

Brand Association and Consumer Patronage of Malt Drinks in Eastern Part of Nigeria

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Abstract: *The investigation analyzed the connection between brand affiliation capacities and purchaser support of chosen malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. The examination used 399 usable duplicates of the poll for investigation. Cross-sectional overview technique was utilized while the information hotspot for investigation was essential. Information gathered were broke down while the theories detailed were tried utilizing basic relapse examination. The outcome uncovered that the certification and social capacities have constructive critical impact on buyer support of malt drinks in eastern piece of Nigeria though close to home distinguishing proof capacity of brand affiliation has positive unimportant effect on purchaser support of malt drinks in Eastern piece of Nigeria. In view of the findings, the investigation recommends that brand managers ought to consider the advancement of good techniques intended for improving the individual recognizable proof elements of brand relationship for buyer manageable fulfillment and support toward utilization of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria and even beyond.*

Key Words: *consumer patronage, guarantee functions, social identification functions, personal identification function.*

1. INTRODUCTION: Background to the Study

One of the realities of present-day business is that there is nothing that your rivals cannot copy in only weeks or months (Jeffrey, 2000). Before, most items went unbranded. Manufacturers and middlemen sold their products out of barrels, containers, and cases, without any supplier's identity.

The earliest sign of branding were in the efforts of medieval guilds to require crafts people to put trade marks on their products to their products and consumers against inferior quality. In our contemporary society, branding is such a strong force that hardly anything goes unbranded. A powerful name is said to have consumer franchise (Adirika, Ebue & Nnolim, 2001). A brand is the identity of a specific product, service, or business.

The word brand began simply as a way to tell one person's cattle from another by means of a hot iron stamp (Scott, 2004, Okocha, 2012). Strong brands create meaningful images in the minds of their target consumers (Keller, 2001). Creating a strong brand identity builds mind share – one of the strongest competitive advantages imaginable.

Thus, customers view your business first when they have need of your product category. For instance, when one thinks of milk, it is more likely for one to think of Peak brand; likewise, when a child wants noodles, the chances are often a choice of Indomie instant noodle. The reason behind these strong brands – product association is that these companies have built rock solid brand identities.

Consumer patronage comes before consumer preference which is viewed by Kanuk and Schiffman (2006) as the subjective individual tastes, as measured by utility, of various bundles of goods. This allows the consumer to rank these bundles of benefits according to the satisfaction levels of utility. Consumers' tendency to patronize goods does not determine consumer's like or dislike for a particular product or service but the actual consumption per time or over time. Consumers often face circumstances that require them choosing among alternatives in the marketplace, where the products are of substitutes.

The traditional focus in the decision-making literature has been on trying to understand how consumers make their purchase decisions on daily bases and making choices to patronize products among other rivalry products or within a class of products is a continuous decision-making process (Agbaeze, Nnabuko, Ifediora and Ekoja, 2017).

In Nigeria, the Malt drinks under study are, Maltina, Amstel Malta, Guinness Malta, Vitamalt, Hi-malt, Grand malt, Malta Gold, Nasmalt, Champ malt, Maltex, Dubic malt, Beta malt and Royale malt etc. all the brand names were vocalized and also used to distinguish a particular malt drink from the other. The significance of brand association of malt drinks has become obvious in recent years because of increasing competition and growing consumers demand (Yung, Lee & Lai, 2009).

Branding is the imaginative process of creating a unique, relevant and harmonious name, term, sign, symbol or its combination in order to identify a company's product and to differentiate them from those of the competitors to (Okpara, 2002). It is the activity used to establish malt drink identity, which is also about providing a means of differentiation.

Branding can stir feeling and make connections among consumers. Malt drink branding is all about more than a brand, trademark or slogan. It is based on how the drink makes customers or consumers feel.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

In the marketing environment, it has always been a difficult task to ascertain exactly which factors motivate the consumer to prefer a particular brand or product to another.

Majority of marketing managers focuses on factors which they think can determine consumers' preference for their brand, without giving due consideration to factors which in the consumers' reckoning influence their buying decision (Rio, Vazquez & Iglesias, 2001). According to them, the resulting outcome is that the plan designed by marketing managers for a particular brand of product may fail to attain the desired and targeted outcome for reasons that consumers are unpredictable in their purchasing behaviours, especially with multiple brands such as those of malt drinks that seem to pose purchasing decisions problems.

Prior to purchase, consumers of malt drink may evaluate the quality or benefits accrued to a particular brand/product and compare it to others alternatives. Scholars of brand association for the past decades in various studies in different countries of the world have both theoretically and empirically investigated the relationship of brand association and consumer patronage; the results have rather than resolve the issue remain inconsistent and with mixed outcomes.

Such studies include; Kim, Jin-Sun and Kim (2008); Rio, Vazques, and Iglesias (2001); Ogba and Tan (2009); Kim and Lee (2010); Rauyruen and Miller (2009). Specifically, Kim, Jin-Sun, and Kim (2008) examined the effect of brand association and equity on guests satisfaction in hotels; Rauyruen and Miller (2009) investigated the relationship between brand loyalty and willingness to pay a price premium as one of the key indicators of brand association; Ogba and Tan (2009) assessed how brand image influences consumer loyalty; Kim and Lee (2010) investigated the relationship between brand association and customer loyalty.

Taking a cursory review, this study notes that, there is no substantial documented evidence that revealed that no study has been conducted on the relationship between brand association functions and consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. Therefore, it is against this backdrop in literature that this study attempts to close the gap by investigating the relationship between brand association functions and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

We measured brand functions with the dimensions of guarantee, personal identification, and social identification.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between brand association functions and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to;

- Determine the relationship between guarantee function and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.
- Evaluate the relationship between social identification function and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.
- Examine the relationship between personal identification function and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Based on research objectives, the following research questions were used to guide the study:

- To what extent does guarantee function of brand association relates with consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria?
- How does social identification function of brand association relate with consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria?
- To what extent does personal identification function of brand association relates with consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria?

5. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE :

Conceptual Framework

Brand associations

Diverse definitions of branding have been given by various authors and a lot of studies have also been deduced by different authorities as reason for the adoption of branding as a marketing strategy.

The popularity of a brand has often been seen as a direct push for sales turnover (Ogbuji, 2008). Despite the vagaries of definitions of branding, the fact still remains that it is a vital aspect of all organization's marketing activity that cannot be underemphasized. Branding has been likened to a child's naming ceremony and as old as man/creation (Okpara 2002).

Branding involves giving of special and unique image or attributes to a particular product which makes it to be special in the mist other products in the minds of the target consumers (Ehikwe, 2005). Although, there has not always been agreement on how to measure brand image (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990), one generally accepted view is that, consistent with an associative network memory model, brand image can be defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the cluster of associations that consumers connect to the brand name in memory. Hence, brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand symbol in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers.

One way to differentiate between brand associations is by their level of abstraction and this can be done by the level of information that is subsumed in the association. In line with this criterion, Keller (1993, 1998) classifies brand associations into three major categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Attributes entails those descriptive features that symbolizes a brand, such as what a consumer thinks the brand is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. Benefits are the perceived value consumers attach to the brand attributes and this have to do with what consumers think the brand can do for them.

Brand attitudes are consumers' total perception of a brand. Hence, it means that a brand has an added value to the physical product beyond the core product that can be seen. These may be aesthetic, emotional, psychological and philosophical values that are embedded in the minds and hearts of consumers (Okocha, 2012).

Based on the definition, a brand is a product or services and the value-added which personifies the offering beyond the actual product. According to the American Marketing Association (1960), brand is defined as any letter, word, name, symbol or device, or any combination thereof which is adopted and used by a manufacturer or merchant to identify his goods and to distinguish them from those sold by other manufacturers, or in the case of services performed by others.

McCarthy and Perreault (1985) as captured in Anyanwu (1999), assert that branding is the use of a name, term, symbol or design or a combination of these to identify a product. The assertion implies that branding identifies the product for the consumer and relates it to branding and product design. The meaning of brand association (BAS) issues has become more obvious in recent years in the personal breweries industry, because of increasing competition and increasing demand (Yung et al., 2009). Brand association would help consumers search and deal with information (Boisvert, 2011).

Brand association provides consumers with a purchasing reason, since most brand associations are related to brand attributes, the target consumer market, and the benefits that consumers need, so it serves as the underpin for brand loyalty and consumers' purchasing decisions (Len et al., 2007). Hence, brand association plays a very significant role in consumers' purchase decision making (Boisvert and Burton, 2011).

Brand associations are a critical component of brand success, brand image and brand knowledge (Farquhar & Herr, 1993), since they convey the attitude developed toward a given brand by consumers (Aaker, 1990). These associations link to brand preference, choice, image and equity (Keller, 1991). It is therefore critical that marketing managers understand the structure and nature of associations for their brands.

The associations consumers connect to brands can either be "hard" (specific, tangible, functional) or "soft" (emotional, based on attributes of a brand such as trustworthiness) (Biel, 1991). Furthermore, some brand associations are strongly connected to specific brands. Consumer Patronage Consumer patronage is a predisposition to buy, displayed by consumers who are establishing brand loyalty (Yuen and Chen, 2010).

It is referred to the extent that a customer showcases repurchasing behaviour, possesses a positive disposition toward the brand or product and considers using the brand or product when the need arises (Gremler & Brown, 1999). Kumar and Advani (2009) were of the opinion that consumer patronage is used to measure the behaviours of repeat customers and also those that offer good brand ratings, reviews or testimonials. Consumer behaviour is a very important aspect of marketing.

This is not far from the fact that the consumer constitutes the nucleus of every business venture. The understanding of consumer behaviour can be facilitated if we appreciate its relationship with human behaviour. Consumer behaviour, according to Anyanwu and Okafor (1995), is an element within human behaviour.

Consumer behaviour, as an aspect of human behaviour, concerns those human actions involved in the purchase of goods and services from the marketing firms (Anyanwu and Okafor, 1995). Boone and Kurtz (1980) as contained in Anyanwu (2003) define consumer behaviour as "the process and individuals undergoes in obtaining and using goods and services including the decision process that precede and determine these acts."

The measures of consumer patronage, according to Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) include; repurchase intention, price tolerance, recommending to others. While other measures of consumer patronage include; customer loyalty, not switching to another brand, commitment to rebuy the brand as a primary choice (Oliver, 1999); number of repeated

purchases (Keller, 2003); intention to buy the brand as the first choice (Yoo & Donthu, 2001); willingness to pay higher price for a particular brands in relation to other alternatives (Aaker, 1996).

In addition, it can also be measured by the number of brands purchased, percent of purchases, and future purchase intention (Keller, 1998).

Guarantee function and Consumer patronage

The guarantee function, understanding by this the promise or guarantee of quality, is based on the appraisal that the brand is reliable, efficiently carries out its performance qualities and meets the generated expectations (Ambler, 1997).

Guarantee function is the promise of quality that a particular product or brand is good; reliable; durable and efficient to carry out its performance or meet the generated expectations. Sheth et al. (1991) and Dubois and Duquesne (1995) state that it is fitting to associate this function with the perception that the brand is linked to products with a suitable level of performance and is concerned about conveniently satisfying consumer needs, contributing variety and innovation.

Branding is about living up to a promise, therefore according to Rio, Vazquez & Iglesias (2001), guarantee function of a brand makes the brand reliable, credible, and trustworthy as well as having the best value for money spent on the brand. Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias (2001) reveals that the more positive the customer's perception of the guarantee function exerted by the brand, the more willing he or she will be to pay a premium price for it, hence tend to recommend it and accept brand extensions.

H01: Guarantee function does not have any significant relationship with consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

Social identification function and Consumer patronage

The social identification function is based on the premises that brand's ability to act as a communication instrument allowing the consumer manifesting the desire to be integrated or, on the contrary, to dissociate himself from the groups of individuals that make up his closest social environment (those people with whom he currently interacts or aspires to do so).

Consumers interested in this function will positively value those brands that enjoy a good reputation among the groups with which they belong to or aspire to form part of (Long and Shiffman, 2000). Rio, Vazquez & Iglesias (2001) states that social identification of a brand of a product makes the brand a leader and also makes the brand being recommended by famous people with who you can identify.

The social identification function increases the customer's acceptance of brand extensions and his or her willingness to pay a premium price for the brand. It does not, however, make him or her more likely to recommend the brand (Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias, 2001).

H02: Social identification function does not have any significant relationship with consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

Personal identification function and Consumer patronage

The personal identification function implies that consumers can identify themselves with some brands and develop feelings of affinity towards such products. Literatures on brand influence, projects basic theory which refers to the congruence between the consumer's behaviour, his self-image and the product image. It make a consumer develops a particular likeness to that brand, make that brand suits his lifestyle. It is recommended by famous people or celebrity who is easily identified (Rio, Vazquez & Iglesias, 2001). This theory is based on the idea that individuals can enrich their self-image through the images of the brands they buy and use.

In this way, the theory upholds that the greater the consistency between the brand image and the consumer's self-image, the better the consumer's evaluation of a brand and the greater his intention to buy it (Graeff, 1996; Hogg et al., 2000). The personal identification function increases the customer's willingness to recommend the brand.

However, the personal identification function does not seem to affect either the price premium to be paid for the brand or the customer's acceptance of the brand extension towards other product categories (Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias, 2001).

H03: Personal identification function does not have any significant relationship with consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Customer--Based Brand Association Theory

A major contribution to branding theory was that made by Kevin Keller (2003) with his introduction of the concept of Customer-Based Brand Equity and the brand hierarchy (Keller 2003). Brand equity according to Keller, is the effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of a brand, with the effect occurring when

the brand is known and when the consumer possesses favourable, strong and unique brand associations (Keller, 2003) The Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model underpins four steps which denote questions asked by customers, and represent a 'branding ladder', with each step dependent on achieving the previous one (Keller, 2003).

These steps consist of six brand building blocks, with a number of sub-dimensions. To build a strong brand, the aim is to reach the pinnacle of the pyramid where a harmonious correlation exists with customers. Briefly overviewed, the first step of the CBBE model is to ensure the correct 'brand identity'.

Answering the first question customers ask about brands – Who are you? – the purpose is to create an identification of the brand, and an association with a specific product class or need. The initial step consists of the brand building block, 'Saliency'. The second step answers the customer question – What are you? – by establishing 'brand meaning' in their minds, and linking brand associations with certain properties. Two brand building blocks make up this step – 'performance' and 'imagery'.

The next step is 'brand response' whereby the proper customer responses to the brand identification and meaning are elicited (Keller, 2003). This step is achieved with the 'judgments' and 'feelings' building blocks, and answers the question – What about you?

'Brand relationships' constitutes the final step in the CBBE pyramid where brand response is converted to an intense, active loyalty relationship between customers and the brand.

Addressing the customer question of – What about you and me? – the final brand building block and the pinnacle of the pyramid is 'resonance'. Keller's conceptual framework provides guidance in building, measuring and managing brand equity. Keller claims that the model can be applied in Business-to Business context and a consumer environment (Keller, 2003).

Review of Empirical Studies

Chen, Yeh and Jheng (2013) using survey method examined the effect of brand management alternatives on brand cognition and brand association in the personal computer industry. The study revealed that susceptibility to global consumer culture has significant influence on brand association through brand credibility.

Additionally, perceived brand globalness also influences brand association through brand awareness. Kim and Lee (2010) through web based survey investigated the relationship among corporate image, brand awareness, service price, service quality, customer support services and customer patronage in Korea.

The findings indicate that service quality, service price, corporate image and brand awareness are strong antecedents for establishing customer patronage. Furthermore, the study therefore concluded that the corporate image of mobile communications service providers is most significantly related to customer patronage. Yuen and Chen (2010) survey method examined the impact of retail service and product quality dimensions on customer patronage.

The findings of the study revealed that retail service quality is positively linked customer patronage whereas product quality does not have a positive significant influence on customer patronage. Ogba and Tan (2009) using ANOVA and correlation analysis ascertained how brand association affects customer loyalty and customer commitment in Chinese mobile phone market. The findings of the study revealed that brand image has positive effect on customers loyalty ($r=0.777$) and possibly boosts customer commitment (0.809).

Kim, Jin-Sun, and Kim (2008) using convenience sampling method investigated the effect of hotel brand equity on guests' perceived value as well as hotel revisit intention in mid-priced hotels in USA. The proposed model (Brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness and brand association) versus competing model (Brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness and brand association) which seemed to fit better in the lodging industry was investigated.

The results revealed that brand loyalty and perceived quality have significant influence on perceived value while brand awareness and brand association do not significantly affect perceived value in the mid-priced hotel industry. Also, perceived value has a positive effect on hotel revisit intent. Rio, Vazquez, and Iglesias (2001) examined the functions performed by product and brand association in the attainment of differential advantages in terms of the benefits perceived by consumers of particular brand of shoes in Spain.

In this study, four categories of functions are identified: guarantee, personal identification, social identification and status. By way of hypotheses, it has been proposed that these functions have a positive influence on the consumer's willingness to recommend the brand/product, pay a price premium for it and accept brand extensions.

The results obtained confirm the convenience of analysing brand associations separately and enable the ascertaining of the brand associations that are the most relevant in order to attain certain consumer responses.

6. METHODOLOGY:

Research design, Population, Sample size and Sampling techniques

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design to generate data needed to get accurate information for proper decision-making.

The population of the study is the consumers of malt brands using undergraduate students of government-owned federal universities in Eastern part of Nigeria, namely; Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Federal University of

Technology Owerri (FUTO), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Michael Opara University of Agriculture, Umudike and Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo.

The geographical scope of the study is limited to the selected University areas under review in Eastern part of Nigeria. The population size of this study is 32,590 (Source: University Registry of the five Institutions for 2017/2018 Academic Session). The population size consists of 20,100; 21,000; 36,000; 27,750 and 3,000 respectively of above stated Universities in Eastern part of Nigeria.

The sample size of the study is 399. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1973) formula, thus; $n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$; Where: N = population size; n = sample size; 1 = constant; e = error margin (5% SL). $n = 107,850 / 1 + 107,850(0.05)^2 = 398.5219 = 399$ approximately. Therefore the sample size is 399.

A proportionate sampling procedure was achieved by adopting Adogbo & Ojo (2003) formula; $Q = A / N \times n$. Where: n is the sample size; N is the total population size; A is the population size of each of the university under review while Q is the sample size of each university. Based on the stated formula, 74, 78, 133, 103 and 11 copies of the questionnaire were distributed at Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Michael Opara University of Agriculture, Umudike and Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo respectively.

The distribution of the instrument for the study was done at Auditorium Hall in each of the five institutions. The justification for using a controlled avenue is due to the nature of the study coupled with the nature of the University system in Nigeria where students are spread across the faculties.

To ensure fairness on the sampling method, students were given the opportunity to be evenly selected by picking a card through a lucky dip. Only those who picked (yes) through a simple random lucky dip were given copies of the questionnaire to fill and submit. Prior to the main study, the instrument was validated by two research experts.

Their corrections and suggestions coupled with the modifications ensured the soundness, accuracy and as well, that the instrument measured what it is supposed to measure. The reliability for this study was established through test retest method. Questionnaire which was developed from the literature was structured to have three sections; A, B & C.

Section A captured the demographic characteristics as well as general information about the respondents. Section B focuses on functional brand association variables while Section C measured consumer patronage. Likert five point scale style of structured questionnaire was adopted; thus; strongly disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Undecided (UND) = 3, Agree (A) = 4 and strongly agree (SA) = 5. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the three formulated hypotheses at 0.05 significant levels.

The Decision rule for rejecting or accepting null hypothesis is thus; if the P-value is greater than 5% (0.05) significant level used, null hypothesis should be accepted. Otherwise, reject null hypothesis if the P-value is less than 0.05, the stipulated significant level. Model Specification & Operationalization of the Variables The researcher adopts Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias (2001) model and modified it as follows; Y = Dependent variable = Consumer Patronage (CP) X = Independent variable = Brand Association (BA)

The model the researcher used in the study took the form below:

$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, e)$ I

$Y = a_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e$ II

From the above, we can state the following:

$CP = a_0 + \beta_1 GUA + \beta_2 SOC + \beta_3 PER + e$ III

Where: a_0 = Constant (intercept), $\beta_1 - \beta_3$ = Coefficient of parameter, e = Stochastic error term, GUA = Guarantee, SOC = Social Identification and PER = Personal Identification functions.

7. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS:

The data generated from the 399 usable copies of the questionnaire returned (100% response rate) out of 399 copies distributed to respondents were presented and analysed. The demographic characteristics of the respondents as well as the descriptive statistics of the variables were presented while Pearson correlation was used to show the relationships among the variables.

Simple regression analysis was used to determine the prediction and statistical influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

VARIABLE	CP	GUA	SOC	PER
Mean	81.04000	82.28000	81.13333	79.80000
Median	79.00000	89.00000	80.00000	77.00000
Maximum	261.0000	261.0000	261.0000	250.0000

Minimum	9.000000	9.000000	10.00000	8.000000
Std. Dev.	58.56123	64.66432	59.18211	54.50043
Skewness	0.926038	0.990238	0.916395	0.769190
Kurtosis	3.651050	3.730450	3.599434	3.171372
Jarque-Bera	12.04392	13.92450	11.62012	7.487437
Probability	0.002425	0.000947	0.002997	0.023666
Sum	6078.000	6171.000	6085.000	5985.000
Sum Sq. Dev.	253776.9	309429.1	259186.7	219802.0
Observations	75	75	75	75

Source: E-view Computations Output, 2019

Table 4.1 above reveal the mean scores for guarantee, social and personal identification functions as well as consumer patronage. They are 82.28000, 81.13333, 79.80000 and 81.04000 respectively. The minimum score by the respondents under consumer patronage (CP) responses was 9.000000 whereas the maximum score made by the respondents was 261.0000. The minimum score by the respondents under guarantee function (GUA) responses was 9.000000 while the maximum score was 261.0000. The minimum score by the respondents under social identification function (SOC) responses was 10.00000 while the maximum score was 261.0000. The minimum score by the respondents under personal identification function (PER) responses was 8.000000 while the maximum score was 250.0000. Moreover, the standard deviation for consumer patronage, guarantee, social and personal identification functions are; 58.56123, 64.66432, 59.18211 and 54.50043 respectively.

The large differences between the maximum and minimum value show that the variables portrayed significant variations in terms of magnitude, thus suggesting varying estimation levels.

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation Matrix

VARIABLE	CP	GUA	SOC	PER
CP	1.000000	0.762520	0.696204	0.690512
GUA	0.762520	1.000000	0.667030	0.698071
SOC	0.696204	0.667030	1.000000	0.730252
PER	0.690512	0.698071	0.730252	1.000000

Source: E-view Computations Output, 2019

The correlation matrix is to check for multi-colinearity and to explore the association between each explanatory variable and the dependent variable. The findings from the correlation matrix table 4.2 above show that consumer patronage (CP) has a positive association with guarantee (0.762520), social (0.696204) and personal (0.690512) identification functions. Guarantee identification function has a positive association with social (0.667030) and personal (0.698071) identification functions. Social identification function is positively associated with personal (0.730252) identification function.

In checking for multi-colinearity, the study observed that no two explanatory variables were perfectly correlated. This indicates the absence of multi-colinearity problem in the model used for the analysis and justifies the use of the ordinary least square method.

Table 4.3: Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	10.47909	7.475346	1.401820	0.1653
GUA	0.425154	0.092828	4.580039	0.0000
SOC	0.250439	0.106304	2.355882	0.0212
PER	0.191232	0.120111	1.592127	0.1158
R-squared	0.657071	Mean dependent var		81.04000
Adjusted R-squared	0.642581	S.D. dependent var		58.56123
S.E. of regression	35.01055	Akaike info criterion		10.00103
Sum squared resid	87027.45	Schwarz criterion		10.12463
Log likelihood	371.0388	Hannan-Quinn criter		10.05039
F-statistic	45.34665	Durbin-Watson stat		1.979720
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

The R-squared which is the co-efficient of determination or measure of goodness of fit of the model, tests the explanatory power of the independent variables in any regression model. From our result, the R-squared (R²) is 65% in the Model.

This showed that our model displayed a good fit because the R² is closer to 100%, these explanatory variables can impact up to 65% out of the expected 100%, leaving the remaining 35% which would be accounted for by other variables outside the models as captured by the error term. The F-statistics measures the overall significance of the explanatory parameters in the model, and it shows the appropriateness of the model used for the analysis while the probability value means that model is statistically significant and valid in explaining the outcome of the dependent variables. From table 4.3 above, the calculated value of the f-statistics is 45.34665 and its probabilities are 0.000000 which is less than 0.05. We therefore accept and state that there is significance relationship between the variables. This means that the parameter estimates are statistically significant in explaining the relationship in the dependent variable. The t-statistics helps in measuring the individuals' statistical significance of the parameters in the model from the result report. It is observed from table 4.3 above that guarantee (GUA) and social (SOC) identification functions were statistically significant at 5% with its values as 4.580039 and 2.355882 respectively. This implies that they have contributed significantly to consumer patronage (CP) at the 5% level of significance.

Personal (PER) identification function was statistically insignificant at 5% with its value as 1.592127. This implies that it has contributed insignificantly to consumer patronage (CP) at the 5% level of significance. Our model is free from the problem of autocorrelation because the Durbin-Watson value is 1.979720 which is approximated as 2 (that means, the absence of autocorrelation in the model used for the analysis).

The a priori criteria are determined by the existing accounting theory and states the signs and magnitude of the variables from the result. Guarantee (GUA) and social (SOC) identification functions has positive signs and its values are 4.580039 and 2.355882 respectively. In the Model, this implies that increase in GUA and SOC increases the consumer patronage (CP) by 458% and 236% respectively, this conforms to our theoretical expectation.

Personal (PER) identification function also has positive sign and its values are 1.592127. In the Model, this implies that increase in PER increases the consumer patronage (CP) by 159%.

8. DISCUSSION OF RESULT AND FINDINGS:

The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between brand association functions and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

Initially, the specific objective one was to examine the relationship between guarantee function and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. Based on tested hypothesis one result on table 4.3 (t-statistic = 4.580039; p-value = 0.0000). Since p-value 0.0000 is less than 0.05 the stipulated significant level; we therefore reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis.

The decision is that guarantee function has positive and significant influence on consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. This implies that guarantee function of brand association has positive significant influence on consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. This is in line with the findings of (Keller, 2002; Rio et al., 2001) who found that guarantee function of brand association has positive significant influences on consumer patronage of products. Secondly, the specific objective two aimed to determine the relationship between social identification function and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. Based on tested hypothesis two result on table 4.3 (t-statistic = 2.355882; p-value = 0.0212). Since p-value 0.0212 is less than 0.05 the stipulated significant level; we therefore reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis.

The decision is that social identification function has positive and significant influence on consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. This implies that social identification function of brand association has positive significant influence on consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. This is in line with the findings of (Rio et al., 2001; Lassar, et al., 1995; Martin & Brown, 1990) who found that social identification function of brand association significantly influences consumer patronage of products. Thirdly, the specific objective three sought to evaluate the relationship between personal identification function and consumer patronage of selected malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. Based on tested hypothesis three result on table 4.3 (t-statistic = 1.592127; p-value = 0.1158). Since p-value 0.1158 is greater than 0.05 the stipulated significant level; we therefore reject the alternative and accept the null hypothesis.

The decision is that personal identification function does not have any significant influence on consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. This implies that personal identification function of brand association has not significantly influenced consumer patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. This is in variance with the findings of (Hogg, Cox & Keeling, 2002; Rio et al., 2001; Lassar, et al., 1995) who found that personal identification function of brand association has significant influences on consumer patronage of products. On relationship, the findings from table 4.2 above show that positive association exist between consumer patronage (CP) and guarantee (0.762520), social (0.696204) and personal (0.690512) identification functions. Guarantee identification function has a positive

association with social (0.667030) and personal (0.698071) identification functions; and social identification function also has positive association with personal (0.730252) identification function.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings, the study concludes that guarantee and social functions of brand association are significantly instrumental influencing consumers towards the patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria. The study concludes that the personal identification function of brand association have less significant influence on consumers towards the patronage of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria.

Thus, brand managers should pay attention to these variables especially to the personal identification functions of brand association, since it has no significant to consumer's patronage. The study recommends that brand managers should consider the development of good strategies geared toward improving the personal identification functions of brand association for consumer sustainable satisfaction and patronage toward consumption of malt drinks in Eastern part of Nigeria and even beyond.

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