

Influence of Product Familiarity on Consumer Preference of Soft Drinks in Coca Cola Beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-County Kenya

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Abstract : *Coca cola beverages Africa faces the problem of identifying the brands of the company that are less consumed and the reasons why sales fluctuate in different sales periods. This study investigated the influence of product familiarity on consumer preference of soft drinks in coca cola beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-county, Kenya. The study adopted cross sectional survey research design. The study targeted the customers of soft drinks in retail outlets. The study sampled 384 customers. Further a research questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. Data was collected using drop and pick method. The collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was examined using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings from the study indicated that product familiarity significantly accounted for 27.5% of the total variation in consumer preferences of soft drinks in Coca Cola beverages Africa. The study concluded that product familiarity has significant influence on consumer preference of soft drinks in coca-cola beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-county Kenya. The study recommended that the company should pay attention to product branding as well as improving product familiarity to ensure that consumers are aware of the product existence.*

Keywords: *Coca Cola Beverages, Consumer Preference, Product Familiarity, Soft Drinks, Nakuru*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's business environment is highly competitive and rapidly changing. Therefore if a firm wants to succeed in its goals it has to do a continuous observation of the consumer behaviour and their preference because consumers are the kings in the business world [1]. Recently, the number of product attributes has multiplied for a great number of products in consumer markets and a wide variety of product variations is available to consumers making it more difficult for them to make a choice. Many times a customer no longer has to consider product variations with only one product category, as often there is an overlap of categories. For example mobile phones are not only used to make a call but also to take photos, listen to music or access the Internet, used for money transfer and also are used to make payments [2].

Consumer preferences characterize attitude towards an item in relation to the other. Consumers are always making choices and decisions in countless ways, from the modest decisions to intricate decisions. Researchers have pointed out that it is a course by which consumers are gathering appropriate data concerning products' qualities and features and gauge the data with regards to their favorites before deciding on what to select among the available choices [3].

Consumer preferences are measured in terms of the level of satisfaction the consumer obtains from consuming various combinations or bundles of goods. The consumer's objective is to choose the bundle of goods which provides the greatest level of satisfaction as they the consumer define it. But consumers are very much constrained in their choices. These constraints are defined by the consumer's income, and the prices the consumer pays for the goods. Consumer value is measured in terms of the relative utilities between goods and these reflect the consumer's preferences [4].

Today, the number of features for certain products has increased to such an extent that a consumer is almost unable to consider all features when making a decision. Not only do manufacturers and retailers want to know if a consumer purchases a particular product, but also what features encourage them to choose a specific brand or a product version within a given brand. Therefore, the manufacturer aims to use a combination of features to make the product that can best satisfy the needs of consumers or the special needs of a group of consumers. One way to do this is

customization to satisfy consumer needs on a segment level as well as to take into consideration individual preferences within a segment [2].

Many companies view product characteristic as an important way to communicate with consumers and create an impression of the brand in their minds. In other instances, the product attributes can extend the brand by offering new uses. Design factors such as size, shape, colour, and lettering all contribute to the appeal of a package and can be as important as a commercial in determining what goes from the store shelf to the consumers' shopping cart [5]. Consumers look beyond the reality of the product and its ingredients. The product's quality, branding, packaging, and even the company standing behind it all contribute to consumers' perceptions. In an effective Integrated Marketing Communication Program (IMCP), advertising, branding, and packaging are all designed to portray the product as more than just a bundle of attributes. All are coordinated to present an image or positioning of the product that extends well beyond its physical attributes [6].

With the changing trend and fashion of current soft drink industry it is of primal importance for the organization to adapt to the changes in accordance with the expectations of the consumer. [7]. Consumer preferences is used primarily to mean to select an option that has the greatest anticipated value among a number of options by the consumer in order to satisfy his/her needs or desires. Preferences indicate choices among neutral or more valued options available. The preference of the consumer is the result of their behaviour they show during searching, purchasing and disposing the products. Consumer preferences are defined as the subjective (individual) tastes, as measured by utility, of various bundles of goods. They permit the consumer to rank these bundles of goods according to the levels of utility they give the consumer. The preferences are independent of income and prices. Ability to purchase goods does not determine a consumer's likes or dislikes. In other words, the consumer has different preferences over the different combinations of goods defined by the set of commodity bundles [4].

1.1 Global Perspectives on Consumer Preference

Soft drinks products have been well accepted by consumers and gradually overtaking hot drinks as the biggest beverage sector in the world. In the midst of the rapidly growing soft drink demands, the industry on the whole is encountering new opportunities and challenges [8]. Globally many studies have been conducted with regard to carbonated soft drink consumption and less on malt soft drinks while other studies looked at different products. For instance, in America drinking habits for consumers is that consumers took more soft drinks as compared to water [9]. All these were attributed to various social factors that were vaguely justified. In Malaysia the characteristics associated with the consumption of soft drinks among Malaysian primary school children were that that soft drinks consumption is prevalently consumed among boys as compared to girls. This indicates that gender plays a critical factor in the consumption of soft drinks [10].

There is lower consumption of fruits and higher consumption of soft drinks among older pupils in Pelotas, Southern Brazil. The change from childhood to adolescence signifies increasing autonomy over food choices, with increasing opportunities for teenagers to select and purchase their own food and drink outside the home [11]. In Europe, influence of individual and contextual socio-economic status on consumption of fruit and soft drinks among adolescents showed that the decisions for consumption are consistent for gender (higher consumption of fruits and lower consumption of soft drinks among girls) [12].

In Australia, adolescents are among the highest consumers of soft drinks. In Australia, behavioural factors associated with high consumption of soft drinks among Australian secondary school students were low fruit intake and consumption of energy drinks on a weekly basis. High consumption of soft drinks among Australian secondary school students is more prevalent among males and those with more weekly spending money. High soft drink consumption also clusters with a number of other unhealthy lifestyle behaviours, namely low intake of fruit, high intakes of fast foods and snack foods, weekly consumption of energy drinks, greater exposure to commercial television and short sleep duration. Male students are more likely to be high consumers of soft drinks compared with female students [13].

In Northern Greece, there is high consumption of adolescents consuming soft drinks. Most of the adolescents consume soft drinks, especially cola drinks with sugar, and they have access to these beverages in their home environment. The majority of the adolescents' parents do not serve soft drinks during their meals, do not approve of soft drinks consumption and do not consume high levels of soft drinks themselves. Taste seems to be a strong determinant of soft drinks consumption. In the case of cola drinks, statistical analysis has revealed that gender, general eating habits, soft drink-related knowledge and a number of family environment variables, such as single-parent family and maternal educational level, together with parental practices, such as parents' approval of soft drinks consumption and parental soft drinks consumption, are significant determinants of cola drinks intake in this age group [14].

1.2 Regional Perspectives on Consumer Preference

In Africa, consumption of non alcoholic beverages (NABs) such as Juice and carbonated drinks has been a basic form of refreshment among Nigerians of all ages, tribes and socioeconomic backgrounds [15]. NABs have been widely recognized for their various contributions to household food and nutrition in general, and especially, for their role in body hydration [15]. They noted that fruit and vegetable based juices are important contributors of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre; and the benefits of juice consumption have been reported [15] while that of the carbonated soda has been a subject of debate in Nigeria.

In Ghana, consumer green behaviour in consumption of soft drinks could be influenced by pro-environmental behaviour, environmental knowledge, environmental attitude and their purchasing power. Coca-Cola consumers are both males and females with females dominating its consumption [16]. In 2010, among 400 adolescents aged 8-17 years in Dares Salaam, Tanzania the frequency and amount of soft drink consumption was assessed. The prevalence of consumption of soft drinks was 61.5%; out of which the prevalence of sweetened juice consumption was 68.3% and prevalence of carbonated beverages was 61.3%. Compared to carbonated beverages which was consumed only once a week, fruit juices was consumed daily by most students. The consumption of soft drinks was also influenced by the type of school. Carbonated beverage consumption was more prevalent among government school students while students from private schools drank more fruit juices [17].

Consumption of soft drinks among grade 11 and grade 12 learners at secondary school in Gauteng, South Africa was that carbonated drinks were the most commonly consumed soft drinks among the learners. Amongst the processed foods, soft drinks have become one of the top energy contributors. Carbonated drinks were also the most preferred drink among the learners. Learners skipping meals would lead to increased soft drink consumption later in the day for energy re-compensation. Children and adolescents have been shown to be the most vulnerable to these energy dense drinks [18].

1.3 Local Perspectives on consumer preference

Soft drink products are one of the many popular beverages that are easily available in today's market. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the existence of soft drink in today's markets [19]. According to [20] on a comparison on brand loyalty in Kenya and India Consumer on soft drinks markets, they found out that the consumption of soft drinks in India is reducing with health concern as the main cause for the same. Parents are very crucial in introducing their children to various soft drinks brands and subsequently shaping their loyalty in Kenyan market. In India, peer influence is the major factor in introducing of soft drinks brand. Most Kenyans enjoy their soft drinks during evening hours but their Indian counterparts prefer during the day. The study established that in India peer group as a powerful motivator in the consumption of soft drinks; while in Kenya, parental influence was critical [20].

Consumers' purchasing behaviour in the consumption of Coca Cola, Novida and Malt soft drinks in Nairobi, Kenya, [19] found that consumers' purchasing behaviour on soft drinks was lured by the design of the bottle or cans of malt soft drinks, followed by the soft drink familiarity and printed ingredients. This was followed closely by the respondents consuming malt soft drink based on the design of the bottle and others preferred the glassy shape of malt drinks. Product features was an attractive attributes to the consumption of malt soft drinks. The presence of an attractive attribute lead to more than proportional satisfaction in the consumption of malt soft drinks The study established that people who consume malt soft drinks may prefer the packaging and less on the nutritional values.

In Trans Nzoia County in Kenya, that consumption of soda was influenced by factors like by cultural ceremonies like circumcision, dowry negotiation and weddings directly influenced soda consumption in the county. These cultural factors influence soda consumption trends in such a way that the residents of Trans Nzoia County take more soda than usual. This is because a soda is served during most of those cultural ceremonies and events in addition to other foods and drinks. Individuals' soda buying patterns in the region are affected by the social environment such as parental upbringing and peer group pressures. Social norms and cohesion practices such as drink sharing among friend and relatives were also found to be cultural factors affecting the consumers' choice of soft drinks among the residents of Trans Nzoia County [21].

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Competition is live in beverage and drinks manufacturing industry and companies have to brace themselves appropriately to manage the upheavals in the market. According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [22] the food and non-alcoholics beverages recorded the highest increase of 13.4% in the period between 2013 and 2017. In this category, mineral waters, soft drinks, fruit and vegetable juices registered one of the lowest average growths of 2.3%. Soft carbonated drinks, the dominant market player here is the Coca-Cola Corporation with bottling plants and marketing facilities throughout the country. Coca cola beverages in Kenya are always faced by two unresolved dilemmas. The first dilemma has been finding out why certain brands of soft drinks are less consumed in Kenya. While

the other dilemma is explaining why sales of soft drinks increase during even years and drop in odd years despite the availability of constant determinants like weather patterns and rigorous marketing strategies [21]. Among all the soft drinks brands customer have to judge factors such as price, variety and taste before making their buying decision [23]. The consumers are provided with different brands and they are quite free to choose the one they think is the best. Among the studies conducted on this field, very few addressed the effect of product characteristics on consumer preference with most addressing other factors such as consumer perception, product advertisement, branding as well as packaging. [20] researched on brand loyalty in global soft drink consumer markets of Kenya and India, [24] conducted a study to establish the role of branding on customer preference in the soft drink industry, [25] studied influence of soft drinks branding on consumer buying decision. As such this study sought to fill the gap by providing literature in that line of research by studying the effect of product characteristics on consumer preference on soft drinks in Coca cola beverages Africa Nakuru East Sub-County Kenya.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to assess the influence of product familiarity on consumer preference of soft drinks in Coca cola beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-county Kenya.

IV. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Product familiarity has no statistically significant effect on consumer preference of soft drinks in coca cola beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-county Kenya.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

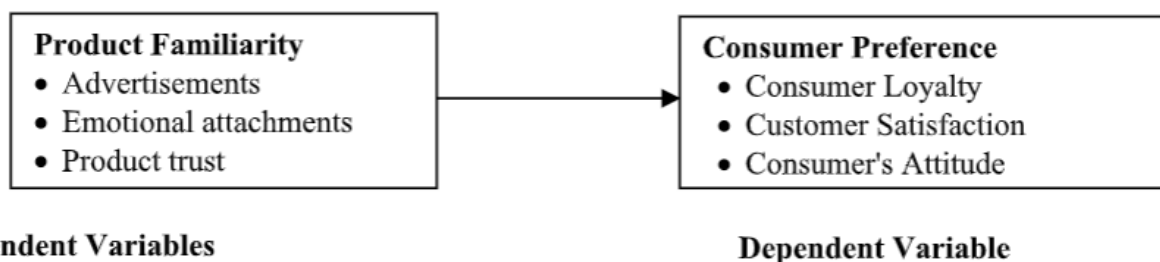
5.1 Black Box Model

Kotler and Armstrong authored the black box model in the year 2003 which looks at the relationship between stimuli and consumer response. The model looks at a consumer as a rational thinker and a problem solver who responds to a wider range of stimuli when deciding to buy or not to buy. The consumer may be responding to internal stimuli. External stimuli come out of the consumer's environment and may include marketing stimuli such as price, promotions and product. Environment forces such as economic factors, socio-demographic, technological and political factors are additional examples of external stimuli. The internal stimuli, referred to as 'the black box' contain a variety of factors that exist inside the consumers mind. Internal factors which influence consumer response include buying attitudes and preferences, lifestyle, perceptions, consumer knowledge and motivations[26].

This model proposes that, as consumers come to recognize they have a problem they need to solve, the 'black box' which is the human mind processes choices based on the internal and external stimuli to arrive at a response. The last step in this model is the consumer decision making process. At this stage the buyer makes a choice to buy the product that best satisfies his or her needs. This decision will be influenced by culture, personal, social and psychological factors. Additionally, the final decision will also be impacted by the stage at which the consumer is along the buying process [27]. In summary the black box model focuses on the consumer as rational thinker and problem solver who responds to a range of external and internal factors when deciding whether to buy or not to buy [28].

This model has been hailed as having the capacity to explain complex behaviours, an acknowledged deficiency of the competing behavioural perspectives where it is impossible to ascertain the contingencies that control response [29] in addition, the black box model has identified and developed a wide range of factors which are thought fundamental to these intrapersonal processes including perception, learning memory, thinking, emotion and motivation [30]. However, the model has also been criticized for a number of factors the key one being the assumption that the consumer is rational, logical, discerning and active in decision making [31]. [29] further critiques the model for relying extensively upon the use of abstract and unobservable explanatory variable which seldom prove amenable to empirical investigation and evaluation.

VI. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

VII. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

7.1 Product Familiarity

Product familiarity is defined by people's representations of prior experiences with products. These representations that are obtained through learning, experience, media and word of mouth are categorized in people's memory. The degree to which people have developed these representations determines their familiarity with products. Exposure to a familiar product is a simple comprehension process in which relevant meanings related to the product from memory are automatically activated. For instance, recognizing familiar products, such as a Coca-Cola bottle, happens automatically and immediately after the exposure. Familiarity and people's ability to remember meanings attached to products is important to marketers, since purchases are often made after consumers' exposure and attention to products. It is important that consumers recall key product and brand attributes and meanings attached to them at the time of purchase [32].

Familiarity is considered as higher standard than awareness, it is a measure of the knowledge and understanding the customer has about the product. Consumer evaluates the product by taste, smell, size and shape. If no differences found when a consumer has to choose between two similar products, it is likely that he will make the judgment and decision by product. In this situation, the product which appears to be more familiar with consumer and had received positive exposures previously will have more advantages. Individuals interpret in relation to past experience, internal and external factors. Increased product familiarity may be due to exposure to the brand in advertisements or in a store, recognition of the product name, and prior purchase and/or usage of the brand [33].

Through advertisement marketers transmit product information, differentiate their products from that of competitors and increase their market share by persuading consumers. For new or niche product recognition is important, thus, using advertising is tactical tool to familiarize consumers with new products and create buying incentives. The fact is developing a brand is difficult and take times; companies make use of advertisement as a technique to enter other branded products. On the consumer side, advertising increases buying behaviour for those who have a positive attitude and or trust towards advertised products [34].

Product familiarity plays a critical role in consumer preferences of products with enhanced and unique features. Product familiarity is an important moderator of the incongruity effect because the degree to which an attribute is perceived as incongruent depends on the consumer's familiarity with the product. Consumers familiar with a category usually possess superior knowledge about existing products and have developed a set of expectations about the product category, such as typical attributes, attribute importance, and relations among the attributes [35].

When consumers possess high product familiarity, they will perceive a product more favourably, prefer it over a dominant brand, and exhibit higher recall of the focal attribute when the product is marketed with unique rather than enhanced features. Therefore, for experienced consumers, unique features are the focus of the learning process and will be processed more extensively in a piecemeal mode, and consequently, will be recalled better. In addition, as consumers gain more experience with a product category, they feel more competent and tend to perceive new features as less uncertain [36].

When consumers decide to buy products, they tend to be affected by product familiarity [37]. According to [38] product familiarity reflects the 'share of mind' of a given consumer attained to the particular brand and the extent of a consumer's direct and indirect experience with a product. [39] analysed the factors that have an influence on product attachment and the ones that are influenced by it. [39] identified product familiarity as a factor that influences product attachment. The literature and research on place attachment suggest that familiarity is one of the predictors of the bonding between people and place. Several other researchers, developing a measurement for place attachment, considered familiarity as one of the dimensions [40]

7.2 Consumer Preference

Consumer differs from one and another based on age, gender, income, education level and tastes. Moreover, it has relationship between the unlimited resources, surroundings, etc., and the consumer will be heavily made to change their choice of the goods and services so that they will demand more and more. Consumers may not really understand why they would choose the product and purchase it at the time and what actually control them to buy it and the reason why so because it always comes from their mind. As a result, a number of factors have been identified and taken into considerations that affect consumer's attitude towards product and service [41].

Consumers normally implement preferences when they go for comparing different alternatives and choices [42]. The preferences of the consumers are a positive motivation, expressed by the affective compatibility towards a product, service or trading form. Preferences can be triggered by: the features related to the material substance of the goods (shape, size, print, taste, color, consistency, package, etc.); elements referring to label, name, use instructions that accompany the product; the statute granted to the person owning and using that particular product [43]. Consumers often anthropomorphize brands by endowing them with personality traits, and marketers often create or reinforce these

perceptions by their brand positioning. Brand personality traits provide symbolic meaning or emotional value that can contribute to consumers’ brand preferences and can be more enduring than functional attributes. Consumers perceive the brand on dimensions that typically capture a person’s personality, and extend that to the domain of brands [43].

In his study, [44] concluded that, most of switching tendency for switching customers are triggered by high level influence of marketers’ marketing mix offerings such as product, place, promotion, and distributional strategies of marketers. They highly concentrated on brand name, taste, and quality of the soft drink that they purchase. As switching customers explore variety seeking behavior toward their soft drink purchase, they were unable to be loyal to a specific brand. However it was also recognized that these factors also influenced on their switching decision. [45] in his study developed a better understanding of consumption pattern of soft drinks and fruit juices of consumers at Indore city. Results from descriptive statistics for the survey indicated that 42% of their respondents prefer Soft Drinks and 58% of the respondents prefer fruit juices.

[46] in his study stated that soft drinks are still popular beverage in the youth market in both Kenya and India. However, it is evident from the study that the consumption of soft drinks in India is reducing with health concern as the main cause for the same. Parents are very crucial in introducing their children to various soft drinks brands and subsequently shaping their loyalty in Kenyan Market. In India, peer influence is the major factor in the introduction of soft drinks brands [47] in this study tried to find out the leading player in the soft drinks market and concluded that the Coca-Cola Brand is a leading player in the market. Because of the quality, price and brand value of Coca Cola products, it has become the symbol of quality and brand image all over the world.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design. This study targeted all the customers for retail outlets including kiosks, dukas, supermarkets, restaurants and convenient stores dealing in soft drinks in Nakuru East Sub-county Kenya. Therefore the customers for the retail outlets were best suited to give this information. Nakuru East Sub-county has potentially thousands of retail outlets dealing with soft drinks. Therefore the study targeted all the customers of these retail outlets in Nakuru East Sub-county in Kenya. As such, the study sample population was 384 respondents picked from the aforementioned sampling units. The study used random sampling technique to select the respondents among the customers visiting the retail outlets in Nakuru East Sub-count Kenya. The study used structured questionnaires that were distributed to all the soft drinks retail outlets attendants chosen to participate in the study. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Data collected was processed and analyzed based on the objectives and research hypotheses using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This was done using both descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies, standard deviation and means) was used to organize and summarize data and to describe the characteristics of the sample and then presented in tables. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The researcher further performed F-tests to test all the hypotheses and draw conclusions on the results.

IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

9.1 Response Rate

The number of questionnaires that were delivered to the respondents was 384 where 301 of them were appropriately completed and returned from the respondents. This represented an overall successful response rate of 78.4%. According to [48], any response rate that is 50% or more is satisfactory. [49] also proclaimed that response rate of 50% is suitable to investigate and publish, 60% is good whereas 70% is very good. Therefore, a response rate of 78.4% was characterized as very good.

9.2 Descriptive Statistics

9.2.1 Product Familiarity

Regarding product familiarity, the study sought respondents’ views in the various aspects for product familiarity. The means and standard deviation values were computed to assist in drawing inferences in regard to product familiarity.

TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics on Product Familiarity

	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
The familiarity of coca-cola increases my buying behavior even when no need arise	24.3	55.1	9.6	6.6	4.3	3.88	.992
Advertisements done on coca cola has influenced my decision on buying the product	38.5	41.9	15.0	3.3	1.3	4.13	.879
Being familiar with coca cola product gives me the confidence	32.2	49.8	12.6	3.0	2.3	4.07	.881

to purchase the product							
I have a prior information on the experience of coca cola drinks	29.9	42.9	16.9	6.0	4.3	3.88	1.042
Due to familiarity on soft drinks I have an attachment with coca cola brands	32.9	42.5	14.3	5.3	5.0	3.93	1.064
I totally rely on coca cola on the ability to function as expected	27.6	43.2	15.3	8.3	5.6	3.79	1.108
I get product information regarding coca cola products through advertisement	35.2	37.5	15.9	6.3	5.0	3.92	1.100
Valid N (listwise)	301						

The study established that respondents agreed that the familiarity of coca-cola increases their buying behavior even when no need arise. 55.1% of the respondents agreed while 24.3% of them strongly agreed. This statement had a mean of 3.88 (agree) and a standard deviation of 0.992. Respondents also agreed that advertisements done on coca cola have influenced their decision on buying the product. 41.9% and 38.5% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively with a mean of 4.13 (agree) and a standard deviation of 0.879. These findings are in agreement with [33] who established that increased product familiarity is due to exposure to the brand in advertisements, or in a store, recognition of a product name, and prior purchase or usage of the brand.

The study recorded a mean of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 0.881 where 49.8% of the respondents agreed and 32.2% of them strongly agreed that being familiar with coca cola product gives them the confidence to purchase the product. [32] observed that familiarity and people’s ability to remember meanings attached to products is important to marketers since purchases are often made after consumers exposure and attention to products. Further, the researcher observed that respondents have a prior information on the experience of coca cola drinks. 42.9% of the respondents agreed while 29.9% of them strongly agreed registering a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.042. This is in line with [32] findings that established that product familiarity is defined by people’s representations of prior experiences with the products.

Respondents agreed (M=3.93, SD=1.064) that due to familiarity on soft drinks, they have an attachment with coca cola brands. 42.5% of the respondents agreed while 32.9% of them strongly agreed. In line with these findings, [36] observed that when customers possess high product familiarity, they will perceive a product more favourably, prefer it over a dominant brand, and exhibit higher recall of the focal attribute when the product is marketed with unique rather than enhanced features. 43.2% of the respondents agreed while 27.6% of them strongly agreed that they totally rely on coca cola on the ability to function as expected. This statement recorded a mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 1.108. Additionally, respondents agreed that they get product information regarding coca cola products through advertisement. 37.5% and 35.2% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively registering a mean of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 1.100. Views in regard to product familiarity appeared rather diverse in various aspects specifically for aspects registering standard deviation values greater than one. In three of the aspects of product familiarity, stand deviation values were less than one showing an attribute of cohesion in the respondents’ views.

9.2.2 Consumer Preference

The study further examined respondents’ views in regard to consumer preference of soft drinks in coca cola beverages Africa. The percentages, means and standard deviation values were established and presented as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Descriptive Statistics on Consumer Preferences

	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
I always crave for a coca cola drink	16.3	44.2	17.9	7.0	14.6	3.41	1.260
I always buy the type of coca cola soft drink product that I desire	33.9	42.5	9.6	4.7	9.3	3.87	1.203
I feel more satisfied when I consume coca cola vis a vis other drinks	29.2	33.9	16.3	12.6	8.0	3.64	1.246
Coca cola is affordable and therefore I frequently buy it	22.9	32.9	15.9	13.6	14.6	3.36	1.358
The availability of coca cola increases my buying patterns	21.6	31.9	24.6	10.0	12.0	3.41	1.263
I am satisfied with the ingredients of coca cola products	13.6	32.2	16.3	17.9	19.9	3.02	1.360
Am a loyal customer to coca cola products	25.2	30.6	11.6	15.3	17.3	3.31	1.438
Coca cola is the best soft drink in the market	32.2	19.6	14.6	13.0	20.6	3.30	1.535
Valid N (listwise)	301						

Results in table 4.4 showed that 60.5% of the respondents agreed that they always crave for a coca cola drink. However the views in line with this item were very diverse with a standard deviation greater than one. As a result a mean of

3.41(undecided) was registered indicating that it could not be conclusively said that respondents generally craved for a coca cola drink. Majority of the respondents comprising of 42.5% agreed while 33.9% of them strongly agreed that they always buy the type of coca cola soft drink product that they desire. This aspect had a mean of 3.87 (agree) and a standard deviation of 1.203. Accordingly, [42] observed that the preferences of the consumers are a positive motivation, expressed by the affective compatibility towards a product, service or trading form.

They also agreed that they feel more satisfied when they consume coca cola vis a vis other drinks where 33.9% of the respondents agreed while 29.2% of them strongly agreed registering a mean of 3.64 and a standard deviation of 1.246. Having a mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 1.358, a conclusive conclusion could not be drawn as respondents on average were undecided on whether coca cola brands are affordable and thus frequently bought. However, 55.8% of the respondents strongly and/or agreed that coca cola is affordable and therefore they frequently buy it. [39] in their study established that that the important factors which influence the purchase of soft drinks are price and availability of the soft drinks, brand name, brand value and packaging.

Further, 31.9% of the respondents agreed while 21.6% of them strongly agreed that the availability of coca cola increases their buying patterns registering a mean of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 1.268. This is in tandem with findings by [39] who noted availability as one of the factors determining customer preferences. On the contrary, respondents were not sure whether they are satisfied with the ingredients of coca cola products. 45.8% of the respondents agreed, 16.3% of them were undecided while 37.8% of the respondents disagreed. This aspect had a mean of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 1.360.

On the other hand, respondents agreed that they are loyal customer to coca cola products. 30.6% of the respondents agreed while 25.2% of them strongly agreed registering a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 1.438. Respondents agreed that coca-cola is the best soft drink in the market. 51.8% of the respondents strongly and/or agreed. This statement had a mean of 3.30 and a standard deviation of 1.535. Views were shown to have significant variation from each with all the items in regard to consumer preferences having standard deviation values greater than one. Therefore, there was no consensus in respondents' minds in regard to consumer preferences of coca cola products.

9.3 Correlation Analysis

The study examined the relationship between product familiarity and consumer preferences. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed and the results presented as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Correlations between Product Familiarity and Consumer Preference

		Product Familiarity
Consumer Preference	Pearson Correlation	.524**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	301

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The researcher observed that there was an average positive significant ($r=.524$, $p=.000$) relationship between product familiarity and consumer preference. This implied that product familiarity significantly influenced consumer preference of soft drinks in coca-cola beverages. Thus, product familiarity had a significant role in determining consumer preference of soft drinks in coca-cola beverages. This findings were in agreement with findings of [35] who argued that product familiarity plays a critical role in consumer preferences of products with enhanced and unique features. Product familiarity is an important moderator of the incongruity effect because the degree to which an attribute is perceived as incongruent depends on the consumer's familiarity with the product. Consumers familiar with a category usually possess superior knowledge about existing products and have developed a set of expectations about the product category, such as typical attributes, attribute importance, and relations among the attributes.

9.4 Hypothesis Testing

The study employed the use of simple linear regression analysis to establish the individual input of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used to test the hypotheses at $p<.05$ significance level.

The hypothesis insinuated that there is no statistically significant effect of product familiarity on consumer preference of soft drinks in Coca Cola beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-County Kenya. Analysis of variance was performed to ascertain the hypothesis the findings were as presented hereafter.

TABLE 4: Model Summary on Product Familiarity

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.524 ^a	.275	.272	.83372

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product Familiarity

An R-squared value of .275 obtained indicating that product familiarity accounted for 27.5% of the total variance in consumer preference. Thus product familiarity plays an important role in enhancing consumer preference on soft drinks in coca cola beverages Africa in Nakuru. East Sub-County 72.5% of the remaining total variation in consumer preference can be accounted for by factors not considered in this model. The analysis of variance gave the following results.

TABLE 5: ANOVA^a on Product Familiarity

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	77.260	1	77.260	113.221	.000 ^b
	Residual	204.032	299	.682		
	Total	281.291	300			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Preference

b. Predictors: (Constant), Product Familiarity

An F-value ($F_{(1, 300)} = 113.221, p=.000$) for product familiarity was significant at $p<.05$ level of significance. Therefore, product familiarity has a significant influence on consumer preference of soft drinks in coca cola beverages. As such the null hypothesis H_{01} , that there is no statistically significant effect of product familiarity on consumer preference of soft drinks in Coca Cola beverages Africa in Nakuru East Sub-County Kenya was also rejected. These findings are in tandem with [34] who also established that product familiarity has a significant influence on consumer preference. They observed that increased product familiarity increases the buying behavior for those who have a positive attitude and trust towards the product. Further [35] observed that product familiarity plays a critical role in consumer preferences of the products with enhanced unique features. They presented product familiarity as an important moderator of the incongruity effect because the degree to which an attribute is perceived as incongruent depends on the consumer's familiarity with the product.

X. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Results established that product familiarity was found to have a positive significant influence on consumer preference of soft drinks. The results indicated that product familiarity was of important in determining the level of consumer preference of soft drinks in coca-cola beverages. Thus, the study concluded that product familiarity had a significant role to play in determining consumer preference of soft drinks on coca-cola beverage Africa in Nakuru, East Sub-County Kenya.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher recommended the coca-cola company should concentrate on how brand familiarity could be improved by making sure that the consumers know that the brand exists. This can be done through promotions. Coca-cola Company should come up with the best multichannel marketing strategy. The study recommended that similar studies should be carried out in different regions of the county in order to benchmark product attributes that determines consumer preferences of soft drinks in coca cola beverages.

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