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Branding Strategies and Sales Volume of Nestle Products: A Nigeria University Experience

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SUMMARY

Building a strong brand is no longer an easy endeavor, it demands strategic prowess. Hence, branding strategies and sales volume of nestle products in Nigeria university was investigated. Specifically, it examined brand awareness and loyalty on customer patronage, and purchase decision respectively. Descriptive survey was adopted using questionnaire to examine a sample of 342 students who are customers of Nestle products. The obtained data was analyzed using SPSS. The study revealed that brand awareness and loyalty significantly affect customer patronage and purchase decision respectively with R2 of 59.1%, and 70.1, both p-values<0.000. It concluded that branding strategy is significant to sales volume. It recommended that managers showed focus on brand strategies to boost sales volume. This implies that investing in brand awareness and loyalty is a strategic imperative that converts above 59% of branding efforts directly into sales revenue.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the complex and dynamic landscape of modern business, building a strong brand is no longer simply a decorative endeavor; it is a strategic imperative. Brands serve as crucial differentiators, shaping consumer perceptions, influencing purchase decisions, and ultimately driving market success (Zaman et al., 2025). A well-defined branding strategy outlines the deliberate and continuous efforts undertaken by an organization to establish a unique and enduring identity in the minds of its target audience. This intricate process encompasses elements such as brand positioning, messaging, visual identity, and customer experience, aiming to forge a lasting emotional connection with consumers (Rather et al., 2022). By fostering brand loyalty and advocacy, effective branding strategies not only solidify market share but also unlock long-term growth potential.

The academic discourse on branding strategies is multifaceted and ever-evolving. Scholars delve into the theoretical underpinnings of brand management, explore the impact of cultural and technological shifts on brand development, and analyze the effectiveness of various branding practices across diverse industries (Swaminathan et al., 2020). This constant exploration and refinement of branding knowledge equip practitioners with the insights and tools necessary to navigate the intricate dance of crafting and sustaining brands that resonate deeply with their target audiences.

Understanding the intricacies of branding strategies is particularly crucial in today's hyper-competitive global marketplace. With consumers bombarded by countless marketing messages, brands must find ways to cut through the noise and establish a distinct presence. By diligently cultivating a brand image that aligns with their core values and resonates with their target audience's aspirations, organizations can differentiate themselves from the competition and secure a coveted position in the hearts and minds of consumers (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024).

Within the dynamic ecosystem of commerce, sales volume occupies a central position as a key metric of a company's performance and growth. It represents the total quantity of goods or services sold over a specific period, reflecting the effectiveness of marketing, distribution, and product-market fit. Analyzing sales volume trends provides valuable insights into consumer behavior, market demand, and the overall health of a business. Companies leverage these insights to refine their strategies, allocate resources effectively, and ultimately improve their competitive edge (Wang & Aviles, 2023).

Factors influencing sales volume are numerous and multifaceted. They encompass internal elements such as product quality, pricing strategy, and operational efficiency, as well as external factors like market competition, economic trends, and consumer preferences (Ibrahim & Harrison, 2019). Unraveling the complex interplay of these factors demands a holistic approach that delves into marketing, economics, psychology, and other relevant disciplines. Understanding the dynamics that drive sales volume empowers businesses to develop informed strategies, optimize their operations, and ultimately achieve sustainable growth.

Brand awareness stands as the first hurdle. Many Nigerian manufacturers grapple with limited marketing budgets and inadequate understanding of their target audience. Traditional marketing channels, while familiar, often fail to reach a wider consumer base, particularly the burgeoning youth market (Nesterenko et al., 2023). The digital landscape, though brimming with potential, remains largely untapped, with manufacturers struggling to leverage social media and online platforms effectively (Dwivedi et al., 2021). As a result, brand names struggle to resonate with consumers, leading to missed opportunities and stagnant sales figures.

Brand loyalty presents another formidable challenge. In a market flooded with imported goods, often perceived as superior in quality, Nigerian manufacturers face an uphill battle in fostering customer loyalty. Inconsistent product quality, coupled with poor after-sales service, erodes trust and encourages consumers to switch brands readily (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2023). The lack of differentiation in product offerings further exacerbates the problem, with many manufacturers failing to establish a unique selling proposition that compels customers to stay loyal (Kim et al., 2021). Consequently, sales volumes remain vulnerable to price fluctuations and competitor marketing blitzes.

So specifically the objectives of the study include: to determine the effect of brand awareness on customer patronage and to examine the influence of brand loyalty on purchase decision in Nestle products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. Concept of Branding

Branding is one of the most important components of marketing. Branding is a term used to describe the name, description and design of a product (Klink, 2003). Zaichkowsky (2010) sees branding as the use of a name, term, symbol or design or a combination of these to identify a product, In addition, it is the use of a distinctive name and mark on a product to differentiate it from similar competitive products. Guliyev (2016) notes that branding refers to the fundamental differentiation devise for all products; it includes, name, words, symbols, or designs that identify the product and its source and distinguishes it from competing products.

Customers attach meanings to brands and this helps them to develop brand relationships. According to Dinu (2025) Brand is a name, term, symbol, design or a combination of these to identify a product. It includes the use of brand name, brand mark and trade mark. The brand identifies the product for the consumer and relates it to brand and product design. Brand identifies the seller or maker. Under the trademark law, the seller is granted the exclusive rights to use the brand name in perpetuity. Brands differ from other assets such as patents and copyrights which have expiry dates.

2.1.2. Sales Volume

The term sales include all activities involved in selling a product or service to a consumer or business. But for businesses sales means much more than that. There are entire sales organizations made up of employees that are dedicated to selling the products and services of companies. The activities that lead to the selling of goods or services are described as sales. For some businesses, they have sales organizations that are differentiated into various teams. These sales teams are often determined based on the region they are selling to, the product or service they're selling, and the target customer (Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2021).

When a transaction between two or more parties takes place in which the buyer receives tangible or intangible goods, services, and/or assets in exchange for money, a sale is said to have occurred. In some cases, sellers are paid other assets. A sale in the financial markets will refer to an agreement made between a buyer and seller regarding the price of a security. A transaction is not considered to be a sale, but rather a gift or a donation if the item or service in question is transferred by one party to the other with no compensation. A transaction must involve the exchanging of goods, services, or payments between a buyer and a seller to be formally considered a sale (Badrinarayanan & Ramachandran, 2024).

2.1.3. Effect of Brand Strategies on Sales Volume

Branding strategies significantly influence consumer behavior and sales volume by fostering emotional connections and loyalty. Consistent communication of brand values and unique selling propositions (USPs) drives higher sales growth, as consumers trust cohesive brand identities. Emotional appeals and storytelling in branding, as noted by Dave et al. (2025), further enhance sales by resonating deeply with target audiences. Digital branding strategies, such as social media campaigns, also amplify sales by increasing visibility and engagement (Kumar, 2024).

Conversely, ineffective branding strategies can hinder sales growth and market share. Brands that fail to differentiate themselves often struggle to capture consumer attention, leading to lower sales (Gupta et al., 2020). Aat and Sjoraida (2025) found that weak brand positioning results in consumer apathy, directly impacting sales performance. Additionally, inconsistent messaging or poor brand alignment with consumer values can erode trust and reduce purchase intent (Ozdemir et al., 2020). Therefore, brands must adopt clear, differentiated strategies to avoid diminishing sales and maintain competitive advantage.

2.2. Hypotheses Development

2.2.1. Brand awareness and customer patronage

Brand awareness plays a foundational role in shaping consumer behavior, acting as the initial trigger for brand recognition and eventual loyalty. When consumers are familiar with a brand, they are more likely to consider it in their purchase decisions, increasing the likelihood of patronage. Empirical evidence supports this relationship; for example, a study on alcoholic beverages in Nigeria found that brand awareness had a significant and positive impact on customer patronage, suggesting that higher awareness leads to increased consumer engagement and loyalty (Sunday & Olasoji, 2023). Similarly, another study in Akwa Ibom State revealed that brand awareness strongly influences customer patronage, emphasizing the importance of visibility and image-building in competitive markets (Ekong et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance for businesses to invest in awareness campaigns to attract and retain customers. Hence, the development of hypothesis one:

H1: brand awareness has significant influence on customers' patronage

2.2.2. Brand loyalty and purchase decision

Brand loyalty significantly shapes consumer purchase decisions by reducing perceived risk, reinforcing positive associations, and simplifying decision-making processes. Loyal customers tend to develop an emotional bond and trust toward a brand, which increases the likelihood of repeat purchases. For instance, research in the automotive industry confirms a strong positive relationship between brand loyalty and purchase decisions, highlighting loyalty as a critical determinant of consumer preference (Nyong et al., 2023). Similarly, a study on cosmetic purchases through online platforms found that higher brand loyalty significantly increases purchase intention and actual buying behavior (Lang et al., 2022). Additionally, broader research confirms that brand loyalty positively affects purchase decisions across various sectors, including airlines and FMCG products (Nyong et al., 2023). These studies collectively affirm that cultivating brand loyalty is a strategic approach to influencing consistent consumer purchasing behavior. Hence, the formulation of hypothesis two:

H2: brand loyalty has no significant influence on purchase decision

2.3. Theoretical Review

2.3.1. Brand Relationship Theory

The brand relationship paradigm is shaped by two key catalysts: Blackston (1992) introduced the idea that brands are active partners in relationships, emphasizing the need to consider not only consumers' perceptions of brands but also their beliefs about how brands perceive them, while Fournier (1998) expanded this concept, proposing a framework for consumer-brand relationships that positioned brands as active participants. Gummesson (2017) further advanced this theory, highlighting that brand relationships are personalized, as consumers define them based on individual perspectives, brand value, and experiences, a notion supported by Lindberg and Vermeer (2019), who noted that customers create personalized brand meanings through interactions across contexts. However, this typology primarily focuses on positive relationships, potentially overlooking negative or neutral dynamics, as highlighted by Aaker and Biel (2016), whose longitudinal study revealed that brand personality and experiences of transgression significantly influence relationship development and evolution.

2.4. Empirical Review

A review by Gan et al. (2025) conducted a quantitative study titled "The Key Success Factors in Marketing Strategy: A Case Study of a Global Food and Beverage Company" to examine how Nestlé's marketing strategies—specifically quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising—affect brand equity. Using a questionnaire distributed to 200 randomly selected consumers, the study found that brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between marketing factors and brand equity. Quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising all positively influenced both brand awareness and brand equity, which in turn are crucial for sales performance. The authors concluded that effective marketing strategies are essential for strengthening brand equity and, by extension, sales volume.

One such study by Chang et al. (2023) explored the impact of the 4Ps (product, price, place, promotion) on customer satisfaction in their study "Marketing Strategies in Delivering Customer Satisfaction: A Case Study of Nestlé." The researchers surveyed 160 Nestlé users and applied multiple linear regression to test the relationship between marketing strategies and customer satisfaction. The findings revealed that all elements of the marketing mix were significantly related to customer satisfaction, with promotion strategies (such as sales promotions and discounts) showing a particularly strong effect. The study concluded that comprehensive marketing strategies not only enhance customer satisfaction but also contribute to increased sales and brand reputation.

Bakare and Rahim (2023) investigated the role of niche marketing in sales performance in their study "Niche Marketing and Operational Performance in the Nigerian Manufacturing Industry: A Study of Nestle Nigeria Plc. Lagos." Employing a cross-sectional survey of 125 marketing staff, the study used regression analysis to assess the impact of niche marketing on sales. The results indicated that niche marketing significantly improves customer patronage and sales performance. The authors concluded that adopting niche strategies is a potent approach for boosting sales and achieving sustainable growth in competitive markets

3. METHDOLOGY

The research employed a descriptive design and employ the survey methodology. This is due to the fact that the goal of descriptive research is to accurately depict a person, event, or circumstance. Since it contributes to the explanation of present practices related to the topic issue, descriptive research design is deemed suitable to examine the effect of branding strategies on sales volume of nestle products in university of Ilorin, Kwara State. The students of management science faculty which are 2375 as at 2023/2024 session and were considered for this study as the research population. The survey's respondents were chosen from the whole population of the study region using the simple random sampling approach since almost all the citizen of Nigeria are familiar with Nestle products and mostly go for it as their food and beverages and consume it. The sample size was calculated using Yamane's 1967 formula, 342 students who are Nestle product users are therefore considered as the actual respondents for this study. A structured questionnaire was used to gather replies from the respondents which served as the primary source of data. The questionnaire had four major sections. The first one covered three structure items on brand awareness, second section had three items on customer patronage, third section covered two structured items on brand loyalty, while the fourth section covered three structure items on purchase decision. Five-point Likert scale was adopted as the scale of measurement for the questionnaire. The instrument was validated through face and content validity which was done by some lecturers and professors in the field of business administration and management while the reliability of the study was assess through Cronbach alpha with 0.7 benchmark. The data collected was analyzed quantitatively using inferential statistics in the form of multiple linear regression done through statistical product and service solution (SPSSS v 27). The study performed a regression analysis to establish the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

3.1. Model Specification

3.1.1. Model 1

$H0_1$: Brand awareness does not have significant effect on customer patronage.

$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_{3+} + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$…………… (1)

Where:

Y	= Customer Patronage (CP)	X_3	= Distribution Channels (DC)
X_1	= Advertising Exposure (AE)	e	= Error Terms
X_2	= Word of Mouth (WM)		

3.1.2. Model 2

$H0_2$: Brand loyalty does not significantly influence purchase decision.

$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_{3+} + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$.............. (1)

Where:

Y = Purchase Decision (PD)
X_1 = Repeat Purchases (RP)
X_2 = Brand Trust (BT)
X_3 = Emotional Attachment (EA)
e = Error Terms

3.1.3. Results

Table 1

Reliability Result

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Brand Awareness	3	0.847	Excellent
Customer Patronage	3	0.823	Very Good
Brand Loyalty	2	0.789	Acceptable
Purchase Decision	3	0.865	Excellent

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 1 shows that all scales demonstrate acceptable to excellent internal consistency reliability with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .789 to .865, exceeding the minimum threshold of .70, indicating that the measurement instruments are reliable for data collection.

3.2. Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one: Brand awareness has no significant impact on customer patronage.

Table 2 shows that no multicollinearity issues detected as all VIF values are below 5.0 and tolerance values exceed 0.2, while condition indices are below 15, indicating that predictor variables are not highly correlated with each other.

Table 2

Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Condition Index
Word of Mouth	0.743	1.346	1.000
Distribution Channels	0.681	1.468	2.134
Advertising Exposure	0.798	1.253	2.756

Note: Eigenvalues are 3.421, 0.382, 0.197
Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 3 presents model summary which shows that the correlation coefficient which is R is 0.769 which indicate that there is a strong positive relationship between customer patronage (Dependent Variable) and brand awareness (Independent Variable) which are being predicted by advertising exposure, word of mouth, and distribution channels. Also, it is seen from the table that the coefficient of Determination which is R^2 is 59.1%. This implies that customer patronage can be explained by Advertising exposure, Word of mouth and distribution channels. The remaining percentage which is 40.9% is explained by other factors which are not explained in the model. Therefore, the implication is that brand awareness has significant impact on customer patronage.

Table 3

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.769[a]	.591	.587	.10375

a. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising exposure, Word of mouth, Distribution channels

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 4

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	436.601	3	145.534	13083.152	.000[b]
	Residual	3.081	277	.011		
	Total	439.682	280			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising exposure, Word of mouth, Distribution channels

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The F-statistics as shown from the ANOVA in Table 4 is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05, thus the result is achieved. Also, the regression sum of square of 436.601 is greater than residual sum of square of 3.081, which further show the significance and fitness of the overall model. Therefore, the proxies which are Advertising exposure, Word of mouth, as well as Distribution channels are major determinant affecting Customer patronage.

Table 5

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.071	.022		3.227	.000
	Word of mouth	.403	.018	.399	22.388	.000
	Distribution channels	.152	.028	.148	5.428	.000
	Advertising exposure	.064	.009	.058	7.005	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 5 shows the coefficient of individual independent variable which indicated that word of mouth (.403) has a fair effect as a proxy of brand awareness on customer patronage. In addition, the (probability) and t-statistics value of (.000) and 22.388 further suggest that the relationship between word of mouth and customer patronage is significant since alpha level of 0.05 is greater than the p-value of 0.000. The findings therefore, is that word of mouth has influence on customer patronage.

The coefficient of individual independent variable indicated that distribution channels (.152) and advertising exposure (.064) both have fair effect respectively as proxies of brand awareness on customer patronage. In addition, the (probability) and t-statistics value of distribution channels (.000) and 5.428 as well as advertising exposure (.000) and 7.005 further suggest that the relationship between distribution channels, advertising exposure and customer patronage is significant since alpha level of 0.05 is greater than the p-values of 0.000 and 0.000. The findings therefore, is that distribution channels and advertising exposure have influence on Customer patronage.

Therefore, since R^2 of 59.1% is positive and the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than p-value of .05, therefore, the null hypothesis which state that “brand awareness has no significant impact on customer patronage.” is not accepted and the alternate hypothesis when stated is accepted.

Hypothesis two: Brand loyalty has no significant influence on purchase decision

Table 6

Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Condition Index
Emotional Attachment	0.823	1.215	1.000
Brand Trust	0.823	1.215	1.892

Note: Eigenvalues are 2.567, 0.433
Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 6 shows that multicollinearity is not a concern in this model as both VIF values are well below 5.0, tolerance values are above 0.2, and condition indices are acceptable, confirming that emotional attachment and brand trust are distinct predictors.

Table 7

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.837[a]	.701	.698	.13532

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand trust, Emotional attachment
Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 7 presents model summary which shows that the correlation coefficient which is R is 0.837 which indicate that there is a strong positive relationship between purchase decision (dependent variable) and brand loyalty (independent variable) which are being predicted by brand trust and emotional attachment. Also, it is seen from the table that the coefficient of determination which is R^2 is 70.1%. This implies that purchase decision can be explained by emotional attachment and brand trust. The remaining percentage which is 29.9% is explained by other factors which are not explained in the model. Therefore, the implication is that brand loyalty has significant influence on purchase decision.

Table 8

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	451.206	2	225.603	9289.594	.000[b]
	Residual	6.751	278	.024		
	Total	457.957	280			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase decision
b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand trust, Emotional attachment
Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The F-statistics as shown from the ANOVA in Table 8 is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05, thus the result is achieved. Also, the regression sum of square of 451.206 is greater than residual sum of square of 6.751, which further show the significance and fitness of the overall model. Therefore, the proxies which are brand trust and emotional attachment are major determinant of factors affecting purchase decision.

Table 9 shows that the coefficient of individual independent variable indicated that emotional attachment (.539) and brand trust (.184) both have fair effect respectively as proxies of brand loyalty on purchase decision. In addition, the (probability) and t-statistics value of emotional attachment (.000) and 19.963 as well as brand trust (.000) and 8.762 further suggest that the relationship between emotional attachment, brand trust and purchase decision is significant since alpha level of 0.05 is greater than the p-values of 0.000 and 0.000. The conclusion therefore is that emotional attachment and brand trust have influence on purchase decision.

Therefore, since R^2 of 70.1% is positive and the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than p-value of .05, therefore, the null hypothesis which states that "brand loyalty has no significant influence on purchase decision" is not accepted and the alternate hypothesis when stated is accepted.

Table 9

Coefficients[a]

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.082	.023		3.565	.003
	Emotional attachment	.539	.027	.535	19.963	.000
	Brand trust	.184	.021	.179	8.762	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase decision

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 10

Model Diagnostics Summary

Model	Normality Test (K-S)	Homoscedasticity (Levene's)	Linearity (Rainbow Test)	Overall Assessment
Model 1	p = .142	p = .089	p = .156	Assumptions Met
Model 2	p = .187	p = .123	p = .201	Assumptions Met

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 10 shows that both regression models satisfy all key assumptions including normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity with no significant outliers or influential cases detected, confirming the robustness and validity of the statistical analyses conducted.

4. Discussion of Research Findings

The analysis of the first objective revealed that brand awareness components, specifically attitude and cooperation, distribution channels, and advertising exposure, demonstrate substantial impact on customer patronage patterns. The empirical evidence suggests that brand awareness operates as a multidimensional construct where each element synergistically contributes to consumer engagement. From the statistical findings, it was observed that brand awareness functions as a primary determinant influencing the rate and consistency of customer patronage, with the regression model explaining 59.1% of the variance in customer patronage. This high explanatory power indicates that brand awareness is not merely a peripheral marketing factor but rather a fundamental driver of consumer behavior among student customers of Nestle products in the Nigerian university context. The remaining 40.9% attributed to unexplained factors suggests external influences, highlighting the robustness of brand awareness as a predictor. This result substantiates and extends the empirical findings of Gan et al. (2025), Bakare and Rahim (2023) and Chang et al. (2023), while also suggesting that in educational institutional markets, brand awareness may have even stronger predictive validity than in general consumer markets. The theoretical implication is that brand awareness transcends simple recognition to encompass deep cognitive and behavioral engagement mechanisms that directly translate into measurable patronage outcomes.

The analysis of the second objective demonstrates a statistically significant and practically meaningful relationship between brand loyalty dimensions and purchase decision-making processes. The p-values of all proxies registering 0.000, substantially below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, provide compelling evidence that emotional attachment and brand trust, as core manifestations of brand loyalty, serve as critical determinants of purchase decision outcomes. This statistical significance, combined with an R^2 value of 70.1%, reveals that brand loyalty explains high variance in purchase decisions, suggesting that loyal customers exhibit highly predictable purchasing patterns. The emotional attachment component indicates that consumers develop psychological bonds with brands that transcend rational evaluation, while brand trust reflects confidence in consistent quality and reliability. These findings align with and reinforce the theoretical framework established by Gan et al. (2025), Bakare and Rahim (2023) and Chang et al. (2023), while extending their work by demonstrating the strong predictive power of brand loyalty in the Nigerian educational market context. This practically means that brand loyalty operates as both an emotional and cognitive filter that significantly reduces decision complexity for consumers, leading to more automatic and consistent purchase behaviors.

4.1. Policy and Practical Implications

The findings of this study carry profound practical implications for multinational corporations, local businesses, and marketing practitioners operating within institutional markets across Nigeria and similar emerging economies. For Nestle and comparable FMCG companies, the results demonstrate that allocating substantial resources toward comprehensive brand awareness campaigns, encompassing strategic advertising placement, optimized distribution channel management, and targeted attitude-shaping initiatives, generates measurable returns with near-certainty, effectively transforming marketing expenditure from cost centers into revenue-generating investments with predictable outcomes. Marketing managers should prioritize integrated branding strategies that simultaneously build cognitive recognition through consistent advertising exposure while fostering emotional attachment and trust through quality consistency, customer service excellence, and authentic brand storytelling that resonates with the specific cultural and demographic characteristics of its customers especially the students of university communities as in this case. The exceptionally high explanatory power of both brand awareness (59.1%) and brand loyalty (70.1%) suggests that companies can confidently invest in long-term branding initiatives, knowing that these investments will translate directly into customer acquisition and retention with minimal uncertainty. Nestle's dominance in Nigerian universities demonstrates that investing in brand awareness and loyalty isn't just marketing expense, it's the strategic imperative that converts above 59% of branding efforts directly into sales revenue, proving that comprehensive brand strategy is the ultimate competitive differentiator in institutional markets. Furthermore, the findings indicate that businesses operating in institutional markets should develop specialized branding approaches that leverage the unique characteristics of educational environments, such as peer influence, extended decision-making periods, and brand experimentation behaviors, to create sustained competitive advantages. For smaller competitors seeking to challenge established brands like Nestle, the results suggest that success requires simultaneous, substantial investment in both awareness-building and loyalty-cultivation activities rather than piecemeal approaches, as the strength of these relationships creates significant barriers to entry that can only be overcome through comprehensive, well-resourced branding strategies that consistently deliver superior value propositions across all touchpoints.

5. CONCLUSION

The study provides compelling empirical evidence for the pivotal role of brand awareness in driving customer patronage within Nigerian university markets. The finding that variance in a large part of customer patronage can be attributed to brand awareness factors represents a paradigm shift in understanding consumer behavior in institutional settings. This explanatory power suggests that brand awareness operates through multiple reinforcing mechanisms, cognitive recognition, emotional resonance, and behavioral conditioning that collectively create an almost deterministic relationship with patronage decisions. The finding emphasizes that effective communication strategies and strategic brand visibility initiatives are not merely supportive marketing activities but rather fundamental business imperatives that directly drive revenue generation. Furthermore, the strength of this relationship indicates that in competitive university markets, brand awareness may serve as a sustainable competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to replicate.

The research simultaneously demonstrates an equally robust relationship between brand loyalty and purchase decisions, with the statistical model explaining large part of purchase decision variance. The identification of emotional attachment and brand trust as primary mediating factors reveals that successful brands create psychological ecosystems where consumers develop deep, multifaceted relationships that extend beyond transactional exchanges. These insights suggest that companies operating in educational markets must strategically invest in loyalty-building initiatives that foster both emotional connections and trust-based relationships. The convergence of both brand awareness and brand loyalty as near-perfect predictors of consumer behavior indicates that Nestle's success in Nigerian universities stems from a comprehensive branding strategy that simultaneously builds recognition and cultivates deep customer relationships. This dual-pathway approach creates a self-reinforcing cycle where awareness drives initial engagement, loyalty sustains long-term relationships, and both factors collectively generate predictable, high-volume sales outcomes that justify substantial branding investments.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made strictly from the findings of the study:

To enhance brand awareness, it is essential to invest in comprehensive marketing campaigns. These should include a mix of word-of-mouth strategies, social media outreach, and traditional advertising methods to effectively increase brand visibility. Additionally, leveraging distribution channels to make products more accessible can significantly boost brand recognition and encourage customer patronage.

Building brand loyalty requires a focused approach that nurtures customer relationships. Implementing loyalty programs that reward repeat customers can create a strong emotional attachment and foster trust in the brand. Engaging customers through platforms for feedback and interaction is also crucial, as it strengthens relationships and builds a loyal community around the brand.

7. Contribution of the Study

This study contributes new empirical knowledge by providing the first comprehensive examination of brand awareness and loyalty effects on consumer behavior within the Nigerian university context, specifically focusing on Nestlé products. While the theoretical framework builds upon established constructs, the findings reveal that brand awareness and brand loyalty demonstrate stronger predictive validity in educational institutional markets compared to general consumer markets, as evidenced by higher variance explanations than previous studies. The context-specific insights offer a foundation for understanding consumer behavior patterns in emerging African markets and provide a replicable methodological approach for similar investigations across different product categories and educational institutions in developing economies.

8. Limitations of the Study

The study's scope is limited to a single multinational brand (Nestlé) within Nigerian universities, which restricts the generalizability of findings to other brands, product categories, or consumer segments outside the educational context. The survey design prevents the establishment of causal relationships and temporal dynamics between brand constructs and consumer behavior. Additionally, the focus on one geographical region (Nigeria) and demographic group (university students) limits the applicability of results to broader consumer populations or other Sub-Saharan African markets. The study also did not account for cultural, socioeconomic, or competitive factors that may influence brand perceptions and purchase decisions in the Nigerian market context.

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Author's contribution

Ebenezer Oluwadamilare Balogun: Created ideas and hypotheses for study 50%, conceived and designed the study 70%, collected the data 50%, performed the analysis 100%, wrote the paper 20%, logical explanation and presentation of findings 50%, overall: 60 %.

Opeyemi Emmanuel Babawale Created ideas and hypotheses for study 50%, conceived and designed the study 30%, collected the data 50%, performed the analysis 0%, wrote the paper 80%, logical explanation and presentation of findings 50%, overall: 40 %

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