

**CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS PRIVATE LABEL  
BRANDS OF FOUR KEY SUPERMARKETS IN KENYA**

**BY**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD  
OF A DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**NOVEMBER, 2015**

## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for any award in any other institution or university.

Signature..... Date.....

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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

Signature..... Date.....

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Above all, I give Glory to God Almighty for giving me the strength and ability to work on this project. My special gratitude to my supervisor Dr Owino Joseph who was always available for consultation and has guided me tirelessly to ensure that this project attained professionalism and high academic standards. Special thanks to my husband who has stood with me throughout this project and really assisted me at each stage of the project. I would also like to acknowledge all my colleagues who stood by me, encouraging me and availing their support whenever I needed it.

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my loving husband, my children, my dad and my entire family who always prayed and encouraged me to achieve my dreams. I particularly and humbly appreciate the invaluable financial and non-financial support and sacrifice that my husband offered me to ensure that I completed the project within the stipulated timeframe.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**PLMA:** Private Label Manufacturers Association

**UK:** United Kingdom

**USA:** United States of America

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## **ABSTRACT**

Supermarket owned products are gaining popularity in Kenya and giving local manufacturers of well-known brands a run for their money. With this new trend, manufacturers of other brands are not only competing amongst themselves but are now faced with a bigger challenge of competing with their distributing partners. However, private label branding is not a new idea in the world, but has been a common business practice in the United Kingdom and United States of America. This introduction of private label brands by Nakumatt, Tuskys, Naivas and other chains has seen some manufacturers of traditional brands crying foul since they have been bypassed in the conventional production chain. In addition, store branded products are taking over shelves and key display positions which is deemed by a few as unfair competition. However, this could be a strategy by the retail chains to increase consumer loyalty in their outlets even as competition since completion among the retailers is getting stiffer by day. In January 2013, Nakumatt, the biggest supermarket chain in Kenya, introduced its private label brand; Blue Label. Each of their products has a distinctive blue band implying the supermarket's commitment to delivery of high quality products. Other key retail chains including Tuskys, Naivas, Uchumi and Ukwala have also adopted this global trend especially on edibles including bread, milk, rice and sugar. The primary aim of the study was to determine consumer perception towards private label brands of the four key supermarkets in Kenya including Nakumatt, Tuskys, Naivas and Uchumi. The researcher did a critical analysis on the variables within consumer perception of private label brands such as brand awareness, perceived price and quality, consumers switching behaviour and the impact of pricing on consumers' choice for private label brands. From the findings of this study, the researcher was able to ascertain that consumers are aware of private label brands and the key purchase driver is price. Perception towards private label quality, availability, display on shelf and pricing was positive as most consumers still had an intention of purchasing the brands. The study also gives suggestions for further research on the future of these private label brands.

# **CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

Supermarket-owned labels are gaining popularity in Kenya and giving local manufacturers of well-known brands a run for their money. With this shift, manufacturers of other brands not only have to compete among each other but now have to compete with retail chains. However, private label branding is not a new idea. It has been a business practice in some parts of the world such as UK and USA. The emergence of private label brands can be traced as far back as 1882 when Sainsbury, the third largest retail chain in UK, started selling own label products in its stores. Sainsbury's aim of introducing private label products was to find a way of providing more affordable goods in comparison to other retailers without compromising on quality.

Walmart, an American based corporation and popular store started selling own label brands in 1991 through the launch of Sam's Choice, one of their flagship brands. Locally, private label branding is still in its infant stages with most of the private label brands being foodstuffs including sugar, bread and rice. Nakumatt, Kenya's biggest chain of supermarkets introduced their private label brand in January 2013, ([www.nakumatt.net](http://www.nakumatt.net)). Since then the outlet has progressively introduced Nakumatt Blue Label products geared towards providing shoppers with variety and affordable products.

This introduction of private label brands by Nakumatt, Tuskys, Naivas and other chains has seen some manufacturers of traditional brands crying foul since they have been by-passed in the conventional production chain. In addition, store branded products are taking over shelves and key display positions which is deemed by a few as unfair competition.

### **1.1.1 The concept of Perception**

Consumers' perception on private label brands is a critical issue because it has direct influence on the brands' sales. Porter and Claycomb (1997) argue that consumer purchase intention and behaviour towards a brand is chiefly driven by the perception consumers have towards the brand. This is regardless of whether they are misconceptions of actual events or not. Rai (2008) defines perception as consumer's

belief concerning a product or a service received or experienced. Perception is also defined as a process in which people select, sort and interpret outside stimuli into a coherent picture of the world around them (Schiffmann and Kanuk, 2009). Two people can be exposed to the same kind of stimuli in similar situations, but end up with completely different perceptions later on. This is because the way individuals select, sort and interpret stimuli is dependent on their needs, values, expectations and so forth all of which are unique to each individual (Schiffmann and Kanuk, 2009).

The process of perception begins with exposure to a stimulus, followed by attention and then sensation. Exposure occurs when a consumer comes into contact with environmental stimuli either intentionally or accidentally. It's important to note that not all stimuli that consumers are exposed to get noticed. This means that a consumer can be exposed to a stimulus and fail to notice it hence affecting the next step of attention. Attention is the allocation of mental capacity to a stimulus. After being exposed to a stimulus, a consumer can for some time pay attention to a specific aspect of the stimulus. Attention can be spontaneous, planned or involuntary. Sensation, on the other hand, refers to the responses of our sensory receptors comprising of the ears, eyes, nose, mouth and touch to stimuli and transmission of the same to the brain (Hanna & Wozniak, 2013). Although sensory receptors play a key role in consumer's perception of an event, one's interpretation of a sensation may lead to a false perception. This is because perception is highly subjective and therefore easily distorted.

It is therefore vital for marketers to understand consumers' perceptions because it often determines the success or failure of brands in the marketplace. With this understanding, marketers are more careful on the ads they air, product packaging, size, colour, packaging design and point of sale materials due to the first impression to consumer's eyes and ears. For consumers who are not brand loyal, a change in packaging colour of another brand can win the consumer's attention and consequently their consideration for the other brand (New Ideas MSI, 2003).

### **1.1.2 The Concept of Private Label Brands**

Consumer loyalty is not only important for brands but it is also vital for the growth and success of retail stores. Presently, competition among retailers is getting stiffer and each of them is working on new strategies to ensure the store's sustainability and

shopper loyalty. One such marketing strategy is the introduction of private label brands by the retailers. Kotler and Keller (2012) define private label brands as brands produced by retailers and wholesalers rather than a manufacturer. Private label brands are also referred to as store brands, retailer brands or own label brands. According to Private Label Manufacturers Association (PLMA, 1991) private labels are products owned by retail stores. These products encompass all merchandise sold under a retailer's brand. The private label brand name can be similar to the retail store's name or different to suit the store's needs ([www.plma.com](http://www.plma.com))

Introduction of private labels can be attributed to two major factors; consumer pull and manufacturers push as Datamonitor's industry report concluded 4 years ago (2011). The report states that private labels penetration is outperforming categories penetration rate due to shoppers turning to store brands and embracing them. Key to note is, private label brands attract the attention of price sensitive consumers and in addition they give retailers a competitive edge to negotiate for better trade margins and offers from manufacturers of other brands. These brands allow retailers to increase a category's sales because they are often competitively priced than other brands and increase variety offered to consumers.

According to Verhoef, Nijssen, and Sloot (2002) the aim of introducing private label brands is to increase the retailer's presence and profits. However, the growth of these brands is threatened by economies of scale because this is often a requirement for economically viable production levels (Rabobank, 2011). Nonetheless, private label market share is predicted to double by 2025 based on consolidation in food retail and the industry's growth (Rabobank, 2011).

### **1.1.3 The Retail Industry**

The entry of private label products is still at its infancy stage in the Kenyan retail scene and is mostly targeted towards food products. But according to Consumer Insight (2012) private label brands will upset manufacturer brands in future, propelled by in-store advertising and promotions which are deemed highly effective. According Nielsen (2014), Europe is the private label global leader. This means that private label brands are most developed in Europe as they account for \$1 of every \$3 spent in consumer packaged goods. This leadership is largely attributed by Switzerland where private label share is at 45%. This translates to the highest market share in the region

and globally. UK and Spain private labels follow closely at 41% share each. In the USA, private label share is at 17.5% which is just above the average global share of 16.5%. In the Pacific, specifically Australia and New Zealand the private label share is at 21% and 13% respectively. The report highlights a significant shift of perceptions towards private label brands from 2009 to 2014 due to the evolution of private labels reputation from cheap brands that compromise on quality to good quality and value for money brands.

According to Nielsen (2014) private label development is still in its early stages in Africa with the exception of South Africa where private label's share is about 18%. But, the fact that Africa's population is a lot younger than the rest of the world is an important point for retailers to consider. This young population has significantly different tastes, preferences and aspirations than the older generation and hence likely to demand a different set of products including private label brands. Private label brands seem to be doing well in Kenya based on the fact that more and more retail chains are introducing their own labels from rice to bread, milk and other items.

KPMG (2015) notes that Kenya is Africa's second biggest formalized retail economy after South Africa. The survey was carried out in seven sub-Saharan Africa economies and showed that 30 per cent of Kenyans shop in formal retail outlets. Kenyan consumers have increasingly been drawn to the large range of products offered by hypermarkets and supermarkets mainly because of the relatively lower prices of these products compared to informal shops. The report further adds that the formal retail sector in Kenya has grown exponentially in the past three years. Euromonitor report (2015) had forecasted hypermarkets to be the fastest growing segment in the retail at about 12 per cent annually from 2010 to 2015. However, the report forecasted a slower growth 2.2% of the entire Kenyan retail sales during the same period.

Euromonitor (2015) estimates that the Kenyan wholesale and retail trade will maintain an average of 10.2% contribution to GDP. The report further states that the Kenyan retail industry remains vibrant with key supermarket chains expanding within the country and beyond Kenya's boundaries. For instance, Nakumatt has opened quite a number of stores in proximity to residential areas and also in Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, whereas Uchumi and Tuskys have presence in Uganda. Construction of new shopping malls and expansion of the four leading supermarkets has increased despite

setbacks such as the destruction of Nakumatt Westgate mall by terrorist in September 2013. And it is worth to note that the Westgate Mall was re-opened in July 2015 and still attracted quite a number of shoppers.

In January 2013, Nakumatt, the biggest supermarket chain in Kenya, introduced its private label brand; Blue Label. Each of their products has a distinctive blue band implying the supermarket's commitment to delivery of high quality products ([www.Nakumatt.net](http://www.Nakumatt.net)). Other key retail chains including Tuskys, Naivas, Uchumi and Ukwala have also adopted this global trend especially on edibles including bread, milk, rice and sugar.

This entry into private label has seen some manufacturers of traditional brands crying foul since they have been by-passed in the conventional production chain. In addition, store branded products are taking over shelves and key display positions which is deemed by a few as unfair competition.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

A study by Deloitte (2010) on consumer perceptions towards private label brands, notes that majority of consumers are increasingly sensing a diminishing discrepancy between the quality of manufacturer brands and private label brands. This is attributed to the retailers increased focus on own brands to garner consumer loyalty. According to this report, store brands no longer suffer the stigma of inferior quality among consumers. While learning's about private label success in one market can help in another, there is no clear cut approach for all markets. Private label growth requires tailored approach for each market since consumer perceptions differ across the global market.

Furthermore, Nielsen (2014) study on the state of private label around the world notes that perceptions towards private label brands are favourable. However, value shares are higher in developed countries including Europe, North America and Australia. The survey polled more than 30,000 consumers in 60 developed and developing countries around the world. However, it's worth noting that Kenya was not part of the poll. The study sought to understand consumer perceptions towards private labels' quality, assortment and packaging.

Other scholars have attempted to tackle the topic of consumer perception towards private label brands in different countries and in Kenya. For instance, Nyengerai (2013) studied the determinants of perception towards private label brands in Zimbabwe with focus on the role of product category. The study concluded that consumers have a positive perception for private label brand products that require further processing and negative perception for those that do not require additional processing. Gala and Patil (2013) conducted a study in India on consumer attitude towards private labels in comparison to other manufacturer brands and concluded that many consumers view private label as low quality products that are bought by low income group shoppers who aspire for better lifestyle but cannot afford or are not willing to spend for the same.

This study shows that in consumer perceptions towards private label brands differ from one country to another. Such a study would be very interesting to carry out in Kenya to find out how the Kenyan shopper and consumers perceives private labels in comparison to other manufacturer brands. Additionally, the study would establish how willing Kenyan's are to switch from manufacturer brands to store brands. Bekene (2009) carried out an exploratory study on consumer perceptions of private label brands within the retail grocery sector in South Africa. He concluded that consumers are hesitant to embrace private label brands fully because they are still sceptical of their quality. Income was found to be the key determinant of purchase of private label brands versus other manufacturer brands.

Muriithi (2014) assessed the transferability of brand equity to the Blue Label products. He was seeking to determine consumer perceptions on the quality of Blue Label products in relation to their pricing. Secondly was assessment of the effect of the store's image and brand awareness of the Blue Label products. The findings of the study was that consumer perception on blue label products in relation to pricing is slowly changing although there is still a lingering perception that these products are of inferior quality.

Walter (2012) established the factors affecting the success of private label bread baked by large supermarkets in Nairobi Kenya. The primary objective of the study was to find out how factors such as perceived value, quality, price and perceived risk impact the purchase intention of private label bread brands. The findings of the study showed

that price, quality and value play a key role in the success of private label brands in large supermarkets.

Although several attempts have been made towards investigating the consumer perception of private label brands, there are no studies known to the researcher that have investigated the same in the Kenyan context. Most of the studies including that done by Gala and Patil (2013); Nyengerai (2013) and Bekene (2009) and many others have been done outside the East African Region. Considering the consumers differs across nations there is a probability of getting different findings if such a research was carried out in Kenya. The current study seeks to address this research gap by assessing awareness of private label brands in Kenya, establishing the purchase triggers and finally establishing the influence of private label brands on consumer switching behaviour. The study will help draw conclusions on this question: what are the consumer perceptions toward private label brands of key supermarkets in Kenya?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To find out consumer awareness of the private label brands in Kenya
- ii. To establish purchase triggers for private label brands.
- iii. To establish the influence of private label brands on consumers switching behaviour from manufacturers' brands.

### **1.4 Value of the study**

The findings from this study will help the policy makers on addressing certain issues arising with the introduction of private label brands. These include retail competition – is introducing private labels fair competition. There is also the issue of private label brands occupying large volumes of the supermarket shelves regardless of their market share.

Thus this study could help retailers to design marketing strategies that could boost their sales revenue share through the private label brands by maximizing on the purchase triggers of private label brands. In addition, it will contribute additional knowledge on consumer perceptions towards private label brands which can also be

used by other players in the FMCG sector in Kenya on ways of addressing this new phenomenon of private label brands.

It will assist marketers of manufacturer brands to design strategies that address the key issues causing consumers to switch from their brands to private label brands. This study will also act as a reference material where future researchers on the subject or studying related topics can find information from the findings and conclusions of the report to build into their reports. The study also highlights the research gap in this subject that will require further research to be carried out in future.

## **CHAPTER TWO:LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter covers literature and theories related to the topic of study including brand awareness, purchase intention and brand switching.

### **2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

To get a better understanding of consumer's choice of brands it is imperative to understand the concept of consumer behaviour and related theories. The next section will highlight some theories related to the topic of study.

#### **2.2.1 Attribution Theory**

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958) addresses the matter of how people deduce, from limited available evidence, unobservable attributes or dispositions about objects and organisms in their surroundings (Burnkrant, 1975, p. 465). It also explains how people assign causality to events and form attitudes based on their own or other people's behaviour (Schiffman, 2008; Wang, 2008). Consumers form attribution towards things in order to judge products and service. This is because they want to find out why a product or service meets or does not meet their expectations (Schiffman, 2008). This theory can be used for explaining consumer behaviour in many situations. Among other behaviours, the attribution theory can be used to explain how consumers make purchasing decisions based on inadequate involvement, experience and information of the products.

That means, when a consumer has no previous knowledge about a product, for instance from an earlier purchase, the consumer uses other cues to evaluate the product. The cues used in such a scenario are those that the purchaser has learnt to use for creating inferences about a product or a brand (Vahie & Paswan, 2006). According to Vahie and Paswan (2006) the consumer can use product assortment or the products stocked by the store as a cue to make inferences about the product. Another cue that a consumer could use is price and additionally, the retail store, such as Nakumatt which owns the private label. According to Burnkrant (1975), the more consistent the cues that a consumer uses to make inferences of a certain product the more effective attribution become.

### **2.2.2 Cue Utilization Theory**

Consumers are regularly faced with uncertainty when judging the quality of a brand the minute they are determining what to buy and in what quantity. It may, nevertheless, be difficult for consumers to assess the various quality-aspects in relation to each other and in relation to requirements rooted in the intended use of the products. According to 'cue utilization theory' (Olson & Jacoby, 1972; Richardson et al., 1994) consumers may try to overcome their uncertainty and the lack of information by selecting one or more cues/stimuli as a basis for their assessment of the quality of the product.

This theory states that in order to explain a product's quality consumers evaluate products by their intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003). Intrinsic cues include a product's texture, colour and style. These are tactile factors that form part of the physical product and cannot be changed without altering the product itself. Intrinsic factors are part of the product.

Intrinsic factors are connected to physical product characteristics which include perceived quality, perceived risk and value. Risk has to do with uncertainty or a mistake where the former arises due to product appearance. Consumers think that purchasing low priced, simple packaged and unpopular brands poses high risk because the quality of such products is questionable (Sudhir and Talukdar, 2004). When consumers are not so familiar with private label brands and do not understand them they are afraid of making wrong decisions by purchasing them (Batra and Sinha, 2000). On such basis, other manufacturer brands expose the consumer to lower risk because they are in general more expensive than private label brands hence perceived to be of higher quality than private label brands.

It is important to take into account how consumers perceive risk when studying consumer perception towards private label brands. Understandably there is a certain risk attached to the purchase of private label brands that must be taken into concern (Richardson et al., 1996; Batra & Sinah, 2000; Gómez & Fernández, 2009; DelVecchio, 2001; Mieres et al., 2006). Perceived risk can be defined as a consumers doubt on the result of a decision. According to Aaker D. (2000) and (Chaudhuri, 2002) consumers reduce their risk by purchasing familiar brands. Consequently, those consumers who think that private label brands are of lesser quality reduce their risk by

purchasing and consuming more expensive products (Yusuf, Fatih, & Hayrettin, 2013). But risk is not just based on quality; rather consumers are exposed to various types of risk when buying and consuming products.

On the other hand, extrinsic cues stem from the intangible aspect of the product including the brand name, perceived price, store name, packaging and advertisement. Extrinsic is defined as not an integral part of the thing or not contain in something (Free Dictionary, 2011). Extrinsic cues have a greater effect in governing consumers purchase decisions especially the price, brand name and packaging (Bäckman, 2005; Dawar & Parker, 1994, Allison & Uhl 1964 in Vahie & Paswan, 2006; Richardson et al. 1996). According to a research done by Richardson (1997) extrinsic cues play a vital part in influencing consumers' purchase intention than intrinsic cues.

Price is a central cue in the market place and is present each time consumers are confronted with a purchase decision. Price can be divided into the perceived price and the objective price. The perceived price is an individual's belief on the price in relation to the product's quality. Objective price is the actual price of the product (Donald, Lichtenstein & Scot, 1989). For most consumers, the perceived price is different from the objective price. For instance if a litre of milk costs Kshs 53, some consumers will notice the exact price of Kshs 53 (Objective price) while others will only recognize the price as cheap or expensive (perceived price) (Zeithaml, 1988). Price affects consumer behaviour both positively and negatively. Positive effect in the sense that a higher price signals high quality; negative by the fact that a consumer is spending money (Bao et al., 2011). Price conscious shoppers are willing to give up quality and other product attributes in order to pay a lower price.

### **2.3. Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is defined as the consumers' ability to recognize and recall a brand in different situations (Aaker, 1996). It is also described as the process from where a brand has become 'top of mind' meaning the consumers have put the brand on a higher rank (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness comprises of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recall is when a consumer sees a product class or category he/she remembers a brand name. For instance, if a consumer is going to buy bread and he recalls Supa Loaf from memory. On the other hand, brand recognition is the consumer's ability to identify a brand when they are exposed to or given a brand cue.

Hoeffler & Keller (2002) point out that brand awareness can be distinguished by width and depth. Width assumes when a consumer purchases a product, a brand name comes to mind at once. However, depth is in what way a consumers recalls or identifies a brand easily. If a brand has both depth and width consumers think of that brand whenever they want to buy from that product category or class. This means the product has high brand awareness. According to Davis, Golicic and Marquardt (2008), a brand name is the most important element of brand awareness.

Brand awareness has to do with communication and is dependent on both the situation and the achieved level of awareness from being unaware of the brand to having top of mind awareness. According to Aaker (1991, p 62) there are three levels of brand awareness. Brand recognition is the first level of brand awareness. It is when consumers is able to recognize a certain brand among others. The second stage of awareness is brand recall which is unaided and is vital for regularly purchased products such as cereals and detergents. Finally there is top of mind awareness. A brand has 'top of mind' awareness if it's the first brand that a consumer thinks of within a given product category (Aaker, 1991). The higher the level of awareness the better because consumers feel that if a brand is well known then it is of high quality. However, Melin (1999) says that what is even better is not that a brand is well known, it is what the brand is known for.

According to a recent study done by Muriithi (2014) only 60% of the respondents were aware of Nakumatt's Blue Label brand. Some of these respondents indicated that they learnt of the brand by visiting the store while others was by seeing them either in the office, at home or in other occasions including events and parties.

### **2.3.1 Attaining Brand Awareness for Private Label Brands**

Brand awareness is a very important factor for attaining a brand advantage although it cannot sell a product especially if the product is new (Aaker, 1991). It is therefore vital for a new product to increase the identity of the brand name and the link between certain characteristics of an item to the brand. Aaker (1991) has highlighted some of the ways to achieve brand awareness which include being different and memorable. This is important because nowadays many products seem alike and have related communication. By being different, a product differentiates itself from other products in the same category hence eases brand recall.

Secondly, is to involve a slogan or jingle. This gives a strong link with a brand as it involves a visual feature of the brand making it a powerful way of attaining awareness. Thirdly is exposing a brand symbol. The advantage of having a known symbol is that it is easy to memorize and recall a graphical illustration such as a logo that is connected to the brand. Publicity is the other way to increase brand awareness because it can be customized to the addresses. Other ways to increase brand awareness include event sponsorships and brand extension (Aaker, 1991).

Muriithi (2014) notes that although most consumers got to know about Nakumatt Blue Label through store visits quite a number attained knowledge on the brand from Nakumatt's social sites and billboards. One of the respondents actually stated to have known about the brand through Nakumatt's Facebook and twitter account when they were offering 50% discount on all their products in celebration of 50 years of independence.

#### **2.4 Purchase Triggers for Private Label Brands**

Brand awareness plays a key role on consumer's purchase intention because consumers tend to buy familiar and well known products (Keller, 1993; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). Brand awareness helps a consumer recognize a brand from a product class and make a purchase decision (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Besides, Aaker and Keller (1990) stated that a brand with high awareness and good image can encourage brand loyalty among consumers, and the higher the brand awareness is, the higher brand trust and consumer purchase intention.

Jin and Yong (2005) note that private label brands success is dependent on several factors such as the country's retail structure, advertising rate of manufacturer's brands, level of retailer concentration, economies of scale and store management.. Baltas (1997) records other factors that trigger consumers towards purchasing of private label brands. These include personality traits, past behaviour, socio-economic factors, and demographic variables. However, consumer perceptions, attitudes and behavioural variables are more effective in influencing purchase intention of private label brands (Baltas, 1997). Richardson et al., (1996) identified perceived quality, perceived value for money, perceived risk, brand familiarity, extrinsic cues and level of income as the primary factors influencing purchase of private label brands.

According to Lee (2004) private label market share growth is largely attributed to retail chains extension of product offering from just basic products to more sophisticated ones. Present day retailers are more professional in managing their store brands. These retailers are investing on attractive product packaging, improving in product quality and expanding their distribution systems over and above offering consumer centric sales promotion (Sullivan, 2005).

Besides this, research has brought out other reasons behind the growth of market share of private label brands. First is the low price of private label brands compared to other manufacturer brands. According to Grewal and Levy (2009) top retailers set the price of store brands 10-15 per cent lower than the price charged by other manufacturer brands. Retailers use their brands as negotiating tools with the manufacturers so they get more promotional items, better prices and quick deliveries (Chintagunta, Bonfrer & Song, 2002). Mills (1995) also concurred with this view in his report by noting that private label brands empower retailers in getting superior deals in form of lower wholesale prices from manufacturers on other manufacturer brands.

Secondly is the current positioning of own store brands. The modern day retailers are not just relying on other manufacturer brands to attract consumers and shoppers to their stores (Roach, 1995). They are diversifying and extending their product offerings to match and supersede consumer expectations. This has in turn enabled them to compete more effectively in both existing and new product categories that have been conventionally dominated by other manufacturer brands.

Private label brands are no longer the low-priced, low-quality, value for money items, rather one will find premium and luxurious own store brands. The top retailers have moved from competing with the other manufacturer brands on the basis of quality to competing on the level of 'value for money' (Halstead & Ward, 1995). By competing on this orientation, retailers are aiming at shifting the mind of consumers from the notion that private label brands are low price goods of poor quality that provide savings by purchasing them. According to Dhar and Hoch (1997) quality- oriented strategies are more sustainable than value oriented strategies hence better to ensure the long run success of private label brands.

Moreover, private label brands have higher gross margin opportunities than manufacturers' brands (Lewison, 1994; Raju, Sethruaman & Dhar, 1995). This

opportunity arises from the low marketing costs incurred by retailers (Ailawadi, Neslin & Gedenk, 2001; Mason, Mayer & Ezell, 1994). According to Hoch and Banerjee (1993) retailers frequently advertise manufacturers' brands in order to attract shoppers to their stores, and then they sell private label brands which are typically lower priced than other manufacturer brands to the price-sensitive consumers.

On the contrary, there are some research studies that reveal different findings from the above perceptions of private label brands. According to Shapiro (1993) previous studies carried on consumer's attitude and perceptions towards private label brands showed that these brands are rated below the other manufacturer brands on various factors including quality, appearance, price, packaging, promotions and so forth. On the basis of price, Private Label Manufacturers Association revealed that consumers prefer private labels because they are lower priced than other manufacturer brands. Roth (1995) highlights that consumers income pattern is a key aspect relating to human consumption. If a price conscious consumer's income is limited, they will buy products just to satisfy the most basic functional needs rather than meet the hedonic needs. Other studies have also shown that the lower the income of a consumer the higher their price consciousness levels.

In addition, the most price conscious consumers are among those consumers who do not believe that price and quality are associated (Blois, 2000). These price-conscious consumers commonly lack knowledge on the different perceived risks involved. They additionally are less brand loyal, are more attracted to promotional offers, are keen on saving money and they care less about product quality. On the other hand, consumers with higher incomes are less price conscious and are less likely to buy private label brands. The other way to look at it is that private label brands are meant for price sensitive and budget conscious consumers who seek ways to reduce expenditure during difficult economic times. However, once the economy picks up, these consumers go back to other manufacturer brands.

Faria (1997) notes that there is a direct link between price and quality, and they form the most important features for the purchase of any product. Hoch and Banerji (1993) and Sethuraman (1992) further add that quality is a major determinant in shopper purchasing decisions apart from price. Holt, Quelch and Taylor (2003) also note that quality is the most important factor that drives consumers towards buying and using

other manufacturer brands. Consumers make judgments on quality based on the price rather than the products physical attributes.

Consumers have a common perception that low priced products are of relatively low quality because they are formulated with poor ingredients and hence lack the necessary level of quality (Batra & Sinha, 2000). A study conducted by Rubel (2005) concluded that consumers purchase private label on the basis of both price and quality. However, if private labels were to offer the same quality as other manufacturer brands then price would be used as the purchasing parameter at that moment. According to Steenkamp, Batra & Alden (2003), the quality of private label brands is generally inferior to other manufacturer brands although it's worth noting that some private label brands quality is at par or above manufacturers' brands.

Promotional strategies of private label brands have also affected their off take and sales. However, retailers do not do large scale advertisements of their brands due to tight marketing budgets. Instead, they use other sales promotion tactics. On the other hand, other manufacturer's brands implement different promotional strategies which yield more sales than store brands (Allenby & Rossi, 1991; Bronnenberg & Wathieu, 1996). Manufacturers' attract consumers through numerous advertising and sales promotions.

Other factors include perceived risk and positioning. According to Narasimhan and Wilcox (1998) consumers prefer other manufacturer brands to consumers' brands when the level of perceived risk in buying these products is high. Furthermore, products that expose consumers to social ridicule have a high risk even when they are of low monetary value. On positioning, Chernatony and McDonald (1992) noted that some own store brands are imitations of other manufacturer brands. This propensity to introduce imitated products does not lead to clear positioning hence the importance of retailers identifying a particular and relevant positioning strategy (Omar, 1999).

## **2.5 Influence of Private Label Brands on Consumers Switching Behaviour**

There are many drivers for brands switching such as variety seeking and dissatisfaction with the current brand (Bawa, 1990; Newman & Werbel, 1973). Considerable evidence put forward that, even a consumer was satisfied with a previous choice, he/she would, under certain circumstances, switch to another brand (Mazursky, LaBarbera & Aiello, 1987).

According to McAlister (1982) consumers switch brands for two reasons. One, they switch brands when seeking information and in order to learn about a product's offering. Secondly, consumers determine their preferred brands yet they still switch to other brands in order to satisfy their need for variety or to remind themselves of brands they have used in the past (Keon, 1980).

Trijp, Hoyer, and Inman (1996) concur with the above by highlighting that one major reason why consumers switch brands is variety seeking and the intrinsic motive to try out something different. Consumers often engage in such kind of behaviour out of boredom (Faison, 1977) or satiation with the product's attributes (McAlister, 1982; Givon, 1984). After some time of repetitively consuming a particular product, the consumer reaches a point where he/she decides to try something different just for the sake of variety.

Interestingly, younger consumers seem to have a more favourable view towards private label brands than older consumers (Veloutsou et al., 2004). Moschis (2003) supports this sentiment by suggesting that older consumers are more brands loyal and are unlikely to try brands with which they are less familiar. On the other hand, younger consumers are more willing to try new or unfamiliar products and brands.

One of the key ways that private label brands use to influence consumer switching from manufacturer brands is through shelf space apportionment. Amrouche and Zaccour (2006) describe shelf space as "one of the retailer's most important assets". Shelf space is normally limited and therefore allocations play a key role in the success of a brand. According to Nogales and Gomez (2005) private label brands are allocated sizeable shelf spaces sometimes twice the space allocated to manufacturer brands

Furthermore, Suarez (2005) notes that retailers regularly place their private label brands to more advantageous positions on the shelves. For instance, they place their own brands to the right of the manufacturer brands they are competing against with a purpose of influencing consumer behaviour. This is due to the fact that 90% of the population is right handed and theoretically they are more likely to reach for the private label alternatives (ibid).

According to Hwang al. (2004) private labels also influence brand switching by displaying the products at a certain level on the shelf. In most cases, they place their

brands on eye-level which falls within the average consumer's line of vision. This attracts the consumer's attention and increase the likelihood of the product being picked. De Wulf et al. (2005) concur with this statement and stresses the influential role that shelf positioning of a private label brand plays in consumers switching behaviour.

When a consumer decides to switch to another brand he/she incurs a cost. The cost incurred due to this process is called switching cost and it makes it difficult for consumers to switch from one brand to another brand (Feick & Lee, 2001). This creates a barrier for consumers to switch even when he/she is not satisfied with a product. The Switching cost can be both financial and non-financial. It can be emotional cost, learning cost, transactional cost, psychological cost and social cost. It can also be the time and effort spent on searching for an alternative brand (Burnham & Mahajan, 2003).

The financial cost can be one off payment and also the additional cost incurred due to functional updates and additional accessories. A consumer may have to spend lot of time and energies in learning the functionality of a new brand. There is also a possibility that switching to another brand can result changes in social status and consequently can cause adverse psychological effects on the consumer (Burnham & Mahajan, 2003).The high switching cost minimize consumers switching intentions.

## **CHAPTER THREE:RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology that was chosen to answer the research questions for this study. It focuses on the research design, population, sample design, data collection and data analysis methods. According to Brannick and Roche (1997), the method that the researcher chose for their study is influenced by a number of factors. These include the nature of the research problem, the researcher's beliefs and the status of scientific research and theories in case they are relevant to the research problem.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study adopted descriptive cross sectional design. This is because descriptive studies are normally the best methods for collecting information that will demonstrate relationships and describe the world as it exists. Bickmann and Rog (2008) states descriptive studies are useful in answering questions such as 'what is' and what was.

The researcher recognizes the advantage of using mixed and multi-methods of research to increase the reliability and credibility of the study but due to time constraints and available resources this was not possible. Consequently, the time horizon for this survey was cross-sectional in that it studied consumer perceptions of private label brands at a particular point in time and not over an extended period of time (Longitudinal). Cross-sectional surveys are known to be useful in assessing beliefs, knowledge and attitudes of a population to a particular object.

### **3.3 Population of the study**

The target population or the population to which the results of this study was extrapolated is the 30% of Kenyans who as reported by KPMG (2015) shopped in formal retail outlets. This was about 13 million Kenyans with an assumption that the current population at the time of study was approximately 43 million. The extrapolation to this population was guided by the fact that the key drivers for private label brands in Kenya are the key retail chains hypermarkets and supermarkets. Subsequently, the researcher recognized the importance of knowing if the regular formal retail shoppers were aware of the introduction of private label brands, whether they were buying them, their purchase drivers and what factors contributed to switching from other manufacturer brands to private label brands.

### **3.4 Sample Design**

Stratified random sampling method was used for this study. This is because the target population was segmented into mutually exclusive subgroups then simple random samples were selected from each of the segment. The strata included shoppers at Uchumi, Naivas, Nakumatt and Tuskys since these are the leading chains in the country with private label brands. The study interviewed 139 shoppers of each of the across the four chains within Nairobi.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The primary method of data collection used was the use of questionnaires. The choice of this method is based on the fact that questionnaires are quick and easy to administer. The questionnaires were self-administered by the researcher in order to ensure clarification of questions just in case of literacy or numeracy problems with the respondents. In addition, self-administered questionnaires reduce the level of nonresponses and mitigate inappropriate responses unlike surveys where the participants are left to fill the questionnaires on their own. The researcher intercepted shoppers as they walked in and out of the supermarkets and requested for their time to assist with the survey. This ensured the relevant sample of the population was picked.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to draw conclusions of the study findings. Descriptive statistics is very important since it makes it easy to interpret what the data is showing. In addition, descriptive statistics enable us to present data in a more meaningful way which allows simpler interpretation of data. Although this method has its limitations it provides a powerful summary that may enable comparisons across people and other units.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study established from the questionnaires in determining consumer perception towards private label brands of four key supermarkets in Kenya including Nakumatt, Naivas, Uchumi and Tuskys. The findings of the study were guided by the following specific objectives: finding out consumer awareness of private label brands, establishing the purchase triggers for private label brands and establishing the influence of private label brands on consumers switching behaviour from other manufacturer's brands. The chapter also explains the findings in comparison with the relevant literature as established by other authors in the same field of study.

### 4.2 Respondents Profiles

The respondents comprised of shoppers of the four key supermarkets in Nairobi. In total the researcher randomly reached 139 respondents from 9 supermarkets in Nairobi (See (Appendix II). 5 of these are Nakumatt supermarkets, 2 Naivas, 1 Tuskys and 1 Uchumi supermarket respectively. 37% of the respondents were male making female respondents the majority at 63%.

The study sought to determine the age of the respondents and the findings were presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Age of respondents**

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21-25 years	15	11
26-30 years	54	39
31-35 years	38	28
36-40 years	24	17
Above 40 years	7	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>

From the findings in Table 4.1, 54 (39%) of the respondents were aged between 26 and 30 years, 38 (28%) of the respondents were aged between 30 and 35 years, 24

(17%) were aged between 36 to 40 years, 15 (11%) between 21 and 25 years and 7 (5%) of the respondents were aged above 40 years.

### **4.3 Awareness of Private Label Brands**

All the respondents were frequent shoppers of the four key supermarkets and they were required to indicate their awareness of supermarket branded products. The most interesting thing is that all the respondents were aware of supermarket branded products in both unaided and aided guide. Top of mind was fresh foods especially Naivas, Uchumi and Tuskys bread. Respondents from Nakumatt supermarkets could easily recall other foods especially sugar.

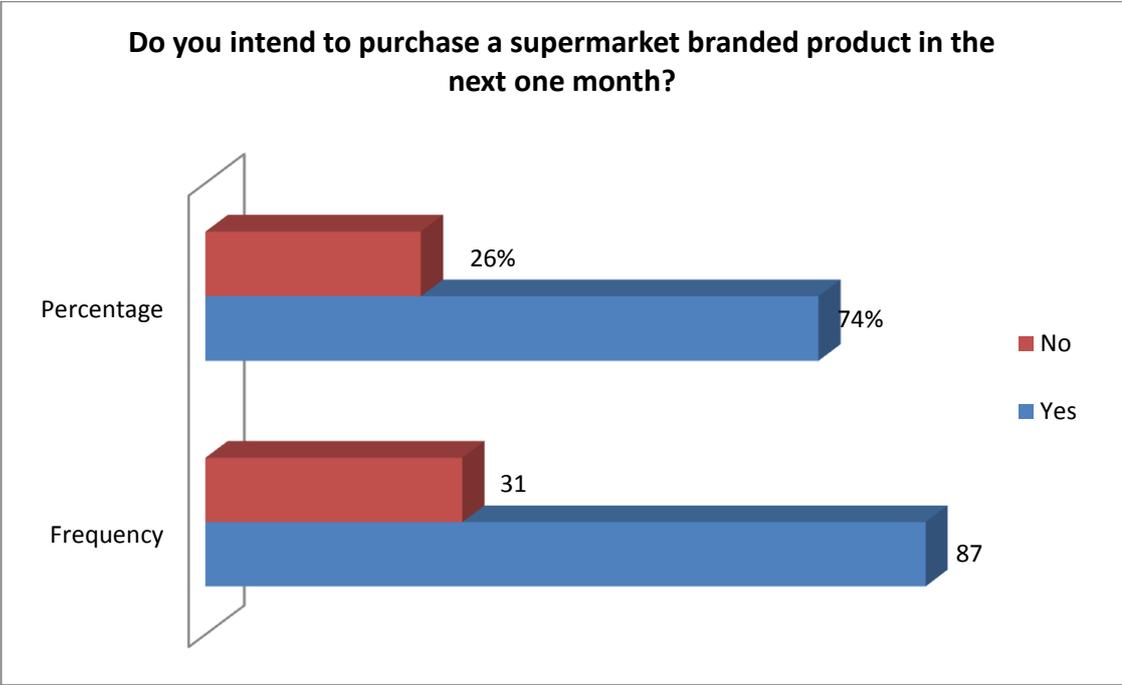
Tong and Hawley (2009) define brand awareness as a buyer's ability to recall or recognize a brand. On the other hand Hongo (2004) notes that brand awareness is a consumer's ability to retrieve a brand when given the category, the needs met or fulfilled in by the category or when given a cue of the brand. Brand awareness affects customers' decision making and is one of the aspects that strengthens a brand's performance (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2011).

The high level of awareness could be partly attributed to the high penetration of modern retail channels in Kenya compared to other African countries. In addition, there is notable shift to formal retail with 24-hour shopping already being offered by Nakumatt, Tuskys and Naivas supermarkets. Online shopping is also slowly picking with Naivas, Uchumi and Nakumatt availing the service to consumers.

### **4.4 Purchase of Supermarket Branded Products**

The study sought to determine how many of the respondents had purchased a supermarket branded product. 128 (92%) of the respondents had bought a supermarket branded product with only 11 (8%) having not bought. The 8% mostly comprised of the male respondents above 40 years. Furthermore, the study sought to find out how many of the respondents had an intention to purchase supermarket branded products in the next one month. Although the question was intended for those who had never purchased supermarket branded products, majority of those that had purchased also responded on that question. The results are presented in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Intention to purchase a supermarket branded product in the next one month**



Some of the respondents who had no intention of purchasing indicated that they were comfortable with the brands they were using hence no intention to purchase supermarket branded products. The majority of consumers purchasing supermarket branded products and had the intention to buy were the younger consumers aged between 26-30 years. This echoes the sentiment that older consumers especially men are more brand loyal hence likely to prefer brands that they are more familiar with. Young, independent consumers however are more likely to try new or unfamiliar products and brands.

Regarding the frequency of purchase of supermarket branded products 59 (46%) indicated that they purchased these items during their monthly shopping. 14 (11%) had bought just once, 36 (28%) purchased the products during their weekly shopping and lastly 19 (15%) purchase these products at least once in every 3 months as shown in Table 4.2. This data suggests that there is substantial potential market for supermarket branded products in Kenya. This further serves to authenticate consumer perceptions and attitudes revealed in this study as the majority of respondents have some experience in respect to supermarket branded products.

**Table 4.2: Frequency of Purchase of supermarket branded products**

<b>Frequency of purchase</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Bought once	14	11
Monthly	59	46
Weekly	36	28
Once in 3 months	19	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>

#### **4.5 Products categories forming largest share of Supermarket Branded Products purchased at a particular time.**

Foods such as sugar and rice form the largest share of Supermarket Branded Products purchased at a particular time. They make up part of the basket of products bought every month by the consumers. 'I cannot miss out a supermarket branded product in my monthly shopping'. They accounted for 37% of purchases made.

Fresh foods form 26% of products forming largest share of supermarket branded products purchased at particular time. It's worth noting that the consumers picked more than one category of product forming largest share of supermarket branded products purchased, "I think both fresh foods and other foods form the largest share', "I am torn between other foods and Toiletries". Household cleaners make up 9%, Dishwashers make up to 13% whereas Toiletries and Confectionaries make up to 7% and 9% respectively.

#### **4.6 Consumer Attitudes and Buying Intention towards Supermarket Branded Products**

Consumers' buying decision is relatively complex but is very important to consider when evaluating why and how consumers respond to a product or brand. Usually purchasing intention is related to a consumer's behaviour, perception towards the product and also attitude. Ghosh (1990) stated that purchase intention is an effective tool used in predicting the purchasing process. However, Zeithaml (1988) states that purchase intention might be altered by the influence of quality, value and price.

The results of this study show that most consumers purchase intention was influenced by price. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Primary reason for purchasing Supermarket branded product**

<b>Primary Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Price	83	65
Quality	3	2
Packaging	0	0
Promotions and offers	24	19
Availability	10	8
Others	8	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>

Out of the 128 respondents who had ever purchased a supermarket branded 83 (65%) of these were primarily driven by the price. Promotions and offers also played a key role to some consumers 19% in making the purchase decision. None of the consumers was influenced by the packaging. Quality also came second after others "I thought of the price before thinking about quality'. Only 2% of the consumers were driven by the quality of supermarket branded products.

Availability on shelf influenced 8% of the consumers while the remaining 6% were influenced by other factors. Most of these was because of out of stock of their favourite brands and hence had to pick the next option. Others who especially bought fresh foods like bakery items were influenced by the aroma once they were in the outlets. This is in line with what Kim and Jin (2001) highlighted that some consumer's behaviour is driven by the physiological motivation that stimulates them to purchase a certain product in order to fulfil a certain need. In addition, consumers' are at times interrupted by internal impulse and external environment during their purchasing process.

Availability was more of the products always being on shelf rather than the supermarkets not being in close proximity to the consumers.

#### **4.7 Rating of Supermarket Branded Products quality and price in comparison to other manufacturers brands.**

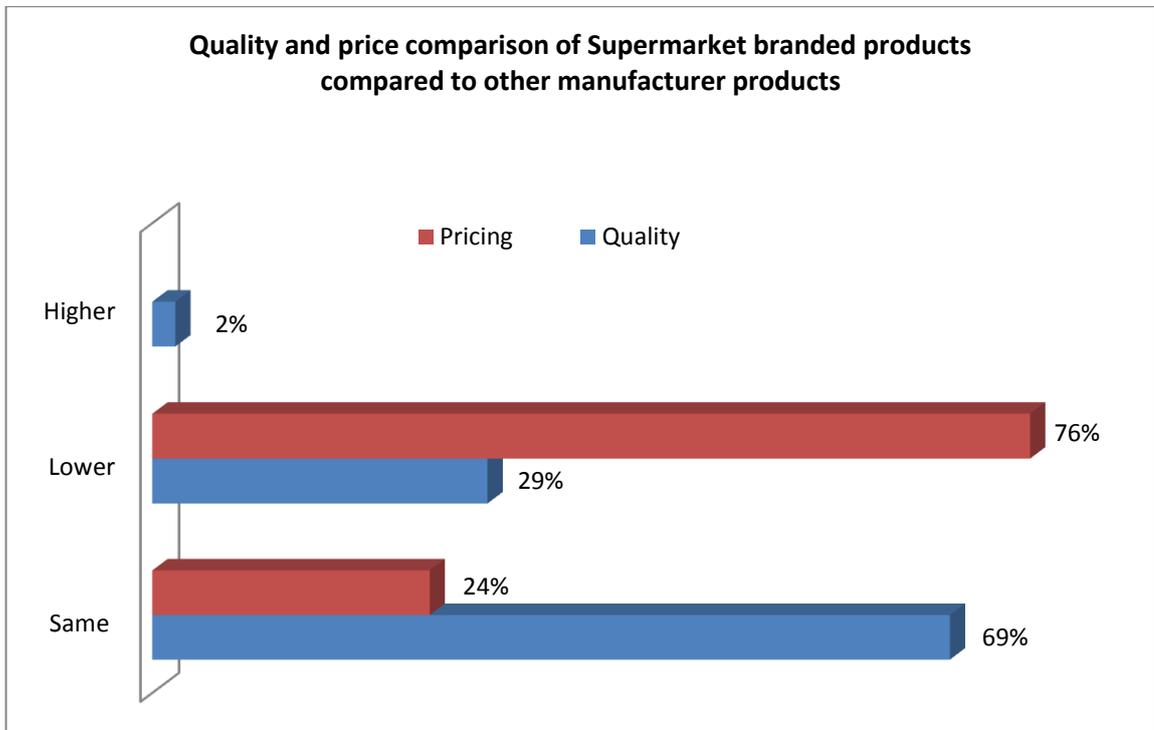
Price is a significant and frequent cue in consumer decision making and is always present every time a consumer is met with a purchase. For every purchase a consumer must give up a certain amount of money which represents the monetary sacrifice made in exchange for the product or service (Zeithaml, 1988; Bao et al. 2011). Price has both positive and negative effects on consumers purchase intention. It is negative in the sense that it means spending money or sacrificing money, but it's positive since consumers sometimes interpret a higher price as a signal to better product quality.

This means that a high price does not necessarily mean a negative effect on purchase probability (DelVeccio, 2001). Quality is also a key factor when making a purchase decision. It is often said that price and quality are two interrelated concepts. Whenever quality is mentioned, price comes up and thus it's hard to separate the two concepts when discussing supermarket branded products (Jin & Suh, 2005).

The results of this study show that 96 (69%) of the consumers rate the quality of supermarket branded products to be same or at parity with the quality of other manufacturers brand. 40 (29%) of the respondents say the quality is lower while only 3 (2%) felt the quality was higher than that of manufacturers brands. The researcher was able to establish from some of the consumers that they normally check the manufacturers name on the packaging especially for non-food items. Therefore, they use the manufacturer's name as an important extrinsic cue in assessing the quality of supermarket branded products.

On pricing, 76% of the consumers stated that the price of supermarket branded products is lower than that of other manufacturer's brands. 24% said that the price is at par whereas none of the respondents felt that the price is higher. The results are summarised in Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2: Rating of Supermarket Branded Quality and Price in comparison to the Quality and Price of other manufacturers' brands.**



#### **4.8 General Consumer thoughts on Supermarket Branded Products**

The study sought to find out general consumer thoughts around six aspects including variety of sizes and features, packaging, availability, recommendation, value for money and consumer acceptance of supermarket branded products. Majority of the consumers concurred that supermarket branded products have variety of sizes and features, are brands that they can recommend to a relative or friend, they offer value for money and are brands for people like them in terms of they wouldn't feel ashamed of using the products the presence of their peers or family.

Packaging is where most consumers neither agreed nor disagreed on being unique from other manufacturer's brands. As a percentage 36% felt the packaging was unique whereas 29% disagreed hence bringing the mean score to neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Availability was what most of the consumers strongly felt supermarket products have and hence is a key strength in consumer pull to purchase. "I doubt if supermarket branded products run out of stock, I always see them when I visit the store" was one of the comments made by a consumer.

The results are shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: General thoughts of Supermarket Branded Products**

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
They have variety of sizes and features	4.3
Their packaging is unique	3.5
I can recommend them to a friend/relative	4.0
They are available	4.7
They are brands for people like me	3.8
They offer value for money	4.4
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.1</b>

#### **4.9 Consumer switching behaviour**

Brand switching is at times encouraged by extrinsic enticements such as promotions and offers. However, consumers often switch brands as a result of intrinsic motives. When asked which of the product categories consumers switch brands most, 28% of the consumers indicated that the frequently to switch brands among other foods such as sugar, white flour and rice is highest. Switching among fresh foods followed closely at 21% and third in place was switching among toiletries at 18%. Consumers seemed hesitant of switching confectionaries, household cleaners and dishwashers with a percentage of 10%, 11% and 11% switching tendencies respectively.

Furthermore, 76% of the respondents said they purchase supermarket branded products at least once in a month. The key influencers were lower price, availability of the product on shelf, shelf display and the fact that consumers didn't see a difference in the quality of supermarket branded products compared to other manufacturers' brands. Table 4.5 summarizes the mean score of each of the concepts asked that influences consumers preference for supermarket branded products.

**Table 4.5: Factors that influence preference for supermarket branded products**

<b>Factor that influenced</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
It was a recommendation from a trusted friend	2.3
I see no difference in their quality from other brands	4.3
They were running a promotion on the product	3.6
I was stimulated by their advert	2.6
I was influenced by the lower pricing	4.5
I was given a sample and liked its quality and functionality	2.3
My favourite brand was not available	2.5
I liked the packaging and design of the product	3.6
They are available	4.7
I was attracted to the product display on shelf	4.5
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.5</b>

#### **4.10 Discussion**

The results show consumer perception of private label brands is positive on most of the aspects especially the key cues – quality and price. The only area where improvement is required is on packaging and design which the consumers felt is not unique and differentiated from other brands. Compared to the findings by Nyengerai (2013) it appears the Kenyan consumer and Zimbabwean consumers perceive private label brands to be at par in quality as other brands. However, the findings of this study are also very much aligned to what Muriithi (2014) reported in his study that consumer perception on blue label products in relation to pricing is slowly changing although there was still a lingering perception that these products are of inferior quality

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a summary of the study's main findings is presented in relation to the objectives. It covers conclusion and recommendation of the study and also suggestions for further research.

The purpose of the study was to determine consumer perceptions of towards private label brands of four key supermarkets in Kenya. The study focussed on the following specific objectives: to find out consumer awareness of private label brands of the four key supermarkets in Kenya, to establish purchase triggers for private label brands and to establish the influence of private label brands on consumer switching behaviour from other manufactures brands.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The study sought to determine consumers' awareness of private label brands or supermarket branded products. The findings established that consumers are aware of these brands and majority have bought them whether once, weekly or monthly. Fresh foods including bread and milk form a considerable share of product categories frequently purchased by consumers at a particular time. However, other food stuffs especially sugar and rice form the largest share of supermarket branded products purchased at a particular time. This could be partly attributed to the commoditisation of this category and lack of very distinct differentiation among brands.

Majority planned to continue buying private label brands. This means that private label brands market share will continue rising as majority of the shoppers purchased these products at least on monthly basis. But, private label share growth and success in not just dependent on this rather it's also influenced by the country's retail structure, the level of retail concentration, economies of scale, advertising rate of manufacturers and management (Jin & Yong, 2005). The majority of consumers purchasing supermarket branded products were the younger consumers. This echoes the sentiment that older consumers especially men are more brand loyal hence likely to prefer brands that they are more familiar with. Young, independent consumers however are more likely to try new or unfamiliar products and brands.

The primary purchase driver for supermarket branded products was price. Price represents an extrinsic cue and provides one of the most vital forms of information available to consumers when making purchasing decisions (Jin & Sternquist, 2002). The study revealed that consumers' perception on the quality of supermarket branded products was positive in that they felt it's the same as the quality of other manufacturers' brands. On pricing majority conquered that supermarket branded products are lower priced than other brands. To this end price did not appear to be a leading indicator of quality. The argument was based on the fact that supermarket branded products are manufactured by the same manufactures of other brands and the lower pricing of private label brands is justifiable by the fact that there are some additional expenses that they do not incur unlike other suppliers.

The general perception towards supermarket branded products having variety of sizes and features was positive. Consumers were however on average neither agreeing nor disagreeing on uniqueness of packaging of these brands. However, majority of the consumers agreed to these brands being available on shelf, offering value for money and hence being brands that suited the consumers' preferences and hence could be recommended to friends and relatives. Consumers indicated that they easily switch brands among food stuffs both fresh and other foods and hence explains why foodstuffs form a large basket of the supermarket branded products by consumers at any particular time. Toiletries also emerged as a key category where consumers switch brands probably because quality is not the key determinant of making purchasing decisions in this segment.

Consumers were still willing to buy supermarket branded items in the next one month. This could be attributed to the reasons they felt made them prefer supermarket branded products. They could not see any difference in the quality of supermarket branded products, they felt the brands were available and had attractive display on shelf. In addition, the lower pricing of supermarket branded products stimulated purchases from the consumers despite the fact that most of these consumers had not received a recommendation from a trusted source nor had they been given sample.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

From the findings, it can be concluded that Kenyan consumers were aware of supermarket branded products and had purchased them at least once. Perceptions

towards quality were favourable since most of the consumers felt there was no difference in quality compared to the quality of other manufacturers brands. Price was the key driver of purchasing supermarket branded products since most consumers perceived the pricing of private label brands to be lower than that of other brands. As a result when asked about offering value for money consumers responded positively and agreeably that supermarket branded products offered value for money. This relates to the fact that consumers felt they were offering similar quality as other brands but at a lower price.

Consumers however felt that supermarket branded products had not been differentiated in terms of packaging and thus it was not key driver towards purchasing. But, availability on shelf and commendable product display was one of the things that influenced consumers preference of private label brands. Consumers appeared to be more loyal in certain categories especially household cleaners. This could be because of the risk associated with the category especially bleach and detergent powder. Hence consumers were hesitant of switching brands in this category.

### **5.3 Limitations and gaps for future research**

Every research has some limitations which might constrain the interpretation of findings. This was not different for the current study. First, it has to be noted that the study was carried out within Nairobi only hence the results of the findings might not be applicable across the country where the key retail chains are not so concentrated. However the results appear to confirm and support earlier studies like that done by Muriithi on Transferability of brand equity to blue label products.

Secondly due to time limitation the sample of the current study was limited to 139 respondents only. Consequently, further research should be done across a bigger sample of more diverse consumer types. This creates a research gap for future research where awareness and market share of private labels brands in other parts of the country can be addressed.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

The study made recommendations based on the study findings that the four key chains should leverage on consumers awareness of their brands. Key here is to take the consumer through the adoption process of product awareness, product interest, product evaluation, product trial and finally product adoption. They can generate

product interest by differentiating their packaging from that of other brands as most consumers seemed to see no uniqueness in their packaging. It's also very important for these chains to work in increasing product recommendations as this is one way of increasing revenue and raising conversion rates of products.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was used for data collection

#### **Part 1: Personal Information**

1a. Gender

- Male                       Female

1b. Age Range

- 21-25                       26-30                       31-35                       36-40                       Above 40

#### **Part 2: Consumer Knowledge and Usage of Supermarket Branded products.**

2a. Are you aware of supermarket branded products?

- Yes                                       No

2b. Please select the brands that you have seen from the list attached

3a. Have you ever purchased a Supermarket Branded product?

- Yes                                       No

3b. If (No to 3a above) do you intend to purchase a supermarket branded product in the one month

- Yes                                       No

3c. If yes (to 3a above) how often do you purchase Supermarket branded products?

I bought just once

Monthly shopping

Weekly shopping

At least once in every 3 months

4. In which of the product categories listed below form the largest share of Supermarket branded products purchased by you at a particular time?

Fresh Foods (Milk and Bread)

Other Foods (Sugar, wheat flour, maize flour grains, rice)

Household cleaners (bleach, scouring powder, disinfectants, detergent powder)

Dishwashers (Dishwashing Liquid or paste)

Toiletries (tissue, serviettes)

Confectionaries (Ice cream, crisps, ground nuts)

**Part 2: Consumer Attitudes and Buying Intention towards Supermarket Branded products**

6. What is your primary reason for purchasing supermarket branded products?

- Price
- Quality
- Packaging
- Promotions and offers
- Availability
- Others.....

7a. How do you rate the quality of Supermarket branded products in comparison to other manufacturer brands?

- They are of the same quality as other manufacturer brands
- They are of lower quality than other manufacturer brands
- They are of higher quality than other manufacturer brands

7b. How do you rate the pricing of Supermarket branded products in comparison to other manufacturer brands?

- They are lower priced compared to other manufacturer brands
- They are priced the same as other manufacturer brands
- They are priced higher than other manufacturer brands

8. What are your general thoughts on Supermarket branded products? *Please choose the appropriate box below that best reflect your thoughts. (1= Strongly Disagree, 3=Undecided, 5= strongly agree*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
They have variety of sizes and features					
Their packaging is unique					
I can recommend them to a friend/relative					
They are available					
They are brands for people like me					
They offer value for money					

### Part 3: Consumer switching behaviour

9. For which of the following product categories do you tend to switch brands frequently?

- Fresh Foods (Milk and Bread)
- Other Foods (Sugar, wheat flour, maize flour grains, rice)
- Household cleaners (bleach, scouring powder, disinfectants, detergent powder)
- Dishwashers (Dishwashing Liquid or paste)
- Toiletries (tissue, serviettes)
- Confectionaries (Ice cream, crisps, ground nuts)

10. Do you buy supermarket branded items at least once a month?

- Yes             No

11. Please indicate the extent to which you agree to the following statements with regards to your preference for supermarket branded products

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It was a recommendation from a trusted source					
I see no difference in their quality from other brands					
They were running a promotion on the product					
I was stimulated by their advert on the products					
I was influenced by their lower pricing					
I was given a sample and liked its quality and functionality					
My favourite brand was not available					
I liked the packaging and design of the product					
They are available					
I was attracted to the product display on shelf					



**Appendix II: List of Supermarkets where data was collected**

	Branches	Location
1	Nakumatt TRM	Along Thika Road
2	Nakumatt Junction	Along Ngong' Road
3	Nakumatt Galleria	Along Ngong' Road
4	Nakumatt Lifestyle	CBD
5	Nakumatt Ukay	In Westlands
6	Naivas Ruaraka	Along Thika Road
7	Naivas Kasarani	Along Thika Road
8	Uchumi Agakhan Walk	CBD
9	Tuskys T-Mall	Along Lang'ata Road