Impact of Branding on Undergraduate Students' Purchasing Behaviour in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of branding on undergraduate students' purchasing behavior in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty, willingness to pay and attitude to specific brand of product. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The sample size was 397 (201 males and 196 females), and it was arrived at using the Taro Yamane sample size formula. The study used proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument for the study was 24 item self-developed questionnaires having three dimensions titled "Impact of Branding on Students Buying Habit Questionnaire (IBSBHQ)" used for data collection. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained for IBSBHQ instrument which was administered to only 50 students outside the study area. All 397 questionnaires were used for the main analysis. Research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using a t-test. The findings show that branding has impact on students`

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loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices and attitude towards a product. The findings show that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to a specific brand of product. Also, the findings show there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices for a product. The study recommends that manufacturers should maintain their reputation so that customers in return will be more loyal to their brand. Finally, the study concluded that branding has impact on undergraduate students` loyalty to specific brand of product.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's consumer-driven world, branding plays a key role in enhancing purchase decisions across numerous industries, including education and manufacturing. The notion of branding extends beyond basic identification; it involves the full perception that customers, including students, have about a product, service, or institution. This view greatly impacts their purchase culture, as well as their loyalty and involvement with the company [1]. In the context of companies, branding has grown increasingly crucial as industrial industries strive to attract and keep clients in a congested marketplace. In Enugu State, Nigeria, the effect of branding on students' buying culture is a crucial subject of research, considering the diversity of manufacturing enterprises and the diverse items they created for students and the broader population at large.

The educational sector in Enugu State is defined by a mix of public and private schools, while industrial enterprises are seeking to develop a distinct brand identity. These manufacturing enterprises employ a variety of branding techniques to attract potential students, including advertising campaigns, community participation, and campus sales promotion. The efficacy of these branding initiatives is evident in students' buying behavior, which includes their choices on which company's products to acquire, their procurement of branded goods, and their participation in on-campus promotional sales [2]. Efficient branding of a product by a manufacturing company may foster loyalty among students towards the company's product.

Branding has a significant impact on consumer behavior, particularly in terms of brand loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices, and attitudes among students. Brand loyalty is a significant indicator of repeat purchases and enduring consumer connections. It signifies a consumer's commitment to repurchase or persist in using a brand, irrespective of situational factors and marketing strategies from rival brands [3]. Loyal consumers frequently regard a brand as higher in quality and are more inclined to participate in positive word-of-mouth promotion, therefore enhancing the brand's reputation and market standing [4].

Brand loyalty is a fundamental term in consumers` behaviour, signifying a deep-seated commitment to purchase or keeps persistent interactions with a single brand, despite rivals' offerings or prospective changes in the market [5]. Numerous variables, such as personal experiences, societal impacts, and the perceived value of the brand, typically impact brand loyalty among students [6]. In the industrial environment, students may build loyalty to a company`s product, like in the case of certain noodles, based on favourable experiences, such as a nice flavour. This loyalty can manifest in various ways, including persistent involvement with the company's product through continual purchases. Early exposure to various companies through classmates, social media, and other factors typically shapes students' brand loyalty. This devotion may be powerful, driving recurrent purchases of branded items, participation in company-sponsored activities, and even influencing future purchasing choices [7]. Developing brand loyalty among students is critical for manufacturing firms because it not only increases immediate engagement and income but also encourages long-term purchasing behavior, even when the company charges higher rates for its products. The perceived worth and status associated with a brand strongly impact the inclination to pay an additional cost for a product.

The willingness to pay higher prices is a critical element of branding, indicating that strong brands can demand higher costs due to

perceived value. Consumers frequently link established brands with superior quality, dependability, and reputation, hence rationalising the increased expense [8]. This tendency is especially evident in luxury goods and services, where brand equity profoundly impacts consumer purchase choices. Premium pricing can act as an entry barrier for competitors, as new brands may find it challenging to persuade consumers to pay more than the prices existing brands have conditioned them to accept. If students view a brand as having greater quality, exclusivity, or status, they are more likely to pay higher rates for such products or services. This phenomenon is apparent in several domains, encompassing technology, fashion, and education. For example, students might be inclined to spend a higher amount of money on university merchandise that carries a well-known brand name, such as clothing, accessories, or gadgets, if they perceive these items as boosting their social standing or reflecting their individual identity [9]. Nevertheless, factors such as socio-economic position, availability of financial aid, and personal beliefs can impact the inclination to pay a higher price across different student demographics. Certain students may place more importance on cost-effectiveness and usefulness than brand reputation, choosing items that provide the most value for their money. Comprehending these dynamics is vital for manufacturing companies and marketers as they develop price strategies and brand positioning, taking into account the probable attitude of students towards their product.

Attitude refers to a consumer's tendency to react positively or negatively to a brand, product, or service. The construct is intricate and includes cognitive, affective, and behavioural components [10]. Regarding student behavior, their attitude towards a brand may have a significant impact on their loyalty, purchase choices, and overall involvement with the company. The cognitive aspect of attitude encompasses students' beliefs and thoughts about a brand [11]. For example, students may perceive a specific company brand as being of superior quality, which can have a positive impact on their attitude towards the company's product. The affective component pertains to the emotional reactions that students connect with the brand, such as sentiments of pride, belonging, or enthusiasm. Typically, favourable encounters, efficient marketing, and peer impact develop these emotional connections [12]. The behavioural aspect of attitude pertains to the students' inclination to

engage in specific actions towards the brand, such as buying branded products or participating in brand-related activities. Increased customer engagement and loyalty correlate with a favourable brand perception, while a negative brand perception can lead to reduced engagement and a preference for rival companies.

Students' attitudes towards manufacturing company`s products are becoming increasingly significant in the educational domain, particularly due to the proliferation of social media and peer impact. Brands that effectively engage with students can cultivate favourable attitudes, resulting in a robust emotional bond and preference over rivals [13]. These attitudes can profoundly impact students' decisions concerning products and services, ranging from commonplace goods to educational resources. Students, who are frequently regarded as trendsetters, can impact wider market trends and behaviors among their peers through their brand preferences [14]. Therefore, understanding brand loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices, and student attitude is essential for enterprises looking to establish robust brands that connect with their intended customers. By promoting brand loyalty, establishing perceived value that warrants premium pricing, and nurturing positive sentiments among students, brands can augment their market presence and stimulate sustained growth. However, there is a lack of research on the extent to which these branding methods impact students' choices, particularly when considering gender as a moderating factor.

Gender has a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour, influencing how people perceive and react to branding. Research has indicated that there are distinct differences in the priorities and preferences of men and women when it comes to making purchase decisions. Generally, males tend to place importance on practicality and prestige, whereas women may prioritise aesthetics and emotional connections [15]. In the education sector, these gender disparities could potentially lead to branding strategies that effectively attract one gender, but may not have the same impact on the other gender. For example, a manufacturing firm that positions itself as a frontrunner in technology products may have a greater appeal to male students, whereas a manufacturing company that places emphasis on cosmetics may be more likely to attract female students. Understanding these characteristics is critical for manufacturing

organizations looking to create branding strategies that effectively appeal to both male and female students. The competitive nature of the manufacturing industry in Enugu State, where firms constantly seek to differentiate themselves and attract both students and the broader public, underscores the significance of this study.

The backdrop of Enugu State is essential for comprehending how cultural, economic, and social elements may impact the results of a study on branding and student buying culture. Enugu serves as a significant centre in southeastern Nigeria, characterised by a distinctive amalgamation of traditional and contemporary impacts. These dynamics likely impact the purchase behaviours of the students in this region, who encounter both global and local brands. Peer pressure, societal expectations, and the desire for social identity, which brands can facilitate, may impact students [16]. Economically, several students in Enugu State come from a variety of financial backgrounds, and branding frequently serves as a mechanism for status signaling. Students engage socially in manners that may enhance the significance of possessing or aligning with specific brands, either as a symbol of differentiation or as a method of belonging to particular social groups [17].

This study investigates the impact of branding on the buying culture of university undergraduates in Enugu State, where brands serve as both economic commodities and symbols of identity and status. Branding is important for students in Enugu because it helps them navigate social hierarchies and articulate individuality in a context where peer impact and social status are paramount. Brands enable students to indicate their association with specific groups or lifestyles, particularly in university settings [18]. The emphasis on Enugu State arises from the region's distinctive combination of economic advancement and cultural legacy. Enugu's intersection of contemporary consumer culture and robust local traditions creates a unique environment for examining students' interpretations and interactions with branding. Distinct branding strategies in Enugu may include significant dependence on social media marketing, word of mouth, willingness to pay premium prices, attitudes which substantially shape consumer choices. Furthermore, cultural practices like communalism, which prioritise group identity and affiliation, may affect how

students in Enugu perceive and react to branding initiatives. The convergence of cultural and economic factors renders Enugu an optimal site for examining the impact of branding on student buying culture. The present study aimed to investigate the impact of branding on undergraduate students' purchasing behavior in Enugu State.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The aim of the study was to determine the impact of branding on undergraduate students' purchasing behavior in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Determine the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product.
- Determine the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product.
- Determine the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- What is the impact of branding on undergraduate students` loyalty to specific brand of product?
- What is the impact of branding on undergraduate students` willingness to pay premium prices on a product?
- What is the impact of branding on undergraduate students` attitude towards specific product?

1.3 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses that were tested at 0.05 were used in the study.

Ho$_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product.

Ho$_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Consumer Culture Theory [19]

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), propounded by Vargo and Lusch in 2004 [19], offers a framework for analysing the interactions between consumers and the socio-cultural institutions that shape their behaviour. The idea contests the conventional perception of customers as passive entities, portraying them instead as active contributors in defining the meanings and experiences linked to products and brands. This theory provides a pertinent framework for analysing the impact of branding on the purchasing behaviour of university undergraduate students in Enugu State, particularly on their identity development and social interactions.

CCT asserts that consumerism extends beyond economic activity, functioning as a cultural practice in which consumers use brands for self-expression and social cohesion. Undergraduate students, akin to other consumers, do not select things solely based on utility or cost. The cultural, social, and symbolic significances they attribute to the brands they encounter profoundly impact their purchasing behaviour. Students in Enugu State encounter a range of global and local brands, and their selections frequently signify a wish to convey a specific image or affiliate with a particular social group. Symbolic consumption is especially evident in the university environment, where peer impact, social media, and cultural trends significantly shape students' brand impressions.

Within the CCT framework, branding serves as a vehicle for students to articulate their identities. Brands embody meanings that align with specific lifestyles, attitudes, and aspirations, which students may find attractive as they navigate their social contexts. Students may select brands that convey modernism, sophistication, or revolt, depending on the image they intend to create. Vargo and Lusch (20040 assert that customers collaboratively generate value with brands, as their interactions within a cultural framework not only dictate a brand's significance but also impact it. For undergraduate students in Enugu State, acquiring a specific brand might function as a means of self-presentation, indicating their affiliation with certain social groups or compliance with particular cultural trends.

Furthermore, branding within CCT entails the negotiation of cultural significance when students choose to embrace or dismiss brands according to their individual experiences, values, and ambitions. Students may accept some brands due to their conformity to global trends or contemporary lifestyles, while they may dismiss others if they perceive them as inconsistent with their cultural or social norms. This selective consumption illustrates the proactive role students assume in co-constructing the value and significance of brands within their distinct socio-cultural context.

In summary, the Consumer Culture Theory by Vargo and Lusch [19] offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for analysing the impact of branding on the purchasing behaviour of undergraduate students in Enugu State. It underscores the importance of students as active participants in the generation of brand value and meaning, as they interact with brands for both their functional advantages and their symbolic and cultural relevance. From the perspective of CCT, branding serves as a significant impact on students' consumer behaviour, affecting their self-presentation and social interactions.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for gathering and examining data to comprehend the impact of branding on the buying culture of students in Enugu State. The choice of the descriptive survey design is based on its ability to gather data from a large number of participants, allowing the researcher to accurately characterise the current conditions and links between the variables being investigated. This design is specifically appropriate for investigating the impact of branding on undergraduate students' purchasing behavior in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The research was carried out in Enugu State, situated in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Enugu State is renowned for its abundant cultural legacy and serves as a centre for educational establishments, encompassing both public and private universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The existence of these institutions

renders the state a prime place for investigating the impact of branding on students' purchasing behaviour. The study population comprises undergraduate students currently enrolled at universities located within Enugu State. This cohort was selected because undergraduate students are typically dynamic consumers influenced by branding in their purchase behaviours. The population comprises students of both genders across various academic levels. The population of the study was 50,000 students.

To run the study effectively and guarantee the data is representative, a sample is taken from the huge student population. The sample size is obtained using the Taro Yamane formula, a widely used method in social science research for calculating an appropriate sample size depending on the entire population. The sample size consists of roughly 397 (201 males and 196 females) students. The utilisation of a stratified random sampling approach guarantees the representation of various universities and gender groupings within the population. The categorisation is determined by the individuals' gender (male or female) and the type of educational institution they attend (public or private institutions). Following the process of stratification, random sampling is utilised to choose the ultimate participants from each strata.

The main tool used for gathering data is a structured questionnaire named "Impact of Branding on Students Buying Habit Questionnaire (IBSBHQ)". It consists of 24 questions, each rated on a scale of highly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and severely disagree (1). All of the question items were arranged in a positive manner, and they were divided into three clusters. 6 question items were on brand loyalty, 6 on willingness to pay premium prices and 6 on students` attitude. In order to verify the accuracy and reliability of the questionnaire, a process known as face validity was conducted. This involved professionals in the field of Business Education and measurement and evaluation to review the instrument. The experts assessed the instrument's validity and applicability based on the suitable level of the instrument. A pilot study is conducted to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. A pilot research is carried out using a limited sample of 50 students who are not included in the primary investigation. Cronbach's alpha was employed to analyse the

internal consistency of the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was trustworthy since the result exceeded the threshold of 0.70. Data collection was carried out by administering the questionnaire to the selected students in their respective schools by the researchers and the research assistants used.

Only students of public universities in Enugu state were considered in the study while those of private universities in the state where excluded from the study. The researcher and five research assistants disseminate the questionnaires to the participants in their different institutions. Out of the 397 questionnaires sent, only 363 were returned and completed accurately. Therefore, just these 363 questionnaires that were returned were utilised for the purpose of data analysis. The research questions were addressed by using the mean and standard deviation. The three hypotheses that led the investigation were examined using a t-test with the help of the statistical package for social sciences version 23. Any mean score above 2.5 were regarded as agreed while those below it were regarded as disagreed. Also, t-test values that were below 0.05 were rejected while those above 0.05 were accepted.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Research Question 1

What is the impact of branding on undergraduate students` loyalty to specific brand of product?

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of the students responses on the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product. It shows that the mean ratings of the students are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 2.88 with standard deviation of 1.00 indicates that branding has impact on undergraduate students` loyalty to specific brand of product.

Ho$_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation analysis of the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product
n = 395

	Item Statement: Loyalty to Specific Product	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	I consistently select products from my preferred brand due to its esteemed reputation.	2.92	.94	Agree
2.	The primary determinant in my shopping decisions is the brand name, since it holds the utmost significance.	2.95	1.05	Agree
3.	I have a profound emotional attachment to my preferred brand.	2.88	.96	Agree
4.	I have never contemplated transitioning to an alternative brand due to my unwavering loyalty towards my preferred brand.	3.04	.95	Agree
5.	The ideals and mission of my preferred brand are in harmony with my personal values.	2.74	.96	Agree
6.	I have complete confidence in my preferred brand's consistent delivery of superior items.	2.80	1.04	Agree
7.	I exhibit unwavering loyalty towards my preferred brand due to its distinctive attributes and advantages.	2.97	1.06	Agree
8.	I would highly suggest my preferred brand to others due to its outstanding reputation.	2.72	1.00	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.88**	**1.00**	**Agree**

Table 2. t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	201	2.89	0.48	395	.459	.647	NS
Female	196	2.87	0.47				

NS = Not Significant

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students loyalty to specific brand of product, t (395) = .459, p = .647. This implies that the null hypothesis formulated was accepted since the associated probability value of .647 was greater than the 0.05 significant level.

4.2 Research Question 2

What is the impact of branding on undergraduate students` willingness to pay premium prices on a product?

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of the students' responses on the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product. It shows that the mean ratings of the students are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 2.80 with standard deviation of 1.01 indicates that branding has impact on undergraduate students` willingness to pay premium prices on a product.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product.

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product, t (395) = .305, p = .761. This implies that the null hypothesis formulated was accepted since the associated probability value of .761 was greater than the 0.05 significant level.

4.3 Research Question 3

What is the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product?

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation analysis of the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product

n = 395

	Item Statement: Willingness to Pay Premium Prices	Mean	SD	Remarks
9.	I am prepared to provide a premium price for a product from a reputable brand.	2.983	1.00	Agree
10.	The prestige of a brand justifies the extra cost. I have confidence in premium brands to provide superior items.	2.71	1.02	Agree
11.	I am prepared to allocate a higher budget for a product that accurately embodies my individual aesthetic preferences or societal standing.	2.89	.96	Agree
12.	A robust brand name warrants a higher price tag.	2.67	.96	Agree
13.	I have purchased a product at a higher price specifically due to its brand's esteemed reputation.	2.83	1.06	Agree
14.	High-end brands have distinctive characteristics that warrant elevated costs.	2.75	1.13	Agree
15.	Given the option, I would go for a premium brand instead of a generic one, even if it entails a higher price.	2.74	1.09	Agree
16.	I am prepared to spend an additional amount for a product that is in accordance with my principles and beliefs.	2.99	.89	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.80**	**1.01**	**Agree**

Table 4. t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students willingness to pay premium prices on a product

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	201	2.81	0.47	395	.305	.761	NS
Female	196	2.79	0.47				

NS = Not Significant

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product

n = 395

	Item Statement: Attitude Towards a Product	Mean	SD	Remarks
17.	I exhibit a heightened level of optimism when it comes to things originating from brand that I have confidence in.	2.74	1.03	Agree
18.	The reputation of a company has a direct impact on how I perceive the quality of its products.	2.92	.98	Agree
19.	If I have a favourable opinion of a brand, I am more inclined to suggest its products.	2.74	.97	Agree
20.	The ideals and mission of a brand have a significant impact on my perception of its products.	2.84	1.04	Agree
21.	I possess a heightened emotional attachment to things originating from my preferred brands.	2.69	1.06	Agree
22.	Branding enhances the attractiveness of a thing to me.	2.75	1.06	Agree
23.	I am less inclined to contemplate purchasing a product from a brand that is unfamiliar to me.	2.91	1.07	Agree
24.	I exhibit a heightened level of optimism when it comes to things originating from businesses that I have confidence in.	2.60	1.16	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.77**	**1.05**	**Agree**

Table 5 shows the mean ratings of the students' respondents on the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product. It shows that the mean ratings of the students are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 2.77 with standard deviation of 1.05 indicates that branding has impact on undergraduate students` attitude towards specific product.

Table 6. t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	201	2.70	0.51	395	-3.031	.003	S
Female	196	2.85	0.51				

S = Significant

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude specific product.

Table 6 reveals that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product, *t* (395) = -3.031, *p* = .003. The result shows a significant differences between male and female students on attitude toward specific programme. This means female students are higher on attitude toward specific product than their male counterpart.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicated that branding had a significant impact on undergraduate students' loyalty to certain product brands in Enugu State. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the average answer ratings between male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students' loyalty to certain product brands. This conclusion aligns with Casidy and Wymer [20], who discovered that all three dimensions of brand strength—brand familiarity, brand remarkability, and brand attitude—are strongly associated with WOM through the partial mediating effects of contentment and loyalty. Casidy's [21] study also supports this discovery, showing a substantial correlation between students' perceptions of a university's brand orientation and satisfaction, loyalty, and post-enrolment communication activity. Branding's impact on customer loyalty may stem from the fact that a strong brand receives consistent patronage.

The findings indicated that branding had a significant impact on undergraduate students` willingness to pay premium prices on a product. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the average answer ratings between male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students` willingness to pay premium prices on a product. This conclusion aligns with Koschate-Fischer et al.

[22], whose study results of the three complementary experimental studies reveal that branding indeed has a positive impact on willingness to pay. Branding's impact on buyers willingness to pay premium prices may stem from the fact that a strong brand produces quality products with high price.

The findings indicated that branding had a significant impact on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product. The results indicate that there was no significant difference in the average answer ratings between male and female students on the impact of branding on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product. This conclusion aligns with Elseidi and El-Baz [23], whose study revealed that brand image has a strong effect on the consumers' attitude toward a specific brand. Branding's impact on buyers attitude may stem from the fact that buyers mostly exhibit good attitude towards a good brand.

6. IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings have significant implications for the impact of branding on consumer behavior among undergraduate students in Enugu State. The substantial impact of branding on students' loyalty to certain product brands indicates that brand power is crucial in consumer retention. This substantiates the notion that robust brands are prone to experiencing constant patronage because of the emotional and cognitive bonds established by consumers. The absence of a significant difference in loyalty between male and female students underscores the widespread attractiveness of brands across demographic categories.

The results indicate that branding substantially impacts students' readiness to pay premium pricing, underscoring the notion that a robust brand elevates perceived value. The belief that premium goods provide superior quality undoubtedly impacts this behaviour, indicating that businesses with robust reputations can effectively distinguish themselves in competitive markets. The lack of gender-based disparities in

this research indicates that brand prominence and excellence are universally acknowledged and esteemed, irrespective of customer demographics.

Ultimately, the results indicate that branding profoundly impacts undergraduate students' perceptions of certain items, underscoring the psychological potency of brand image [24]. The tendency of students to have positive views of esteemed businesses highlights the importance of developing a strong and unique brand identity. The lack of gender disparities in these views indicates that branding has a consistent impact on consumer behaviour in this environment, making it an essential instrument for influencing a diverse array of consumers.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that branding substantially impacts loyalty, readiness to pay premium pricing, and attitudes, all of which are essential for establishing and sustaining robust client relationships. These findings emphasise the importance of brand strength and image in customer decision-making, as well as the ability of branding to overcome demographic disparities in influencing consumer choices.

7. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that branding has impact on undergraduate students` loyalty to specific brand of product. Also, branding has impact on undergraduate students` willingness to pay premium prices on a product. Finally, the study concluded that branding has impact on undergraduate students attitude towards specific product as most undergraduate students shows positive attitude towards their favourite brand both on campus and out the school.

8. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The findings exhibit certain limitations that must be acknowledged when evaluating the results. The study's concentration on undergraduate students in Enugu State may restrict the applicability of the findings to other groups, both geographically and demographically. Students' attitudes and behaviours in various areas or cultural contexts may vary considerably, indicating that the impact of branding on loyalty, willingness to pay premium pricing, and perceptions may not be uniform across diverse populations. The study also failed to consider other characteristics that could affect consumer

behaviour, such as socio-economic status, previous brand experience, or product category preferences, which may have influenced the results.

The reliance on self-reported data, susceptible to biases like social desirability or recall inaccuracies, presents a further disadvantage. Respondents may have given answers they perceived were anticipated, or their responses may not genuinely represent their true behaviour or purchasing choices. Furthermore, the study's design failed to investigate the long-term impacts of branding on consumer loyalty and attitudes, leaving unresolved whether these branding effects are enduring or variable over time.

The absence of distinction among product categories also constitutes a constraint. The impact of branding can change markedly based on the product category, with luxury items and everyday essentials provoking distinct reactions to branding initiatives. The study failed to investigate these complexities, perhaps oversimplifying the function of branding across various product categories.

9. RECOMMENDATION

The listed below recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study.

- Manufacturer should maintain their reputation so that customers in return will be more loyal to their brand.
- Despite hat customers are ready to provide a premium price for a product from a reputable brand; manufacturers should not see it has an advantage by continuously increasing the price of their products unjustly.
- Brand improvement should always be manufacturing priority in gaining buyers positive attitude towards the manufacturers` brand.

10. SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following were suggested for further studies:

1. Subsequent research may investigate the impact of branding on consumer loyalty, price premium willingness, and sentiments among diverse demographic segments, including age, income, and cultural backgrounds, to improve the generalisability of the results.

2. Subsequent research might examine the effects of branding across several product categories, including luxury items, essential goods, and technological products, to ascertain whether branding affects customers differently according to product category.
3. Researchers may investigate the impact of socio-economic characteristics, including purchasing power and financial position, on the modulation of branding's effect on customer choices, especially concerning the readiness to pay premium prices.
4. Further research could employ experimental designs or behavioural observation to mitigate the biases inherent in self-reported data, thereby offering a more objective comprehension of the impact of branding on real customer purchasing behaviour.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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