

MARKETING STANDARDISATION AND CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION OF AUTOMOBILE FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates marketing standardization and consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. The main objective of the study is to find out the relationship between marketing standardization and consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. The population of the study comprised of 17 automobile firms in Port Harcourt. The research design used was the correlational research design. The hypotheses were tested with the use of Pearson product moment correlation and supplemented with SPSS version 21.0. The results were that there was a significant relation between marketing standardization and consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. Recommendation was that the standard organization of Nigeria (SON) set up a monitoring body from time to time to check the quality and standards of product and services of the automobile firms, to limit the automobile firms from selling fake parts to customers.

Keywords: *Marketing standardization, Habitual buying decision, spontaneous buying decision, consumer purchase decision*

INTRODUCTION

As far as the topic of consumer purchase decision is concerned marketing standardization is the most examined issue. A large number of theoretical (see for example Jain 1989; Douglas and Wind 1987; Douglas and Craig 1986; Buzzell 1968) and empirical studies (e.g., Boddewyn and Grosse 1995; Ozsomer, et al. 1991; Leonidou 1996; Whitelock, et al. 1995) have been undertaken either to establish a theoretical framework or to examine the degree of standardization of elements of the marketing program in practice in order to discover the elements most likely to be standardized. It may be argued that the definition of a global marketing program can be arrived at by multi cross-cultural studies. This is to say that, reaching a decision regarding the possibility of implementation of a standardized element requires searching the entire global marketplace, then proving the standardized element works in every market without any problem. On the other hand, if a standardized element does not work in any one market it may be that the standardization of that element will be rejected globally. In other words, in order to reject the idea of any one element of the marketing program becoming global, it is sufficient to prove that it does not work in any one market

Research Questions

For the purpose of this research sorts to find answers to the following questions:

- i. To what extent does marketing standardization relate with spontaneous buying decision?
- ii. To what extent does marketing standardization relate with habitual buying decision?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis are as follows:

- a) There is no significant relationship between marketing standardization and spontaneous buying decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt.
- b) There is no significant relationship between marketing standardization and habitual buying decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt.

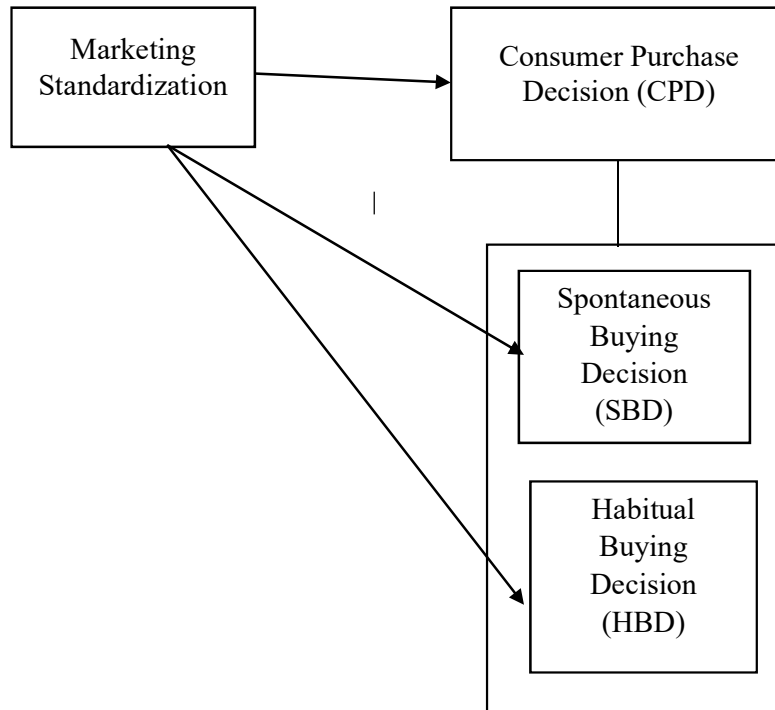
Conceptual/Operational Framework

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of Marketing Standardization and consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt.

Source Douglas and Wind (1987)

Literature Review*Conceptual Review*

Conceptual review here entails the conceptualization of the study constructs, the different proponents and the philosophies behind them. The respective dimensions of the independent variable and the latent measures of the dependent variable are equally explained.

Concepts of Marketing Standardization

Marketing standardization focuses on creating a standard plan of action across the board for marketing your brand or product in various countries. The ultimate goal is to achieve consistency and create a global appeal to a brand and its standardized products. Think standardized packaging, a recognizable image and slight variation in strategy across international markets. A lack of standardization can easily create confusion and misalignment among both your customer and global teams. Note that while the objective of global marketing standardization is to achieve uniformity across markets, adapting your strategy to a country's cultural and social norms when necessary is crucial to the success of a standardization approach. Standardization marketing strategy is typically applied to discussion of global businesses and means to market a solution with uniform consistency throughout the marketing mix. This is an opposite approach to an adaptation strategy, under which multinational companies differentiate their product and adapt it to fit the unique needs of countries.

Specifics of standardization

A major point about a standardization marketing strategy is that organizations can choose to standardize all aspects of the product experience, or they can standardize component of the product

or marketing. Standardizing the whole product experience includes product uniformity, customer service, product support, marketing, pricing and distribution. This is a standardized marketing mix.

Benefits

The overriding benefits of a standardized marketing strategy are consistency throughout the world and cost savings. Increased globalization of world businesses contributes to more similarities among international marketplaces. This has led some companies to realize the benefits of providing a consistent, and uniform product and marketing system around the world. Because these organizations are producing same products and reusing established marketing and distribution systems, they also get economies of scales benefits in production and buying.

Weaknesses

An inherent disadvantage of a standardized marketing strategy emerges from its goal of offering uniformity. Selling the same products with the same message globally means little to no differentiation for local markets and their unique needs. Ideally, a standardized approach is based on research that unique needs are not relevant. However, companies open the door for competitors to enter the market and offer some type of standardized product, service, or unique marketing messages.

Additional insights

Even companies that desire to standardize may find it difficult to do so in lieu of global restrictions. Trade barriers and tariffs are common tools global governments use to force companies to adapt to local market needs and requirements. Many countries have varying expectations on delivery from external sources. Not all businesses benefit from a standardized approach to international marketing and business. Each organization must carefully weigh its offering, its options and its ability to standardize or adapt for business results.

The Advantages of Selling a Standardized Product

People who buy standardized products aren't looking for anything unusual or unique. They take comfort in knowing what to expect from buying something that is a standard in the industry, and that is good news for you. Whether you are a manufacturer or an end-product seller, you can reap the benefits of standardization by saving money and passing those savings on to your customers for a product with which they are already familiar.

Standardized products benefit from familiarity

Cell phones, laptop computers, bank cards and frying pans: What do these products have in common? All are familiar to most people because they're used regularly. If some aren't using them now, they have used them in the past, so they know how they work and what they do. It could be said that they are standardized products because each one operates essentially the same as the others in its category, often using identical technology. You might think there would be an outcry over products that come to market because they mimicked other successful products, but the truth is far from it. While the first groundbreaking product is marketed as the original with warnings to not settle for imitations, those copycats are marketed as just as good but more affordable.

Concept of consumer purchase decision

As one of the factors influencing consumers purchase decision, decision-making styles are crucial for understanding consumer purchasing decision and for developing successful marketing strategies. Decision-making styles have been mainly viewed as a relatively enduring consumer personality that seldom changes even when applied to different goods and situations. Recently, a study showed that consumer decision-making styles are influenced by product type, suggesting that decision-making styles are individual response patterns in a specific decision context rather than personality trait

based. Despite extensive research regarding consumer decision making styles, relatively little attention has been paid to identify whether consumer decision-making styles are truly personality trait based or context-dependent. Identifying individual consumer decision-making styles has received a significant amount of attention from consumer decision researchers and practitioners over the years due to the inextricable links to consumers' purchase decision (Mitchell & Bates, 1998). In particular, examining decision-making styles is important so that marketers and retailers are in a better position to understand the preferences and needs of different groups of consumers (Tai, 2005). Several studies have investigated consumer decision-making styles and revealed their importance to consumer decision research (Hafstrom, Chae, & Chang, 1992; Durvasula et al., 1993; Lysonski, Durvasula, & Zotos, 1996; Mitchell & Bates, 1998; Fan & Xiao, 1998; Kamaruddin & Mokhlis, 2003; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004; Bauer et al., 2006).

Spontaneous Buying Decision

The understanding of spontaneous buying decision is a success key to the business organizations. Buying decision is the study of how a customer, or a group of customers select, buy, use, and dispose ideas towards the products or services in order to satisfy their needs and wants (Chand, n.d.). The personalized marketing analysed the pattern of buying decision of a customer. After the analysed of personalized decision, the prediction of future trend can be done easily (Kumar, John, & Senith, 2014). According to Engel, Blackwell, and Mansard, "buying decision is the actions and decision processes of people who purchase goods and services for personal consumption". According to Loudon and Bitta (2019), "buying decision is the decision process and physical activity, which individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using or disposing of goods and services" (Chand, n.d.). According to Lerne, "Buying decision involves the study of how people--either individually or in groups--acquire, use, experience, discard, and make decisions about goods, services, or even lifestyle practices such as socially responsible and healthy eating" (Perner, n.d.). The five stages in the buying decision process are: Problem recognition, Information search, Evaluation of alternatives, Purchase decision, and post-purchase decision. It is vital to know the spontaneous buying decision process. The spontaneous buying decision process are the decision-making processes begin by the buying to buy the goods or services in exchange of money in the market before, during and after the purchase of goods or services (Lumen, n.d.). It helps the seller/marketer for selling its goods or services in the market. If the marketer successfully understands the spontaneous buying decision according to the buying decision process towards the goods or services, then it may be successful for selling its goods or services. Spontaneous buying decision-making process step-by-step. The buying decision process consists of five stages Problem recognition, Information search, Evaluation of alternatives, Purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. It shows that how a buying does not think that much or plan that much before to buy a product. The buyer can use all five stages during decision making process towards a product. Perhaps, the buyer can also skip the one or more stages, it's all depends on buying mind (Kotler et al. 2017). Every human has different mind to other humans. For instance; A person buying his/her regular brand of milk every day when the need arises. So, the chances of skipping information and evaluation are more as compare to the highly involvement products. Basically, it depends on the human nature. But in case of buying a car where involvement is high. When the buying going to buy a car, then the customer can't skip any step out of five. (Kotler et al. 2017,) This process works especially for new purchase or highly involvement of buying purchase. Some companies focus on understand the buying experience in learning, choosing, using and disposing of the product.

Habitual Buying Decision

Picture yourself sitting at your local cinema as the lights go down, a box of popcorn in hand. A short while later, and most of the box might be eaten. What drives this behavior? It would be reasonable to think of popcorn's taste and other qualities. But the results of a recent field study challenge this explanation, at least when habits are guiding behavior (Neal, Wood, Lally, & Wu, 2009). Participants

in the study rated a series of movie trailers before the feature film at a campus cinema and were given a free drink and box of popcorn. Unbeknown to them, the popcorn was either fresh or 7 days old and decidedly stale (a manipulation based on [Wansink and Kim, 2005](#)). Participants who only occasionally ate popcorn liked the stale popcorn less than the fresh and ate less of it. However, participants who habitually ate popcorn at the cinema were a different story—when they were given stale popcorn, they liked it less, but they ate just as much as if they had been given fresh popcorn. Moreover, their habits were apparent only in the cinema context. When the study was replicated using a show of music videos in a campus meeting room, habitual eaters reacted much like non-habitual eaters—they ate significantly less stale than fresh popcorn.

This scenario captures an essential component of habits as they play out in every day's life. When people frequently have performed a response in particular contexts, the context can come to trigger the response directly in the sense that it does not require supporting goals and intentions ([Neal, Wood, & Quinn, 2006](#); [Wood & Neal, 2007](#)). Thus, when sitting in a theater watching movie trailers, viewers with a habitual pattern of past consumption will eat popcorn, even when they find it decidedly unappetizing.

Research on habits is important for consumer behavior because repetition is a central feature of daily life. About 45% of people's behavior is repeated almost daily and usually in the same context ([Quinn & Wood, 2005](#); [Wood, Quinn, & Kashy, 2002](#)). Purchase and consumption are similarly repetitious. Consumers tend to buy the same brands of products across different shopping episodes (e.g., [Seetharaman, 2004](#)), purchase the same amounts at a given retail store across repeat visits ([Vogel, Evanschitzky, & Ramaseshan, 2008](#)), and eat similar types of foods at a meal across days (e.g., [Khare & Inman, 2006](#)). Moreover, understanding of repeated consumer behavior is significant for brand and financial reasons. Increases in repeated purchase and consumption are linked with increases in market share of a brand, customer lifetime value, and share of wallet (e.g., [Ehrenberg & Goodhardt, 2002](#); [Wirtz, Mattila, & Lwin](#)). Thus, repetition, and more specifically habits, may characterize a significant segment of consumer behavior that is linked to important marketing outcomes.

In this article, we explain how consumer habits are cognitively represented, how they guide behavior, and how they are formed and changed. Although some researchers treat habits and automaticity as synonymous terms, we refer to habits as a specific type of automaticity characterized by a rigid contextual cuing of behavior that does not depend on people's goals and intentions. Habits develop as people respond repeatedly in a stable context and thereby form direct associations in memory between that response and cues in the performance context (e.g., physical location, preceding actions). Once habits form, perception of the context directly activates the associated response in memory. As we explain, this direct cuing process distinguishes habits from brand loyalty and other factors that might also promote automatic repetition. In differentiating among types of automaticity (see [Bargh, 1994](#); [Moors & DeHouwer, 2006](#)), we move beyond dual process, automatic vs. controlled distinctions to identify the characteristic effects of habits in guiding consumer behavior.

Theoretical Review

Social Cognitive Theory

Many psychological theories have been recommended over the years to explain human behavior. The interpretation of human nature embodied in such theories and the causal procedures they propose to have a substantial consequence. What theorists believe people to be regulates which characterizes the human working they discover most thoroughly and which they leave unexamined. The notions of human nature in which psychological theories are entrenched is more than a theoretical issue. As knowledge and information acquired through inquiry is applied, the notions managing the social practices have even vast suggestions. They affect which human potentialities are educated, which are underdeveloped, and whether determinations at change are focused primarily at psychosocial, biological or socio-structural factors. This theory addresses the personal

determinants and mechanisms of human functioning from the perspective of social cognitive theory (Bandura, n.d.).

In the socio-cognitive view, individuals are self-organizing, positive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just responsive organisms designed and shepherded by external occurrences. People have the authority to create an impact on their own accomplishments to produce certain results. The capability to use regulator over one's thought processes, enthusiasm, affect, and action functions through devices of personal agency. Human agency has been intellectualized in at least three different ways, as either autonomous agency, mechanically reactive agency or emergent interactive agency. The concept that humans' function as completely self-determining agents has few serious advocates, although it is sometimes appealed in caricatures of cognitive theories of human behavior (Bandura, n.d.).

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory a predecessor to Berry's relationship marketing theory is social exchange theory. Homans (1961), defined social media exchange theory as the exchange of tangible or intangible transaction between two or more parties that has both a cost and a reward. According to Homans, the transaction usually involves either or both parties trying to obtain a reward that is of superior value to them when compared to the costs that are involved. Blau (1964) defined social exchange as voluntary actions of the involved parties that are motivated by the rewards that the parties will be received. Blau's definition focuses on individual willingly incurring a cost with the expectation of receiving a reward when the reward that the party receives produces either profit or at least equity. According to Blau, the rewards received in a social exchange can be either intrinsic (e.g., love) or extrinsic (e.g., helping others).

Furthermore, one party's dependence on the other is what prompt the transaction (Blau, 1964). Oliver and Swan (1989) argued that the fundamental drivers of social exchange interaction is justice and fairness because, in social exchange, the party's motivation is to obtain some valued reward although something of value is forfeited. In social exchanges, people seek to maximize rewards, minimize costs, and attain the greatest profit. Redmond (2015) posited that social exchange theory involves four elements: (a) Parties aim to attain a valued reward, (b) One party must forfeit something of value. (c) Parties seek profit in the exchanges, Chou and Hsu (2016) asserted that social exchange theory involved social interaction where two parties exchange a reward that is needed by the other person. According to Surma (2016), social exchange theory explains the development and management of interpersonal relationships and suggests that the goal of the exchange is to increase the benefit while reducing the cost.

Empirical Review

Tan and Sousa (2012) carried out a study on International Marketing Standardization A Meta-Analytic Estimation of Its Antecedents and Consequences in India, they stated that throughout the past four decades, researchers have examined several antecedents and consequences of international marketing program standardization. However, the findings of their studies reported in the literature are too fragmented to yield clear insights. To address this issue, the authors conduct a meta-analysis to quantitatively synthesize and analyze the empirical findings on antecedents and consequences of international marketing program standardization. The empirical results reported in this study have been integrated from 110 independent samples published in 108 articles. Multivariate analysis is used to examine the antecedents of international marketing program standardization strategy as well as the interdependence between the four elements of the marketing-mix. their findings were that the relationship between international marketing-mix standardization tends to be different when studies use different measures of performance (i.e., single vs. multiple measures).

Bardakci and Whitlock (2018), carried out a research on the standardization of marketing: towards a meta-analysis of empirical studies in the United Kingdom. Examining the degree of

standardization/adaptation of marketing program elements in overseas markets comparing one country to another. The aim of their exploratory paper is to present a method for integrating the findings of such separate empirical studies, using five studies as a basis for this integration. The combined findings were that product characteristics is the most standardized element of the marketing program for consumer goods.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used correlational research design

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of 17 automobile firms in Port Harcourt.

Sample/Sampling Techniques

The sample of the study consist of all the 17 automobile firms in Port Harcourt, which compresses of managers, such as general managers, marketing managers, account managers and supervisors.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire comprising of 15 items of four (4) point scale, strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A respondent was expected to indicate him/her agreements or disagreements to the statement provided in the validation of the collection. The instrument was subjected to scrutiny by experts in marketing, measurement, and graduation to ensure that it will measure what is expected measure.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the field of study was organized in tables, the use of Pearson product correlation, and supplemented with SPSS version 21.0

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between marketing standardization and spontaneous buying decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt.

Relationship between Marketing Standardization and Spontaneous buying Decision

Correlations

		Marketing Standardization	Spontaneous Buying Decision	Spontaneous Buying Decision
Marketing Standardization	Pearson Correlation	1	.906	Rejected
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009	
	N	101	101	
Spontaneous Buying Decision	Pearson Correlation	.906	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.009	
	N	101	101	

*S= Significant $p < 0.05$

Source: Research Survey, 2023

Data in the table indicate the relationship between marketing standardization and Spontaneous Buying Decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt This result show that the P-value of 0.009 less than 0.05 level of significance has positive relationship between marketing standardization and Spontaneous Buying Decision of automobile firms Port Harcourt. This result indicates 0.906 (90.0%) co-efficient that as scores on marketing standardization and Spontaneous Buying Decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between marketing standardization and habitual buying decision of automobile firms in in Port Harcourt.

Relationship between Personality Attributes and Habitual Buying Decision

		Correlations		
		Personality Attributes	Habitual Buying Decision	Decision
Personality Attributes	Pearson Correlation	1	.908	Rejected
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009	
	N	101	101	
Habitual Buying Decision	Pearson Correlation	.908	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009		
	N	101	101	

***S= Significant $p < 0.05$**

Source: *Research Survey, 2023*

Data in the table indicate the relationship between marketing standardization and habitual Buying Decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. This result shows that the P-value of 0.009 less than 0.05 level of significance has a positive relationship between marketing standardization and Spontaneous Buying Decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. This result indicates a 0.908 (90.0%) co-efficient that as scores on marketing standardization and Spontaneous Buying Decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

Marketing standardization and Spontaneous buying decision/habitual buying decision.

The findings revealed a significant relationship between marketing standardization and consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. This was validated by the fact that automobile firms distinguished themselves from the rest due to their standards and level of customers' relationship. Adekanye (1971) investigated the effects of marketing standardization on personality on customer purchasing decision acting as a moderating variable. The findings of the study revealed that marketing standardization has a positive effect on spontaneous buying decision and habitual buying decision. Also, marketing standardization moderates the relationship between spontaneous buying decision and habitual buying decision positively. This agrees with the findings of the present study.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between marketing standardization and consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt. Findings of the study indicate that much awareness has been done on marketing standardization and its impact on consumer purchase decision. The study established that one of the most significant contributions of marketing standardization is its expected increase in high level of standards in the automobile industry. The study as well indicated that standardization in the automobile firms increases the habitual buying decision of the customers. The study concludes that marketing standardization has positively affected consumer purchase decision of automobile firms in Port Harcourt.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the significance and contribution of marketing standardization to consumer purchase decision to the improvement in the automobile firms in Port Harcourt, the researcher recommends the followings:

1. Despite the fact that the studies centered only on automobile firms in Port Harcourt, it is as well relevant to other automobile firms in other states within Nigeria to put more attention on marketing standardization in their firms for better standards in their respective firms.

2. It's suggested that the standard organization of Nigeria (SON) set up a monitoring body from time to time to check the quality and standards of product and services of the automobiles firms, to limit the automobile firms from selling fake parts to customers.

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