

Multisensory and Consumer Purchase Decisions: Empirical Evidence from Malt Consumers in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This work examined the effect of multisensory on consumer purchase decisions in Nigeria using five states in south eastern part of Nigeria. The study utilized 355 valid copies of the questionnaire and evaluated the effects of malt brands taste, visual appearance, texture and smell on consumer purchase decisions. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the four formulated hypotheses at 5% level of significance. The major findings revealed that malt brands taste, visual appearance, texture and smell had significant effects on consumer purchase decisions. The conclusion emanating from this research is that taste of a particular malt brand is the most significant predictor and also the most important determinant of consumer purchase decision. The study recommends that malt manufacturers and brand managers should invest more on sensory purchasing motives for continued consumer purchase actions and patronage.*

Key Words: *multisensory, consumer purchase decision, malt brands, malt consumers, Nigeria.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The increasing competitive market for beverage products especially malt drinks in Nigeria has made customers to detect attributes that appeal to their senses during product evaluation and purchase. Pertinently, the senses (taste, sight, touch and smell) have received increased attention in the field of marketing from both researchers and practitioners [1]. Recently, mass marketing strategies are now failing in the way they connect to customers. The current strategies lie and focus on sensorial appeals through the senses. The need to identify new sensational strategies that not only appeal to the target market but also tend to remain in the customers' minds during product evaluation and subsequent purchase is of high importance. Multisensory product attributes provide the consumers with positive purchasing motives in relation to the specific brand and also paves way for emotional bonds that result in a permanent relationship with the customers [2].

Studies on the senses have shown that sensory cues of taste, visual appearance, texture, and smell affect our brand evaluation and choices [3]. Consumer no longer chooses a product only for the cost-benefit equation but the sensational motives that influences purchase decisions. Satisfaction is assured when a product brand provides an enjoyable taste, appearance, texture and smell. Multisensory provides added value to the satisfaction of the consumers and also make them to fall in love with the product through unforgettable experiences that encourage them to make wise purchase decisions.

Consumer purchase decision is an outcome variable which is a function of multisensory product characteristics. Importantly, consumer purchase decision entails buying the most preferred brand of a product. It focuses on the decision either to purchase or not to purchase a particular brand of a product. Pertinently, the investigation of the effect of multisensory on consumer purchase decision toward malt brands in Nigeria will enable companies to develop strong bond between their brands and their customers.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The motivation for this study emanated from unhealthy competition as a result of brand proliferation in Nigerian markets among malt manufacturers, brand managers and other stakeholders in the Beverage industry in Nigeria. Consumers on the other hand are too selective, unpredictable and always demanding for particular brands of products that appeal to their senses. Because of these challenges, some manufacturers have focused on some factors such as steady product availability, price reduction and advertisements as factors which they think affect consumers' patronage of malt brands without giving due consideration to multisensory purchasing motives that influence consumers purchase

decisions. Unfortunately, extant studies on multisensory purchasing motives are still few in Nigeria notwithstanding that a manufacturer who understands consumer sensational appeals and eventually positions his/her product brands in the minds of the customers through multisensory will definitely succeed in this contemporary warfare.

Extant studies indicate that multisensory plays an essential role in product evaluation and in influencing purchase decisions [1]. The review of the previous studies shows that the senses of taste, vision, texture and smell have been discussed in the literature [4] although the results have inconsistent, unclear and mixed findings. For example, malt brand taste significantly affects consumer purchase decision as found by [5] contrary to [6]. Malt brand visual appearance significantly affects consumer purchase decision as found by [7] converse to [8]. Malt brand texture significantly affects consumer purchase decision [9] as opposed to [10]. In addition, malt brand smell significantly affects consumer purchase decision as found by [11] which contradicts the findings by [12].

The abysmal inconsistencies in the literature concerning the constructs of this study suggest further empirical investigation. Therefore, there is need to determine the extent of effect of multisensory on consumers purchase decisions. Based on the available literature reviewed, it was observed that scanty literature on the subject matter still exist in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study attempts to fill the gap in knowledge. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the effect of multisensory on consumer purchase decisions of malt brands in Nigeria.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effect of multisensory on consumer purchase decision of malt brands in south-eastern part of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to;

- i Determine the effect of malt brand taste on consumer purchase decision.
- ii Evaluate the effect of malt brand visual appearance on consumer purchase decision.
- iii Ascertain how malt brand texture affects consumer purchase decision.
- iv Examine how the smell of malt brand affects consumer purchase decision.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions are put forward:

- i To what extent does malt brand taste affects consumer purchase decision?
- ii How does malt brand visual appearance affects consumer purchase decision?
- iii To what degree does malt brand texture affect consumer purchase decision?
- iv To what dimension does the smell of malt brand affect consumer purchase decision?

5. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Multisensory

Multisensory purchasing motives have received increased attention in the field of marketing from both researchers [1] and practitioners [4]. Researches on senses have shown that sensory cues of taste, sight, touch and smell can affect our preferences and choices [1]. They play a crucial part in the creation of an emotional sensation, connection and experience of purchase [13]. The human senses have been identified as important determinants in consumer purchasing behaviour. Also, they are acknowledged as powerful cues that affect consumer's perception and actual purchase [14]. [15] emphasized the need for customer experiences through the senses. Moreover, the sensorial cues affect consumers' decisions as regards to products' purchases [16]. Interestingly, the senses of taste, sight, touch and smell are important in influencing customer product evaluation as well as the overall purchase experience [17].

Consumer Purchase Decision

Consumer purchase decision entails buying the most preferred brand. It is a decision to purchase or not to purchase a specific product brand [18]. A critical and appropriate product evaluation and subsequent purchase enables companies to develop strong bond between their brands and their customers. However, sensational evaluation does not only create a purchase decision but also takes the consumer right through the buying action, post-purchase justification for ultimate satisfaction [19].

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Taste

The sense of taste is considered to be one of the most intimate among the senses because we cannot taste malt drink from a distance. Taste is a principal attribute that is the central reason for buying a product brand especially malt drink [20]. Taste determines the impressions of malt brand. It is very important in the beverage firms because it reduces faking a particular product brand. Recently, companies are making huge investment in order to identify their respective products through taste. Extant literature shows that taste forms include: sweet, savour, bitter, juice, cream, salt and sugar [5]. Also, the involvement of sense of taste in product evaluation is pertinent especially in this contemporary time where

consumers always expect products that will satisfy them well [21]. In Nigeria, it is still fuzzy on the extent taste of product brand affects consumer purchase decisions. Based on these points, we hypothesize that:
H1: Malt brand taste significantly affects consumer purchase decision.

Visual appearance

Product brand visual appearance aids to establishing brand identity. Sight facilitates the perception of the differences between alternatives [2]. Touching a product during evaluation reduces doubt [14] and increases actual purchase of the touched product [9]. The sense of vision is imperative in effecting customer evaluation as overall experience [1]. The sensorial product design and appearance have trigger emotional responses and also create willingness to make purchase decisions [22]. The appearance, colour, shape, design and size of a product brand are likely to positively affect consumer purchase decisions. Similarly, the consideration and appreciation of product visual attributes is useful in product evaluations and purchases [3]. In Nigeria, it is still hazy on the extent product visual appearance affects consumer purchase decisions. Accordingly, we put forward this hypothesis:
H2: Malt brand visual appearance significantly affects consumer purchase decision.

Texture

The sense of touch is one of the most intimate senses [23]. Human hands have been recognized as the principle source of input to the perceptual system [9]. [24] observe that it is beneficial for sellers to allow their customers touch, evaluate and interact with products before purchase. Consumers like to evaluate products and gather information about their properties which are conducted through the sense of touch. Additionally, it is important to evaluate a product brand through tactile sensation [25]. The opportunity to evaluate a product through touch creates a feeling of ownership [26]. Texture has a significant impact on consumer evaluation of product and purchase of product offering [24]. [27] opine that the tactile inputs provide the customer with an experience that can never be forgotten. Product texture is used as a delineation strategy to avoid product faking [28]. In Nigeria, it is still vague on the extent texture of product brand affects consumer purchase decisions. Based on this argument, we hypothesize that:
H3: Malt brand texture significantly affects consumer purchase decision.

Smell

Research has shown that smell is connected to our emotional and sensorial perceptions due to the olfactory bulb in the brain, which detects odors, flavor, aroma and so on and as well fast-tracks signals to the limbic system which eventually links sensation and emotion to memories [29]. Smell stimulates certain areas of the brain responsible for creating emotions and memories. Some companies recently have dedicated more efforts toward improving on their products' flavor, congruency, scent, fragrance and aroma in order to enhance their marketing strategy and brand identity. Smell has attributes such as flavor, scent, aroma, fragrance, congruence, pleasant odour and stink. Smell is essential in product perception and evaluation. For instance, extant literature supports that pleasant smell enhances product and store evaluations [11]. In Nigeria, it is still indistinct on the extent the smell of malt brand affects consumer purchase decisions. Therefore, we postulate that:

H4: The smell of malt brand significantly affects consumer purchase decision.

Theoretical Framework of the study

a. Senses theory as propounded by [30] suggests that a prospect examines a product brand through the senses of taste, sight, sound, smell and touch. According to him, a consumer or a prospect can evaluate a product through unisensory (single sense) or multisensory (interaction of many senses). Importantly, all the independent variables of this research originated from this theory and rooted on it.

b. Consumer decision theory as propounded by [31] states that consumer purchase decision emanated from the fourth stage of the seven purchase decision-making processes of this theory. According to this theory, the first stage is need identification, followed by searching for related information, followed by evaluation of attributes and alternatives, followed by consumer purchase decision, followed by consumption, followed by post consumption behaviour and finally, divestment.

Proposed Conceptual Model for the Study

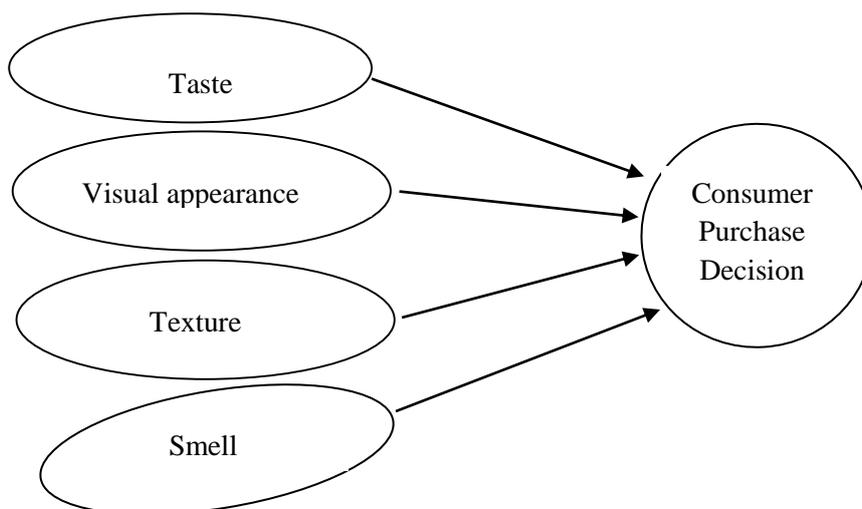


Figure 1: Conceptual model for the Study

Source: Developed by the Researchers, 2020.

6. METHODOLOGY:

Research Design, Population and Sample Size of the Study

The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design. The target population of the study consists of consumers of malt brands in the capitals of the five states that made up south-eastern geo-political zone in Nigeria. The population size was difficult to obtain because of absence of sampling frame or records of malt consumers to lay hands on. The sample size of 384 was determined using a Cochran formula specifically formulated for the determination of unknown population size. The study adopted a purposive sampling procedure while 35 sales outlets were purposively selected across the five states capitals in south eastern part of Nigeria. The selected malt brands under investigation were Maltina, Amstel, Dubic, Grand, Guinness, Maltex, Royale, Vita, Royale and Beta malt. Adult consumers of the selected malt brands of age 18 and older found drinking the required malt brands under review were used in the survey. The instrument was developed from the previous studies and the scales adapted from ([18]; [5]; [3]; [24]; and [11]). The distribution of the instrument for the study was done cross-sectionally. Prior to the main study, the instrument for the study was validated by three research experts. The average reliability correlation coefficient was 0.762 that proved the consistency of the instrument used in the main survey. The questionnaire for the study was structured to have three sections A, B & C. Section A was designed to capture the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B was designed for multisensory constructs while Section C was designed to measure consumer purchase decisions. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the four formulated hypotheses at 5% level of significance. The dependent variable (Y) is consumer purchase decision while the independent variable (X) is multisensory which is measured by four variables, namely; taste, visual appearance, texture and smell. The decision rule for the acceptance of hypothesized hypotheses is that the p-value will be less than 0.05; otherwise the null hypothesis will not be rejected.

Model Specification

X = Independent variable = Multisensory

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1Tas + \beta_2Vis + \beta_3Tex + \beta_4Sme + \mu$$

α_0 = Constant (intercept), $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ = Coefficient of parameter $X_1 - X_4$, μ = Stochastic error term

Tas = Taste, Vis = visual appearance, Tex = Texture, Sme = Smell.

7. RESULTS :

The data generated from 355 valid copies of the questionnaire from the respondents were analyzed. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses in order to ascertain the statistical effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Table 1 shows the result of the regression analysis:

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis Result

Hypotheses	Constructs	B Coefficients	T-values	p-values	Results
	Constant		0.795	0.213	
H1	Taste -> CPD	0.313	6.795	0.000	Significant

H2	Visual appearance -> CPD	0.297	4.957	0.013	Significant
H3	Texture -> CPD	0.225	2.687	0.030	Significant
H4	Smell -> CPD	0.254	3.718	0.021	Significant
Model 1	R = 0.703, R ² = 0.558, Adjusted R ² = 0.542	F statistics = 19.052	F. p-value = 0.000	Std error = 0.834	Durbin W. = 2.002

Note: Path is significant at 5% level of significance; if the t-value is ≥ 1.96 , or p-value ≤ 0.05 .

CPD = consumer purchase decision (dependent variable)

Predictors: taste, visual appearance, texture and smell

Source: SPSS Computation Output, 2020.

As shown on table 1, the regression model (R) has a value of 0.703 which portrays a strong positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The R² value of 0.558 shows that 55.8% of the variations in consumer purchase decision was explained by the variations in the explanatory variables. The F-statistics value of 19.052 with its corresponding p-value of 0.000 proved the overall significant of the regression model. The result on table 1 indicates that malt brand taste significantly affects consumer purchase decision ($\beta = 0.313$, $t = 6.795$, $p < 0.005$). A positive significant effect was found to exist between malt brand visual appearance and consumer purchase decision ($\beta = 0.297$, $t = 4.957$, $p < 0.005$). Also, malt brand texture had a positive significant effect on consumer purchase decision ($\beta = 0.225$, $t = 2.687$, $p < 0.005$). Moreso, the smell of malt brand significantly affects consumer purchase decision ($\beta = 0.254$, $t = 3.718$, $p < 0.005$). Accordingly, all the alternative hypotheses were significant and accepted.

8. DISCUSSION :

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effect of multisensory on consumer purchase decision in south-eastern part of Nigeria. The specific objectives sought to ascertain how malt taste, visual appearance, texture and smell affect consumer purchase decisions. Related literatures were reviewed and relevant theories discussed. Based on the findings as depicted on table 1, malt brand taste had positive significant effect on consumer purchase decision. The finding is in line with the findings of [5] and negates of [6]. A cursory look on table 1 shows that malt brand visual appearance had a positive significant effect on consumer purchase decision. The finding is consistent with the findings of [3] and [7] and contradicts the findings of [8]. Also, an examination of the result on table 1 indicates that malt brand texture positively and significantly affects consumer purchase decision. The finding is in accord with the findings of [9] contrary to the findings of [10]. Additionally, a critical investigation of the result on table 1 shows that the smell of a particular brand of malt had a positive significant effect on consumer purchase decision. This finding affirms the finding of [11] and opposes the findings of [12] that reported insignificant effect of smell on consumer purchase decision.

9. CONCLUSION:

The findings of this research have demonstrated that the study constructs have overwhelming significant effect on consumer purchase of malt brands in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study concludes that malt taste, appearance and design, texture and smell are significantly instrumental in effecting consumers' decisions towards the purchase of malt brands in Nigeria. The study therefore concludes that taste is the most important predictor of multisensory purchasing motives and also the most significant determinant of consumer decision toward the purchase of malt brands in Nigeria. The study recommends that malt manufacturers, brand managers and other key holders in the beverage companies should invest more on multisensory purchasing motives such as malt taste, visual attractiveness, texture and smell for better and sustainable consumer purchase action and consumption for ultimate satisfaction, patronage and loyalty.

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