarity and people like the familiar.

Thirdly, name awareness is usually a signal of commitment and substance because it is reasoned that a brand name is usually recognized when a firm has invested to ensure some

exposure of the same. Lastly, Aaker (1991) says that awareness enables a brand to be in the “considered set of brands” during a purchase decision.

Because consumers are bombarded everyday with marketing messages marketers are faced with the challenge of establishing recognition and recall of their brands. There are two key things that are important as marketers grapple with this challenge:

A broad sales base is usually an enormous asset. It is expensive and often impossible to support brands with a relatively small sales unit. Secondly companies that operate outside the normal media channels by using event promotions, sponsorships, publicity, sampling and other attention getting approaches will be most successful in building vibrant awareness.

2.2.2 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality can be defined as the customer’s perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives (Aaker 1991).

Aaker (1991) mentions that perceived quality cannot be objectively determined in part because it is a perception and also because judgments about what is important to customers are involved and customers differ sharply in their personalities, needs and preferences. He further says that perceived quality is an intangible, overall feeling about a brand and that it is defined relative to an intended purpose and a set of alternatives.

Perceived quality has been elevated to the status of a brand asset for several reasons. Firstly, only perceived quality amongst all the brand assets has been shown to drive financial performance. Secondly, perceived quality is often a major (if not principal) strategic thrust of a business and thirdly, perceived quality is linked to and often drives other aspects of how a brand is perceived.

Aaker (1991) says that perceived quality as a strategic thrust is reflected through the enormous quality management programs that are ran by organizations. In the last ten years or so, several

companies have sought to get ISO certification a mark of quality. TQM (Total Quality Management) programs or related programs have been central to many firms and perceived quality is usually the end goal of TQM programs. Many firms explicitly consider quality to be one of their primary values and include it in their mission statements.

Perceived quality can be used as a key positioning dimension for corporate brands especially for brands that span across various product classes. Further for many brands perceived quality defines the competitive landscape and their position within that landscape. Perceived quality is also usually at the heart of what customers are buying and can influence the perception a consumer has of a brand.

Perceived quality also strongly influences a consumer's "reason to buy". It's a pivotal influence as it puts a brand strongly within the consideration set. Further, the perceived quality advantage provides a brand the option of charging a premium price. The price premium enables a company to increase profits and/ or provide resources with which to reinvest in the brand.

Another value created by perceived quality is that it is meaningful to retailers, distributors and other channel members as they desire to carry brands that are well regarded that customers want (Aaker 1991). He further adds that perceived quality can also be exploited by introducing brand extensions using the brand name to enter new product categories.

Aaker (1991) says that there are several things that influence perceived quality. The dimensions that underlie a perceived quality judgment depend on the context, in this case either the product context or service context. The product context looks at aspects such as performance of a product, features, conformance with specifications, reliability, durability, serviceability and finish. The service context on the other hand looks at the physical/ tangible features, reliability, competence, responsiveness and empathy.

It is important to note that to achieve the perception of quality, the quality claim must have substance. This means that a firm needs to have an understanding of what quality means to

their market segments as well as a supportive culture and a quality improvement process that will enable the organization to deliver quality products and services. Creating a quality product is not enough; perceptions of quality must be created.

Perceived quality differs from actual quality for a variety of reasons:

If a consumer has had a previous negative experience with a product, they may be overly influenced by that poor image of quality. Therefore they may not believe any new claims on quality. It is therefore important to protect a brand from gaining a reputation for shoddy quality from which recovery is difficult and sometimes impossible.

Secondly, a company could be achieving quality on a dimension their consumers do not think is important. Thirdly, consumers do not have all the information necessary to make a rational and objective judgment on what quality is – and even if they do, they may lack the time and motivation to process it. As a result they will rely on one or two cues that they associate with quality. For a marketer, the key is to understand and manage these cues properly, understand the little things that consumers use as a basis for making judgment.

2.2.3 Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1991) defines brand loyalty as a measure of the attachment a customer has to the brand. Brand loyalty is also defined as a measure of how often a customer is inclined to choose the same brand when buying from the product class (Kohli and Leuthesser, Brand Channel Website). They further add that if most customers are indifferent to brand names and buy primarily on the basis of features, price and convenience, then very little brand loyalty exists.

Aaker (1996) says that a highly loyal customer base can be expected to generate very predictable sales and profit stream and this makes brand loyalty a significant brand equity asset. A brand without a loyal customer base is usually very vulnerable or has value only in its potential to create loyal customers.

He further says that the impact of brand loyalty on marketing costs is often substantial. It is much less costly to retain customers than to attract new ones. A common and expensive

mistake is to seek growth by enticing new customers to the brand while neglecting existing ones. The loyalty of customers also represents a substantial entry barrier to competitors in part because the cost of enticing customers to change loyalties is often prohibitively expensive. A study in a bank showed that reducing defections by just 5% generated 85% more profits, 50% more in an insurance brokerage firm, 30% more in an auto-service chain.

Aaker (1991) describes the levels of brand loyalty, which do not occur in a pure form but reflect the behaviour of customers who may represent these different levels of loyalty. The Non-loyal buyer is completely indifferent to the brand as each brand is perceived to be adequate and the brand name plays little role in the purchase decision. This buyer may be termed as a switcher or price buyer. The satisfied/ habitual buyer is satisfied with the product (or at least not dissatisfied). There's no dissatisfaction that would stimulate a change especially if that change involves effort for the buyer. The satisfied buyer with switching cost is a buyer who is satisfied but has switching costs in time, money or risks associated with switching. To attract these buyers, competitors need to overcome these switching costs by offering a benefit large enough to compensate for the switch. There is the buyer who likes the brand and considers it a friend. The committed buyer has a pride of discovering and/ or being users of the brand. This buyer will recommend the brand to others.

Aaker (1991) has expounded on the several types of loyalty programs that companies have introduced. Some of the most common are the frequent buyer programs used mostly by airlines and hotels. A frequent buyer program provides direct and tangible reinforcement for loyal behaviour. Not only do such programs enhance the value proposition of the brand but also act as a point of differentiation. They also affirm the commitment that firm is making to loyal customers.

Customer clubs are another form of loyalty program. Customer clubs are usually more involving than frequent buyer programs. However, like frequent buyer programs a customer club provides visible evidence that the firm really cares about its clientele and provides a vehicle through which a customer can identify with the brand, express his or her brand perceptions and attitude, and experience the brand with like-minded people.

Database Marketing is a by-product of frequent buyer programs and clubs whereby customer data is used for database marketing. This form of marketing is narrow and focused. News about new products and special promotions can be tailored to the segments most likely to respond. Targeted customers will feel the firm is connecting with them individually and the brand-customer relationship will become stronger. Through communicating using newsletters and personal notifications, a firm is able to match product needs to customers.

2.2.4 Brand Associations

A brand association is anything linked in memory to a brand (Aaker 1991). Customers make associations with brands and the associations have a level of strength. A link to a brand will be stronger when it is based on many experiences or exposures to communications rather than few. It is also stronger when it is supported by a network of other links.

A brand image is a set of associations usually organized in some meaningful way. The positioning concept reflects how people perceive a brand and it is closely associated with brand association and image. A well-positioned brand will have a competitively attractive position supported by strong associations. Brand associations might include product attributes, a celebrity spokesperson or a particular symbol. Brand associations are driven by the brand identity – which can be defined as what the organization wants the brand to stand for in the customers mind.

Brand associations create value. The value of a brand name is in the meaning it carries for the people the brand is speaking to. Associations represent a basis for purchase decisions and for loyalty. Among the ways in which associations create value to the firm and its customers is helping to process/ retrieve information, differentiating the brand, generating reason to buy, creating positive attitudes/ feelings and providing a basis for product extensions.

Associations can serve to summarize a set of facts and specifications that otherwise would be difficult for the customer to process and access and expensive for the firm to communicate. Further, an association can provide an important basis for differentiation, which can be a key competitive advantage for a brand. Thirdly, because many brand associations involve product

attributes or customer benefits, these provide a specific reason to buy and use the brand. Associations represent a basis for the purchase decisions and brand loyalty. Some associations are liked and stimulate positive feelings that get transferred to the brand. This is especially so when likeable spokesperson or symbols are used for brand communication that can evoke those feelings. An association can also provide the basis for an extension by creating a sense of fit between the brand name and a new product – or by providing a reason to buy the extension.

Aaker (1991) says that there are different types of associations and of interest to the brand manager are those associations that directly or indirectly affect buying behaviour. He has classified associations into eleven (11) categories. He begins with Product Attributes, which he says is one of the most used positioning strategies whereby an object is associated with a product attribute or characteristic. Developing these associations is effective because when the attribute is useful, the association can directly translate to a reason to buy or not to buy the brand. The challenge with this approach is for a company to identify an attribute that is important to a major segment and not already claimed by competitors.

An intangible factor is a second category. It refers to a general attribute such as perceived quality, technological leadership, perceived value or healthy food, which serves to summarize sets of more objective attributes. Intangible factors such as technology, health or nutrition is more difficult to counter. It has been argued that these intangible attributes are more effective than product attributes for positioning. Thirdly, customer benefits are regarded as a category because most product attributes provide customer benefits. What is critical though is to determine whether the dominant association is a product attribute or the customer benefit. It is therefore useful to distinguish between a rational benefit and a psychological benefit. A rational benefit is closely linked to a product attribute and would be part of a rational decision process. A psychological benefit relates to what feelings are engendered when buying or using the brand. The psychological benefit is a powerful type of association and it is more effective when accompanied by a rational benefit.

The fourth category is relative Price and it recognizes that there are different price categories and a brand needs to be clear on its price category. A fifth approach is to associate the brand

with use or application. User or customer association is the sixth category and it focuses on matching the positioning with a certain segment. Identifying a brand with its target segment is often a good way to appeal to that segment. A point of caution however with this strategy is a strong user association can limit the ability of the brand to expand its market. Using a celebrity as a positioning statement has strong associations and linking a celebrity with a brand can often transfer those associations to the brand and makes the eighth category.

In the last four sets of categories, lifestyles/ personality looks at the traits a brand would have if it “were a person” and the association is then skewed towards that “created person” who would represent the brand. Product class as a type of association focuses on efforts of a brand to associate itself with the product class. Last but not least, most positioning strategies have competition as a frame of reference - whether explicit or implicit. It is useful to consider positioning with respect to a competitor for two reasons – firstly, it is because the competitor may already have a firm well developed image developed over many years which can be used as a bridge to help communicate another image referenced to it. Secondly, it is more important for customers to just believe you are better than a given competitor rather than knowing how good you are.

Lastly, the country/ geographic area associations are regarded as a category and more so because these aspects can be a strong symbol when connected to products, materials and capabilities. They are values that can be exploited with regards to a brand.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design

This is a descriptive survey and will also incorporate explanatory research as it is intended to establish the influence of brand equity assets on consumer purchases choices. The study will focus on Nairobi consumers and the purchase of breastfeeding pillows.

3.2 The Population

The population of interest is both pregnant and breastfeeding mothers found in Nairobi.

3.3 Sample Frame

For this study we have adopted the NHIF (National Hospital Insurance Fund) accredited list of Hospitals in Nairobi, total number of 65 Hospitals – Appendix 1. Out of the 65 Hospitals, 1 hospital is a mental hospital, the other a spinal injury hospital and the last one a prison hospital all which would not be relevant for this research. This leaves a total of 62 hospitals of which, 52 are Private, 7 are Mission hospitals and 3 are public Hospitals.

The sampling frame will consist of the 52 Private hospitals. However it is prudent to note that these Hospitals have different bed capacities as represented below:

Bed Capacity	Private Hospital
0 –100	44
101 – 200	6
201 – 300	2

Table 1

A sample size of 50 pregnant and breastfeeding women was considered appropriate for this study, as the women would be drawn only from the Private Hospitals. In order to get a representative sample, hospitals were selected through simple random sampling technique whereby 8 Hospitals from the smaller bed category (0 – 100) would be sampled and 1 Hospital each from the other two categories, making a total of 10 Hospitals.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The primary data will be collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire has two parts: the Introduction and the Brand analysis section. The questionnaires have both open and close-ended questions.

A research assistant would distribute the questionnaires. A total of 5 mothers would be interviewed from each hospital, 2 of whom would be drawn from the hospital's antenatal clinic and 3 would be new mothers who have just delivered and have begun breastfeeding.

The mothers would be selected systematically with every 3rd mother in the antenatal waiting area receiving a questionnaire. The same system would be applied in hospital wards, every 3rd mother receiving a questionnaire.

3.5 Data Analysis

The questionnaires will be edited for completeness and consistency before processing. Data will be coded to enable responses to be grouped into categories.

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data and will include frequencies and percentages. Correlation analysis will be used to show the relationship between the variables, in this case, the degree to which brand equity assets (loyalty, awareness, perceived quality and associations) affect the purchasing decisions of consumers.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the findings of the study from the data collected. This chapter begins by providing general information in terms of the response rate and the general profile of the respondents. The presentation then delves into the four critical areas of study, namely the variables within each brand equity asset and how they influence consumer purchase. It begins with the influence of awareness on the purchase of the breastfeeding pillow, the variables within loyalty and how that influences purchase, factors that define association of the brand and the variables that influence quality perception on purchase.

4.1 Response Rate

Out of the 50 respondents targeted, 47 of them were reached and successfully provided information that was suitable for using the existing tool. This was a 94% response rate. From these respondents, 21% of them indicated that they had attained secondary education while 43% attained college education and 36% university education. Thirty eight (38%) of those interviewed indicated that they had an income of less than 20000, 30% earned between 21000 to 50000, 28% earned between 51000 to 80000 and the other 5% had an income ranging 81000 to 100000. Majority of the respondents (88%) were in the 18 to 34 years age group. The remaining 12% were between 35 to 40 years

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Level of education attained		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Secondary	9	21
	College	19	43
	University	16	36
	System	3	
Level of income			
Valid	below 20000	15	38
	21000 to 50000	12	30
	51000 to 80000	11	28
	81000 to 110000	2	5
	System	7	
Age			
Valid	18 to 34 yrs	36	88
	35 to 40 yrs	5	12
	System	6	

4.2 Influence of awareness on purchase

The table below represents the various variables representing awareness and how they influence purchase of the breastfeeding pillow:

Table 4.2: Influence of awareness on purchase

Influence of Awareness	No Extent		Little Extent		Some Extent		Great Extent	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Advertising	34	72.30%	4	8.50%	2	4.30%	7	14.90%
Information from relatives and friends	9	19.10%	9	19.10%	13	27.70%	16	34%
Distribution in hospitals/ shops/ supermarkets	20	43.50%	11	23.90%	8	17.40%	7	15.20%
Conspicuousness of Marketing Collateral	30	63.80%	5	10.60%	4	8.50%	8	17.00%
Uniqueness of Product packaging	19	40.40%	5	10.60%	9	19.10%	14	29.80%
How easy the brand name is to recall	22	46.80%	5	10.60%	11	23.40%	9	19.10%
Events participated in	26	55.30%	8	17.00%	4	8.50%	9	19.10%

Seventy two (72%) of the respondents indicated that advertising had no influence on their purchase of the breastfeeding pillow. Nine percent (9%) and 4% indicated that advertising had influenced their awareness to a little and some extent respectively. About 15% said it did to a great extent. According to 34 % of the respondents, information from relatives and friends had an influence to a great extent. For some 19% the influence was to some extent same as those who indicated that information from relatives and friends had no influence at all. The remaining 28% were influenced to some extent. Distribution through hospitals and shops had no influence on awareness of 44% of the respondents. Twenty four percent (24%) and 17 % indicated the influence of these distribution channels had little and some influence respectively, while the remaining 15% indicated that the influence here was to a great extent. The conspicuousness of the marketing collateral had no influence to 69% of the respondents. On the while, 11% of the respondents indicated that the influence was just little. The remaining 9%

and 17% indicated that the influence was to some and great extent respectively. While 40% of the responded indicated that the uniqueness of product packaging had no influence, 11% indicated that it had influence to a little extent. Nineteen percent (19%) of the respondents indicated that the uniqueness of the product packaging had an influence to some extent. The remaining 30% indicated the influence was to a great extent. For brand recall, only 19% of the respondents indicated it had an influence to a great extent. Twenty three percent (23%) indicated it did so to some extent while 11% said it did so to a little extent. The remaining 47% didn't think it had an influence at all. Events participated in was only seen to have had a great influence in awareness to only 19% of the respondents. Nine percent (9%) and 17% did indicate that events participated in had an influence to some and little extent respectively. Fifty five percent (55%) indicated it had no influence at all.

4.3 Influence of brand loyalty on purchase

The table below represents the various variables representing loyalty and how they influence purchase of the breastfeeding pillow:

Table 4.3: Influence of brand loyalty on purchase

Influence of Loyalty	No Extent		Little Extent		Some Extent		Great Extent	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Price	2	4.30%	3	6.40%	11	23.4	31	66%
Quality	1	2.10%	1	2.10%	4	8.50%	41	87.20%
Availability	2	4.30%	5	10.60%	9	19.10%	31	66%
Advertisement level	10	21.70%	9	19.60%	16	34.80%	11	23.40%
Company's commitment	6	12.80%	7	14.90%	7	14.90%	27	57.40%
How well the brand serves its function	2	4.30%	3	6.40%	3	6.40%	39	83%
Extent of information	3	6.40%	2	4.30%	14	29.80%	10	21.30%
What other people think	10	21.30%	13	27.70%	14	29.80%	10	21.30%
How long the brand has been in the market	15	31.90%	13	27.70%	14	29.80%	5	10.60%

A majority (66%) indicated that price had a great influence to loyalty and subsequently purchase. This was followed by 23 % of the respondents who indicated that price did have an influence to some extent. The remaining, 8% and 4% of the respondents indicated that price only influenced their brand loyalty to little or no extent respectively. On the while, 87% of the respondents indicated that for them brand loyalty was influenced by product quality to a great extent. This was followed by only 9% who said, quality influenced them to some extent, while 2% and another 2% indicated that they were influenced by brand quality to a little and no extent respectively.

Whereas 66% of the respondents were of the opinion that brand availability greatly influenced their brand loyalty, remaining were varied in opinion. Four percent (4%) said, it had no influence at all while 11% and 19 % said it had little and some influence respectively. The influence of advertising levels on brand loyalty seemed to have varied almost proportionately across the respondents. Those who indicated it did to some extent were 35% and had a slight majority against the other respondents of whom 24%, 20% and 22% contended the advertising levels influenced them to a great, little and no extent respectively. A majority of the respondents (57%) felt that the company's commitment to the brand influenced their loyalty to a great extent. For 15% of them, felt that it only did to some extent, same as those who felt it did to a little extent. Only 13% felt it had no influence at all.

The ability of a brand to serve its function was considered to have a great influence to a significant majority (83%) of the respondents. Six percent (6%) said it did so to some extent same as those who said it did to a little extent. The remaining 4% were of the opinion that it did not have any influence at all. Majority of the respondents (60%) indicated that information on the brand had an influence on the brand loyalty. This was followed by 30% who did indicate the influence was to some extent. For 4% of the respondents, the influence was to a little extent while 6% was to no extent. On the influence of people's perception of the brand to its loyalty, 21% of the respondents indicated it had an influence to a great extent similar to those who were of the opinion that it had no influence at all. Those who thought it had an influence to a little extent were 28% while the remaining 30% indicated that it did have influence to some extent.

The influence of the length of time a brand has been in the market on brand loyalty greatly influenced only 11% of the respondents. For 30% of the respondents, the influence was only to some extent while 28% and 32% indicated the influence was to a little extent and no influence at all respectively.

4.4 Influence of Association in purchase

The table below represents the various variables representing association and how they influence purchase of the breastfeeding pillow:

Table 4.4: Influence of association on purchase

Influence of brand association	No Extent		Little Extent		Some Extent		Great Extent	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Product features	2	4.30%	1	2.20%	5	10.90%	38	82.60%
Benefits from use	0	0	2	4.30%	2	4.30%	43	91.50%
The manufacturers reputation	3	6.40%	8	17.00%	17	36.20%	19	40.40%
Country of manufacture	6	12.80%	4	8.50%	11	23.40%	2.6	55.30%
Distribution channels used	7	15.20%	8	17.40%	16	34.80%	15	32.60%
Extent of distribution	6	12.80%	8	17.00%	14	29.80%	19	40.40%
Endorsers used (KEBS)	4	8.50%	3	6.40%	9	19.10%	31	66%
Events brand participates in	20	42.60%	8	17.00%	7	14.90%	12	25.50%

Majority (83%) of the respondents indicated that product features greatly influenced their purchase while 11% were influenced to some extent. Four percent (4%) were not influenced at all while 2% were influenced to a small extent. A majority of the respondents (92%) also indicated that the benefits of use influenced their purchase decisions to a great extent. Four percent (4%) indicated the benefits influenced them to some extent while another 4% they did to a little extent.

The manufacturer's reputation influenced about 40% of the respondents to a great extent, while to 36% of the respondents it was to some extent. Seventeen percent (17%) of the respondents only influenced to a small extent while the remaining 6% were not influenced at all. The

country of manufacture did not matter to 13% of the respondents while to another 9%, it mattered to a little extent. However, 33% and 23 percent were influenced by the country of manufacture to a great and some extent respectively. The distribution channel used influenced 33% of the respondents to a great extent. Another 35% were influenced to some extent while for 17% of them; the influence was only to a little extent. The remaining 13% were not influenced at all. The extent of distribution had a great influence on 40% of the respondents. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents indicated that the influence was to some extent while 17% were only influenced to small extent. The remaining 13% were not influenced at all.

Endorsements from organizations like KEBS had a great influence to a good number (66%) of the respondents while no influence to 8% of the respondents. To 19% and 6% of the respondents, the influence was some and little extent respectively. For 43% of the respondents, brand participation in events had no influence at all. Nevertheless, to 26% of the respondents, such participation has a great influence while for 15% and 17% of them, the influence was to some extent and little extent respectively.

4.5 Influence of Quality perception on Purchase

The table below represents the various variables representing quality perception and how they influence purchase of the breastfeeding pillow:

Table 4.5: Influence of quality perception on purchase

Influence of Quality Perception	No Extent		Little Extent		Some Extent		Great Extent	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Price of the brand	7	15.20%	5	10.90%	12	26.10%	22	47.80%
Image of distribution outlet	3	6.40%	6	12.80%	19	40.40%	19	40.40%
Advertising levels	6	13%	10	21.70%	12	26.10%	18	39.10%
Advertising message	5	11.10%	7	15.60%	13	28.90%	20	44.40%
The brand name	5	11.10%	4	8.90%	8	17.80%	28	62.20%
Information levels you have about the brand	2	4.30%	1	2.10%	12	25.50%	32	68.10%
Company's commitment	4	8.75	8	17.40%	11	23.90%	23	50%
Kind of endorsers used (KEBS etc)	6	12.80%	4	8.50%	5	10.60%	32	68.10%
Performance	2	4.40%	1	2.20%	5	11.10%	3.7	82.20%

For 48% of the respondents, price influenced quality perception to a great extent and subsequently purchase. For some 26% of them, price only influenced their quality perception to some extent. The influence to 11% was little and not there at all to 15% of the respondents. Six per percent (6%) of the respondents did not care about the image of the distribution outlet and by extension its implication on quality. Thirteen percent (13%) cared a little while 40% cared to some extent similar to those cared to a great extent.

Only 39% of the respondent's perception on quality was greatly influenced by the advertising levels while to 26% the influence was to some level. There was little influence to 22% of the respondents while there was no influence at all to the remaining 13%rs. The advertising message was of great influence to only 45% of the respondents in relation to quality perception. Twenty nine percent (29%), the influence was to some extent while to 16% the influence was only to a little extent. There was not influence to the remaining 11% of the respondents.

The brand name was considered to be a great influence to the quality perception by 62% of the respondents. For 18% and 10%, the influence was to some and little extent respectively while to the remaining 11%, the brand name did not have any influence at all. One's information on a brand had a great influence on the quality perception according to 68% of the respondents. Twenty five percent (25%), information had an influence to some extent, while for 2% the influence was only to a little extent. The remaining 4%, one's information had no influence.

For, 50% of the respondents, company commitment to the brand had a great influence to the quality perception of the brand. For 24% the influence was to some extent, while 17% of the respondents the influence was little. Nine (9%) of the respondents indicated, there was no influence at all. Quality perception was influence greatly by the kind of endorsement used according to 68% of the respondents. For 11% and 9% the kind of endorsement used only influenced them to some and little extent respectively. The remaining 13% were not influenced at all. The quality perception was influence greatly by the performance of the brand according to 82% of the respondents. For, 11% of the respondents, the performance of the brand only

influenced them to some extent, while for 2% the influence was to a little extent. The remaining 4% were not influenced at all.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study was measuring the influence of brand equity assets on consumer purchase. To facilitate the research, each of the brand equity assets was assigned variables that were then measured.

5.2 Summary

The majority of those who participated in this research were women of between 18 and 34 years of age, which generally represents the most reproductive age segment of society.

Awareness is the first brand equity asset that was measured. The variables that seemed to most influence awareness were information from friends and relatives, the uniqueness of the packaging used on the product and lastly how easy it was to recall or articulate the brand name or product. On the contrary, the variables that least influenced awareness and subsequently purchase were advertising of the product, the conspicuousness of marketing collateral. The events that the brand participated in also had little influence.

Loyalty as a brand asset in this research was most influenced by Price, quality and lastly how well the brand serves its function. Of the least influence was how long the brand has been in the market, what other people think of the brand and the level of advertisement applied on the product.

Brand Association was most influenced by the type of endorsers used (KEBS etc). It was equally influenced by product features also greatly influenced by benefits derived from product use. On the contrary the variables that least influenced brand association according to this research included the events that the brand participates in and the distribution channels used.

Quality perception was most influenced by the information levels individuals have about the brand. The image of the distribution outlet and the endorsers used also had great influence on quality perception. The variables that least influenced quality perception included advertising levels, the price of the brand and the advertising message.

5.3 Discussion

With regards to the breastfeeding pillow, this research showed that the greatest influence on awareness was information from friends and relatives. This agrees with research on consumer behavior that looks at the influence of what are known as social factors on consumer purchase. Social factors include reference groups, family, social roles and statuses. The finding in this research validates Kotler (1999) who says that the family is the most important consumer-buying organization in society. He says that family members constitute the most influential primary group.

How easy it was to recall or articulate the brand name was a factor that greatly influenced awareness. This finding is reflected in studies on brand awareness by Aaker (1991) who defined brand awareness as the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. Aaker (1996) also says that awareness is measured according to the different ways in which consumers remember a brand ranging from recognition (which refers to whether the consumer has ever been exposed to the brand) to recall (which refers to the brands within a certain product class that a consumer can recall) to “top of mind” (refers to the first brand recalled) to dominant (the only brand recalled). In this research, awareness was not influenced much by advertising levels. This can possibly be explained by the fact that the product is relatively new and not much investment has been made in mainstream advertising.

Certain variables that were measured under loyalty had great impact on purchase. A closer look at brand loyalty by Aaker (1991) defines it as a measure of the attachment a customer has to the brand. Out of the variables presented in this research, price and quality had the greatest impact in defining loyalty. Brand loyalty is also defined as a measure of how often a customer is inclined to choose the same brand when buying from the product class (Kohli and Leuthesser, Brand Channel Website). They further add that if most customers are indifferent to brand names and buy primarily on the basis of features, price and convenience, then very little brand loyalty exists. As far as this study is concerned, more research would have to be done to establish the level of attachment to the brand name as far as loyalty in purchase is concerned.

A brand association is anything linked in memory to a brand (Aaker 1991). In this research, the product related features and benefits of product use created the greatest memory to the brand. This can probably explained by the fact that the product has a unique shape that is different from ordinary pillows that serves to explain its function. This finding is validated by a study by Aaker (1991) on the eleven (11) different types of associations that could influence purchase behavior. One of the associations is product attributes and another is customer benefits. Customer benefits are regarded as a category because most product attributes provide customer benefits. Another association category Aaker (1991) mentioned is the country/ geographic area association. In this research this has best been represented by the endorsers used (KEBS) who would directly validate the product source and quality. Of little significance to brand association was the events that the brand participates in. This is an interesting finding because one of the leading breastfeeding pillows brand has been a major sponsor of industry specific events. Perhaps the lack of much mass market advertising as at the time of this research - hence little awareness within the market - explains this fact.

Perceived quality is defined as the customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives (Aaker 1991). Perceived quality is also usually at the heart of what customers are buying strongly influences a consumer's "reason to buy". It's a pivotal influence as it puts a brand strongly within the consideration set.

In this research, quality perception was measured by several variables. Several were shown to have had an influence on purchase, the most significant being information levels that people had about the brand closely followed by performance of the brand. In the study of how consumers buy, the "five-stage model" (Kotler 1999) represents the typical five steps that a consumer may go through when making a purchase decision: problem recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. The search for information usually precedes a purchase as shown by this model and it is a way of reassurance to the buyer that indeed they are buying the best quality product from the set of considered alternatives.

According to this research it also seems that the image of the distribution outlet to a certain extent did influence the quality perception of the brand. Perhaps a little more research would

be needed to define the relationship between image of distribution outlets and quality perception. The brand name was found to be great influence to assigning quality to a product. Of lesser influence was advertising levels though across the brand assets, advertising has not had much influence. As mentioned earlier this can probably be explained by the low investment the products have had in mass market advertisement.

5.4 Conclusion

From the research it is clear that all the variables within the equity assets measured had an influence on consumer purchase but to varying levels. In looking at brand awareness, brand recall was important in facilitating purchase. Further, certain variables that were measuring brand association in this research showed their great influence in facilitating product purchase.

The research however was also a pointer to the various areas the brand can invest in order to strengthen its position in the market place. To begin with, the research has shown that a lot more awareness needs to be created through advertising as a channel. The research however validates some well known facts such as the impact and influence of word of mouth in purchasing decisions, as was shown in some of the variables that influence awareness.

The study has also brought out relationships between loyalty and quality as well as loyalty and price. It was also mentioned earlier that it has also brought out relationships between image of outlet stores and quality perceptions. More research would need to be carried out to establish the dynamics of these relationships. The research, all in all does show the significance of the variables within the brand equity assets and there is little doubt that these variables do influence consumer purchase.

5.5 Recommendations

These findings are very useful. One of the reasons brands are built is that when they build equity, they in turn create profitability for the company. This research brings out some of the measurable variables within brand equity assets – and these are not exhaustive in themselves.

The findings are extremely useful to any upcoming brand as they will first and foremost understand the importance of branding and brand equity. Further through this research, an upcoming brand will be exposed to the various elements within brand equity. They will also understand that these elements can be researched on and are measurable.

Further, they are relevant to existing brands as there are several dynamics to brand equity assets and these relationships can be ascertained to some extent. This research gives pointers to those relationships and opens doors to further research so that they strengthen their position in the market place.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The geographical scope of the scope limited the respondents to only Nairobi. Secondly there was a lot of bureaucracy in approaching respondents in some medical institutions. Time and financial resources also limited the sample size and geographical scope.

5.7 Suggestions for further research

There were limitations to the study but also there were certain relationships that were unearthed by this study and these can be researched on further:

1. The extent to which pricing of brands influences loyalty and vice versa
2. The influence to which pricing influences quality perceptions and vice versa

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ACCREDITED NHIF HOSPITALS

HOSPITAL	BED CAPACITY
EDELVALE TRUST JAMAA HOSPITAL	- 46
EMMAUS INNERCORE NURSING HOME	- 16
FAMILY HEALTH OPTIONS	- 19
HURUMA NURSING & MATERNITY HOME	- 26
KAYOLE HOSPITAL	- 40
MARIA MAT. & NURSING HOME	- 20
MARIAKANI COTTAGE HOSPITAL	- 21
MATER MISERICORDIAE HOSPITAL NAIROBI	- 135
METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL	- 35
NAIROBI EQUATOR HOSPITAL	- 40
NAIROBI SOUTH MEDICAL CENTRE	- 15
OLIVE TREE HOSPITAL	- 16
SOUTH 'B' HOSPITAL	- 12
ST. ANNES MATERNITY HOME – NAIROBI	- 13
ST. JAMES HOSPITAL	- 63
UMOJA HOSPITAL	- 13
CITY NURSING HOME NAIROBI	- 20
COPTIC CHURCH NURSING	- 37
DIVINE WORD PARISH HEALTH CENTER	- 32
DORKCARE NURSING HOME LTD	- 15

HOSPITAL	BED CAPACITY
ENKITOK JOY NURSING HOME	- 15
KAREN HOSPITAL LTD	- 102
KENYATTA NATIONAL HOSPITAL (AMENITY WING)	- 225
KILIMANJARO NURSING & MATERNITY HOME	- 1804
LANGATA HOSPITAL	- 30
MADINA NURSING HOME	- 18
MAGADI SODA COMPANY HOSPITAL MAGADI	- 50
MARIE STOPES KENYA LIMITED	- 19
MARURA NURSING HOME	- 13
MASABA HOSPITAL	- 156
MATASIA HEALTH CLINIC	- 23
MATHARE MENTAL HOSPITAL (GENERAL WARD)	- 1138
MBAGATHI DISTRICT HOSPITAL	- 250
MELCHIZEDEK HOSPITAL	- 19
MENELIK MEDICAL CENTER	- 13
MIDHILL MATERNITY & NURSING HOME	- 28
MOTHER & CHILD HOSPITAL	- 23
NAIROBI HOSPITAL NAIROBI	- 220
NAIROBI WOMEN'S HOSPITAL	- 50
NATIONAL SPINAL INJURY HOSPITAL	- 30
NGONG HILLS HOSPITAL	- 40

APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Carol Ngige
Faculty of Commerce
C/O MBA Office
Department of Business
Administration
University of Nairobi
P. O. Box 30197
NAIROBI

April 2010

Dear Madam,

RE: COLLECTION OF SURVEY DATA

I am a Master of Business Administration student at the University of Nairobi, in the faculty of Commerce. As part of my course work, I am undertaking a Marketing Research and the topic is on the **Influence of brand equity assets on consumer purchase choices** and I am studying **the case of breastfeeding pillows in Nairobi**

You have been selected to form part of this study. I'm therefore kindly requesting you to assist me to collect the data by filling out the accompanying questionnaire, which I will collect from your house.

The information you provide will be used exclusively for academic purposes and I assure you that the information you give will be treated with strict confidence. Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully,

CAROL NGIGE

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1

What is your name? (Optional) _____

Where are you located? (Hospital) _____

Kindly indicate below your highest educational certification:

Secondary Education Level _____

College Level _____

University Degree _____

Kindly tick appropriately against your gross income bracket:

Below KES 20,000 _____

Between KES 21,000 – 50,000 _____

Between KES 50,000 – 80,000 _____

Between KES 80,000 – 110,000 _____

Above KES 110000 _____

Kindly tick your age bracket:

Between 18 – 34 years _____

Between 35 – 40 years _____

Above 40 years _____

PART 2

Please indicate by ticking in the appropriate box to what extent the following variables have influenced your awareness in the purchase of a brand breastfeeding pillows:

Key: 4 – To a great extent
 3 – To some extent
 2 – Little extent
 1 – No extent

	4	3	2	1
Advertising	()	()	()	()
Information from relatives and friends	()	()	()	()
Distribution in hospitals/ shops/ supermarkets	()	()	()	()
Conspicuousness of marketing collateral (labels/ brochures etc)	()	()	()	()
Uniqueness of product packaging	()	()	()	()
How easy the brand name is to recall/ articulate	()	()	()	()
Events participated in	()	()	()	()

Others (please specify below and rate)

Please indicate to what extent the following variables influence your loyalty in the purchase of a brand of breastfeeding pillows:

	4	3	2	1
Price	()	()	()	()
Quality	()	()	()	()
Availability of the brand	()	()	()	()
Advertisement level	()	()	()	()
Company’s commitment to the brand	()	()	()	()
How well the brand serves its function	()	()	()	()
Extent of information you have about the brand	()	()	()	()
What other people think of the brand	()	()	()	()
How long the brand has been in the market	()	()	()	()

Others (please specify below and rate)

Please indicate to what extent the following factors influence the associations you attach in the purchase of a brand(s) of breastfeeding pillow

	4	3	2	1
Product features	()	()	()	()
Benefits from use	()	()	()	()
The manufacturers reputation	()	()	()	()
Country of manufacture	()	()	()	()
Distribution channels used	()	()	()	()
Extent of distribution	()	()	()	()
Endorsers used (KEBS)	()	()	()	()
Events brand participates in	()	()	()	()

Others (please specify below and rate)

Please indicate to what extent the variables below influence your quality perception of a breastfeeding pillow in Nairobi

	4	3	2	1
Price of the brand	()	()	()	()
Image of distribution outlet	()	()	()	()
Advertising levels	()	()	()	()
Advertising message	()	()	()	()
The brand name	()	()	()	()
Information levels you have about the brand	()	()	()	()
Company's commitment to the brand	()	()	()	()
Kind of endorsers used (KEBS etc)	()	()	()	()
Performance of the brand	()	()	()	()

Others (please specify below and rate)

Do you know of any brand name of Breastfeeding Pillows?

Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, which? _____

THANK YOU

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