

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE BRANDING FOR CONSUMERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study of brand perception and acceptance is critical to enhancement of marketing of agricultural produce in Nigeria. The descriptive survey targetted Kogi – one of the agricultural States in Nigeria. The study population comprised 400 farmers from nine Local Government Areas in Kogi State, which has three senatorial districts. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed to elicit information from respondents on cassava and yam. Data were analyzed using Average Mean Score statistical tool. The study recommended, among others, proper branding of agricultural produce, establishment of processing mills, improvement in storage facilities, and reflection of branding with organisation and product objectives.

Introduction

The term “Agricultural Produce” is used in reference to basic food commodities that are either in their original form or have undergone only primary processing, e.g. cassava, yams, cereals, coffee, beans, sugar, cotton and rubber (Crawford, 2011). But the focus of this paper is centred on cassava and yam because they are some of the most important staple food crops grown in tropical Africa. They play some

role in efforts to alleviate the African food crisis because of their efficient production of food energy, year round availability, tolerance to extreme stress conditions, and sustainability to present farming and food systems in Africa (Hahn, 1992).

Branding of agricultural produce is a strategy that may be adopted in enhancing the marketing of agricultural produce in Nigeria. A successful brand is the most valuable resource that a producer or company has. Nzuki (2010) speculates that brands are so valuable that producer will soon include a “statement of value” addendum to their balance sheets to include intangibles, such as the value of their brands.

Branding of agricultural produce can be used as external clue to taste, design, qualify, prestige, value and so forth. In other words, consumers usually associate the value of product with brand, since branding of agricultural produce serve as a signal to the customer, the source of the product and protect both customer and the producer from competitors who attempt to provide product that appear to be identical (Nzuki, 2011). However, in order to achieve successful branding strategy of agricultural produce, traditional cassava and yam tubers are to be processed by various methods into numerous products and utilized in various ways according to local custom and preferences. For example, cassava products can be processed into garri, fermented and dried cassava pulp, smoked cassava balls (*kumkum*) *chikwangu*, starch, and dried cassava. Yam can be processed by milling into flour and fried yam. Each of them can be packaged using different branding strategies and sold in the store outlet. Therefore, improvement of cassava and yam processing and the utilization techniques greatly increase labour efficiency, income and living standard of both cassava and yam farmers and the urban poor, as well as enhance the shelf life of products, facilitate their transportation, increase marketing opportunities, and help improve human and livestock nutrition (Hahn, 1992).

But, to achieve the objective of branding strategy of agricultural produce, the economic problem associated with it must be determined. For example, the issue of standardized system of grading

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and measurement, which enhances marketing efficiency, is not a feature of agricultural markets in Nigeria. Grades are determined arbitrarily by sizes, while measures come in various types of metal and plastic bowls, dishes, tin baskets and calabashes. Most of the measures are susceptible to manipulation to change volume, in an attempt to take the advantage of buyers. This is why quantities vary within and across market places (Adekanye, 1997). Therefore, the evaluation of product varying quality and size is greatly affected in the market.

Even though branding has become a central issue in any product strategy, including agricultural produce, selecting a particular brand name, which carries the agricultural produce throughout its life, has become a problem. It is important that the name selected must be the one that is capable of ensuring the success of the product in the market place (Kotler, 1999). In addition, standardized system of grading and measurement, which enhances marketing efficiency, is not a feature of agricultural produce in the market. The fact is that grades are determined arbitrarily by sizes, while measures come in various types. This constitutes a problem to a marketer because branding of a agricultural produce cannot take place without determining the level of standard and grading (Adekanye, 1977). Local processing also contributes to the problem traceable to its high cost and time-demand (Orebiyi, 2002).

Therefore, the study sought (i) to assess whether branding of agricultural produce may help to increase the incomes of the farmers in Nigeria, (ii) to determine if branding of agricultural produce helps to enhance the shelf-life of produce, (iii) to evaluate whether branding of agricultural produce may help to improve marketing efficiency of agricultural produce in Nigeria.

Theoretical review

Branding is one of the important activities in marketing. Its proper application helps to increase sales, maintain of increased company market share and eventually increase profit, which serves as an identity for the product (Uyebode, 2001). According to Nwaizugbo

(2004:113), branding is defined as “a process of establishing a product identity”. It is a concept adopted by companies to identify their products and distinguish them from those of competitors. A brand, on the other hand, is a distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand, thus, signals to the customer the source of the product and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors, who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical (Peter, 2011 in Aaker, 1991, Stanton, 1994 and Kotler, 1996).

Branding plays some important roles in marketing, including:

- making shopping easy and time efficient, as it makes the brand stand out among competing products;
- assuring regular satisfaction, as many consumers prefer to buy product brands they are “sure” of rather than risking a new product trial, and are even willing to pay a premium for the brand they like;
- being a dependable guide to quality, as consumers use well-known brands as an indication of good quality, and are willing to buy brands without inspection when they are sure of quality;
- satisfying status needs, as some customers buy only prestigious brands while others are less concerned to the product (Nwaizugbo, 2004).

Branding also plays the following roles to the marketer (Nwaizugbo, 2004):

- it encourages repeat purchase and lowers marketing cost by making it easier to the consumer to adopt the product in a purchase decision process;
- it may develop customer loyalty because once a customer develops an interest in a particular brand, he may likely become a brand loyalist, which implies that he closes his eyes to other competing brands in the market;

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- it may build good corporate image through good brands, and ensure speedy acceptance of new products marketed under the same name.

Agricultural production refers to the production of crops and animals for man's use (Omoruyi, et al., 1999). According to Ubom (2010), agriculture had been variously described as a science, an art, a business tradition and a way of life. No matter how much structural transformation takes place in Nigerian economy for many years to come, agriculture will continue to play its dominant role. Beyond supplying foods and raw materials to the rest of the economy, the conventional and predominant roles of agriculture had placed it as resource reservoir providing the needed financial and labour to other sectors of the economy. Successive Governments in Nigeria had placed agricultural transformation in its cardinal agenda. Over the years, Nigeria had made concerted efforts aimed at agricultural development through such programmes as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), Integrated Rural Development, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies and Land Reforms.

Some specific important roles of agriculture are:

Provision of food for the teeming population: Agricultural is the only source through which man can feed. A nation that can feed herself can save a lot of money for other goods and services, which cannot be provided through agriculture. If agriculture is allowed to lie fallow, then the country will depend solely on importation of food for her population. Such a country will certainly be bankrupt and this will lead to debt burden.

Employment for the working population: Agriculture and other agro-based industries provide employment opportunities for a greater percentage of the working population directly and indirectly.

Source of income to farmers: Agriculture generates income for the farmers through the sale of crops and animals as well as products from

them. People who work on the farms can earn their wages and salaries from engaging in farm work or being used as farm labour.

Sources of foreign exchange: Agriculture helps nations to earn foreign currency through the export of agricultural produce like cocoa, groundnut, kola, palm produce, rubber sheets and lump cotton, among others. The foreign exchange earned can be used, in turn, to purchase goods, such as machines necessary for the improvement of agriculture.

Market for industrial products: Agriculture provides markets for industrial products. Finished products from industries, such as farm tools, machineries, chemicals and storage materials, like sacks, are used in agricultural sector.

Therefore, building a brand for agricultural produce is important. Edicha, et al. (2010) observe that there are several branding strategies that exist to create brand equity and position for a brand in the mind of the consumer. An organization must therefore choose the strategy most likely to generate success from the product of service. They also identified traditional branding strategies which consist of brand expansion, brand leveraging, multi-brand and co-branding. But, in the case of agricultural produce, brand expansion is the appropriate branding strategy that has to be adopted. This is because brand expansion strategy aims at introducing a new product or service utilizing the established image of a core brand to gain acceptance for the new product or service in the market place.

According to Beneke (2010), consumer base judgment of brand quality is direct and indirect factors. Direct attributes include ingredients, taste and whilst indirect factors are represented by price and brand name. Direct factors are usually difficult for consumers to test without consuming the product, or completing various tests. Hence, reliance on indirect quality indicators such as brand name and price are more heavily relied upon. The authors suggest that a thorough understanding of how these indirect cues impact different consumer groups in their purchasing decisions may help retailers to improve success of private label brands. Through further investigation, they identified brand, package and advertising as indirect factors which

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impact consumer perceptions and hence influence purchasing decisions. The success of a brand for agricultural produce in the long term is not based on the number of consumers that buy it once-off, but on the number of consumers who become regular buyers.

Consumers become brand loyal when they perceive some unique value in the brand that no alternative can satisfy. This uniqueness may be derived from a greater trust in the reliability of a brand from a more favourable experience when a customer uses the brand. Not only does the brand loyal customer buy the brand but (s)he also refuses to switch, even when presented with a better offer. Maintaining brand loyalty is becoming a critical component in the development of competitive strategy, thus highlighting the importance of developing methods to measure and elevate brand loyalty. Effective brands have been correlated with increasing market share, lending credibility to new product developments, giving a clear, valued and sustainable point of difference as well as commanding a premium. Most importantly, consumers appear less price-sensitive and more trusting toward these brands.

Research Method

The target population was 13,060 Local Government Council staff spread among the three senatorial districts of Kogi State. The choice of this group was based on the assumption that the staff were either consumers or producers of cassava and yam. The sample size of this study was determined using Yaro Yemane formula (1996) as stated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where N = Sample size
e = Level of significance (5%)
n = Population

Since, there are 13,060 estimated Local Government Council staff in Kogi State,

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{13,060}{1+13,060 \times (0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{13,060}{13,061 \times 0.0025} \\
 &= \frac{13,060}{32,6525} = 399.96 = 400 \\
 &= 400
 \end{aligned}$$

Questionnaire copies were distributed among the three senatorial districts as in Table 1.

Table 1.1: Questionnaire distribution by senatorial district in Kogi State

Three Senatorial Districts	No of Questionnaire Distributed
Kogi East Senatorial District	170
Kogi West Senatorial District	130
Kogi Central Senatorial District	100
Total	400

The distribution of questionnaire was based on the population from each senatorial district in Kogi State. In order to discuss the results of the study, Average Mean Score was adopted. The formula is (Ugoji, 1990):

$$\frac{\sum FX}{N}$$

Multiple sampling technique was used. First, purposive random sampling technique was applied in selecting Kogi State from the middle-belt of Nigeria, and three local governments from each of the three senatorial districts in Kogi State. Also, stratified random

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sampling technique was used to select a total of nine local governments from Kogi State, Nigeria.

Finally, simple random sampling technique was employed to select males and females staff from each department or unit from the three local governments. In all, the sample consisted of three senatorial districts with total number of four hundred (400). In order to collect data and provide answers to the questions, a questionnaire was designed. It consists of two sections. Section (A) elicited personal information, while Section B elicited information on the branding strategy of agricultural produce in Nigeria. The B Section consists of 15 Likert scale items with four options ranging from Strongly Agreed (SA) to Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Data Analysis and Result

R.Q.1: Do you consider branding of agricultural produce a strategy to increase the income of the farmers?

Table 1.2: Branding of agricultural produce help to increase income of farmers

Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\frac{\sum FX}{N}$
Branding of agricultural produce helps to increase the income of the farmers	25	35	190	150	2.0
Branding of agricultural produce attracts more customers	158	148	50	44	3.1
Branding of agricultural produce adds value to a product	20	24	190	166	2.0
Branding of agricultural produce influences consumer's perception	167	153	30	50	3.1
Branding of agricultural produce has promotion advantages	199	141	45	15	3.0

From Table 1.2, majority of the respondents firmly agreed on the items 2, 4 and 5. Calculations clearly indicate the positive views expressed by the respondents. They generally agreed that branding of agricultural produce attracts more customers, provides promotional advantages and influences consumer's perception. But, some respondents failed to agree on items 1 and 3. They disagreed on the matters relating to whether branding of agricultural produce tend to increase the income of the farmers, as well as adding value to a product.

R.Q.2: Can branding of agricultural produce helps to enhance the shelf-life of products?

Table 1.3: *Branding of agricultural produce help to enhance the shelf life of products*

Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\frac{\sum FX}{N}$
Branding of agricultural produce helps to enhance shelf life of products	18	17	180	185	2.0
Through branding of agricultural produce, the shelf-life of the product can be positioned	188	162	25	35	3.3
With branding of agricultural produce, shelf-life can be used to determine quality	21	19	200	160	2.0
Branding of agricultural produce tends to affect shelf-life of product	17	13	198	172	2.0
Branding of agricultural produce as a strategy assists shelf-life of products	12	13	225	150	2.0

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Majority of the respondents answered in affirmative. They disagreed in all the items except item 2. Their opinions showed that branding of agricultural produce has no positive influence on the shelf-life of the product. However, a few respondents expressed their various views in favour of agricultural produce helping in product positioning.

R.Q.3: How does branding of agricultural produce help to improve marketing efficiency?

Table 1.4: *Branding of agricultural produce help to improve marketing efficiency?*

Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\frac{\sum FX}{N}$
Branding of agricultural produce help to improve marketing efficiency	199	453	56	22	3.3
Branding of agricultural produce helps to position the product in the minds of the customers	221	129	19	31	3.4
Branding of agricultural produce is a strategy to increase sales revenue	201	139	55	5	3.3
Branding of agricultural produce assures repeat purchases	19	17	189	175	2.0
Branding of agricultural produce help to maintain brand loyalty	191	15	08	50	3.2

Many respondents expressed their positive views on how branding of agricultural produce may help to improve marketing efficiency in addition to product positioning, increase in sales revenue and

maintenance of brand loyalty. The results of the calculations clearly prove these facts especially items 1, 2, 3 and 5. However, a few respondents disagreed on the view about whether branding of agricultural produce helps to assure repeat purchases. This means branding strategies of agricultural produce has no positive impact on the repeat purchases of the customers.

Discussions of findings

Majority of the respondents showed a greater positive response on the branding of agricultural produce for Nigeria. It was discovered from the findings that branding of agricultural produce helps to attract more customers and also to influence customers' perception in addition to creating promotional advantages. Also, the findings revealed that branding of agricultural produce does not lead to an increase of the income of farmers and may not add value to a product. Again, majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that branding of agricultural produce helps to enhance the shelf-life of products. The disagreement portrays the negative opinion expressed by the respondents. It, therefore, means that branding of agricultural produce has no impact on shelf-life of a product. Although very few respondents agreed that branding strategy of agricultural produce can only be used to position product before consumers.

Finally, the findings revealed that many respondents asserted that branding of agricultural produce helps to improve marketing efficiency as well as position the products in the minds of the customers. It also showed that branding as a strategy increases sales revenue and equally helps to maintain brand loyalty of the customers. It, therefore, means that branding strategy of agricultural produce has a positive effect on the marketing activities in Kogi State, Nigeria. However, some respondents were of the opinion that branding strategy of agricultural produce may not assure repeat purchases. By implication, it means branding strategy has no positive impact on the repeat purchases of the buyers in Kogi State, Nigeria. The result agrees with the work of Oyeboade (2001) who suggested that proper

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application of branding strategies can increase sales, maintain or increase company's market share and eventually increase profit. Branding strategies facilitate memory recall and brand loyalty.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the findings, it can be concluded that branding of agricultural produce has a significant influence in consumers. This conclusion can be used to generalize the influence of brand on consumer in their purchase decisions. Brand name, if properly planned and promoted, will influence consumer's attitude towards agricultural produce. Branding also aids manufacturers in competing effectively with competing brands in the market, as it will make sales promoting to be useful for building a demand for a product and consumer would be able to make selective demand.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in relation to the findings of the research.

1. **Proper branding of agricultural produce:** Brand name should be properly planned and promoted in order to influence consumer's attitude towards agricultural produce. Any brand name chosen by manufactures of agricultural produce must be appropriate and easy to remember by any one of the average intelligence. This will make shopping easy. Without branding consumers will be thrown into confusion in a retail outlet since there will be nothing to serve as a dependable guide to quality.
2. **Establishment of processing mills:** Efficient and modern processing mills should be established as part of the government rural development policy programme throughout Nigeria. This will have a positive multiplier effect on the producers, marketers as well as the consumers, as it facilitates the quality and branding of agricultural produce for the producers.

3. **Improvement in storage facilities:** Since, branding cannot take place without storage facilities, there should be improvement in storage facilities for better preservation of agricultural produce. This is because lack of efficient storage facilities normally forces the producers of agricultural produce to sell off their farm produce during the harvesting season at rock bottom prices.
4. **Reflection of branding with organisation and product objectives:** Branding strategy to be adopted for agricultural produce must reflect the organisation's objectives, marketing and product objectives. This is because it is an embodiment of the organisation and the product image.

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