

Factors Influencing Consumer Preference Among Beverage Product Brands in Namibia

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Abstract: The primary purpose of conducting this study is to explore the factors that influence consumers' preferences for beverage product brands in Namibia. The results of the study are useful in providing insights into the market characteristics of the Namibian beverage product brands and that of similar brands produced by other organizations for the Windhoek market. The scope of the study was delimited to the population domiciled in the Windhoek area; as such, the results may not be reflective of the general situation in Namibia because the factors that act in an urban setting may be fundamentally different from those that act in rural settings. This is because the sociology, economic, regional identity, and self-image dynamics of the rural settings are fundamentally different from those in the urban setting. As such, the interaction of the same factors in different sociological and economic environments and where individual perspectives for self-image and prestige are dissimilar can yield completely different results. Furthermore, the study recognizes that Namibia produces many different beverages, but in this study, the investigations were focused on alcoholic brands only. The study revealed that customers always stick to their beer brand. The study revealed there is a relationship between price, taste, packaging and quality, and promotion. The findings also revealed contradictory responses on factors that influence brand switching, where it was revealed that better quality and taste of one's favorite brand have significant effects on brand choices. Also, the findings show that customers do not switch brands because of advertisements for other brands. Advertising induces brand switching but does not affect the repeat purchase rates of consumers who have just purchased the brand; but is inconsistent with respondents' responses on advertisements as one of the influential factors on consumer preference where they responded that it is an important factor that influences brand choice. These inconsistent responses in price and advertisement can be interpreted that many customers are satisfied with their favorite brands, and therefore a change of price or advertisements of other brands cannot drive them to switch to other brands. Finally, introducing new brands in the market showed to have a significant impact on brand switching, but this switching does not last long because the switching is meant only for testing the quality of newly introduced brands. Price, flavour, special promotions, packaging and quality, and advertising are crucial factors in beer purchasers' brand choice selections, according to a study. Breweries should pay adequate attention to these factors in their production processes and marketing plans and strategies to promote them well. Managers of brands should invest in frequent advertising to reduce brand switching and retain customers. Maintaining brand quality and advertising it frequently will keep customers buying the same brand.

Keywords: Advertisement, Beverages, Brand switching, Consumer preference, Namibian Brands, Promotions

1. Introduction

We live in a world where producers create products to make a profit and to have loyal customers that stick to their products. As such, producers conventionally manufacture different products to satisfy a large variety of customers who have different product preferences. Therefore, different brands are often found within a single company, where one product can be bigger or better compared to other brands that are produced by the same company. The beverage industry is one such sector where the players involved often tend to have several products that have different labels and branding. The term brand has been used in different ways but is commonly referred to as a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors (Ismail, Ismail et al., 2012; Keller et al., 1998). In this study, the term brand will be used to refer to the various products that are produced within one company but are labelled or branded in a manner that differentiate one product from the others. Furthermore, brand preference refers to when consumers choose one available product brand over others because of an acquired habit or favorable past with that brand (Perreault, Cannon and McCarthy 2014). Brand preference has been found to be important in the customer's decision process and can influence consumer buying decisions (Ismail et al., 2012). This is true because a recognized and trusted brand identity makes people confident that the product is dependable and meets the prestige of the consumer (Isik and Yasar, 2015). When one organization produces different products that are branded differently, it is important to understand the influence each brand has on marketability and preference by consumers.

The process of globalization has aided the exchange of brands, goods, and services and has caused the entire world to act as a single large market (Ismail et al., 2012). Therefore, local products and brands compete with global brands that are probably bigger than local ones. The beverage industry in Namibia is comprised of local, South African, European, and other global brand labels. In respect of local labels, Namibia Breweries Limited (NBL) is the leading beverage company in Namibia, with about 80% of the market share (NBL, 2017). This company was founded in 1920 and operated under the name Southwest Breweries Limited (SWB). After the motherland obtained independence on March 21, 1990, the company changed its name to the present Namibia Breweries Limited. The range of products of NBL today include among others, Club Shandy, Tafel Lager, Tafel Lite, Urbock, Windhoek Draught, Windhoek Lager, and Windhoek Light. Other than the four top-selling beers, Windhoek Lager, Windhoek Light, HansaPilsener, and Tafel Lager, NBL also produces some specialty beers, makes Beck's under license, and distributes Guinness and Kilkenny in the region. NBL also has a division called Stortebecker that produces some Schnapps. Its ready-to-drink products include Smirnoff Spin, Smirnoff Storm, and Archers Aqua. It also manufactures Foundry Premium Cider, its own range of soft drinks, the McKane range, and manufactures products from the Pepsi range under the license of PepsiCo. It is envisaged that the consumer preference within the beverage brands of NBL is dissimilar. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the consumer preference patterns for the different beverage brands of NBL in the Windhoek market. While NBL upholds similarly high standards when producing the various brands, it has been observed that the popularity of brands is not similar among consumers in the local market of Namibia. This is a common trend, particularly for alcoholic beverages; the preference generally varies from one product brand to the other, even though they were produced by the same parent company. Consumers tend to build a preference for beverage products with certain attributes, and their decision process often occurs in a holistic manner rather than on a case-by-case basis (Isik and Yasar, 2015). Both extrinsic and intrinsic factors are known to influence the decision process for a customer to prefer a certain product over its competitors, even when those products are produced by the same company (Isik and Yasar, 2015; Kaupa, 2016). While several studies have been conducted on consumer brand preference in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ndadziyira, 2017). The NBL internal marketing division keeps reviewing preference patterns, a gap still exists because there is no proof of a comprehensive study that have sought to evaluate the factors influencing consumer preferences

for the different product brands of beverages. Therefore, this study was designed to seek and understand customer preferences for NBL brands. In this case, special focus was placed on investigating the different factors influencing the preference and brand choices for NBL beverages.

2. Literature Review

This section provides an overview of related literature on factors influencing brand preferences, especially in an African setting. It also introduces the framework for understanding the research objectives that comprise the main focus of the research described in this study.

2.1 Brands

A brand can be referred to as a unique design, sign, symbol, word, or a combination of these employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors (Keller et al., 1998). A brand can also be defined as a characteristic that distinguishes the product and identifies it in a clearly discernible way from other goods in the same category (Kaupa, 2016). The term brand also refers to the sum of brand experiences or interactions, but those experiences and interactions can create infinite possibilities (Hao, 2009). In some contexts, partly where a single company produces different products, the brand can be the name given to a product such that it takes on an identity by itself (Jones and Bonevac, 2013). This is the context in which the term brand is used. Various authors recognise that it is consistently easier to state the purpose of a brand than to offer a universally applicable definition of the term brand (Jones and Bonevac, 2013; Rundle-Thiele and Bennett, 2001). Therefore, a brand enables the buyers to identify the origins and value of products before buying. The mechanism of brands is both a tangible and intangible, practical, and symbolic, emotional, visible, and invisible trait under conditions that are economically viable for the company (Keller, 2012). As such, economics literature has long recognized the importance of product brands in the formation and growth of the market structure of the goods industries (Bronnenberg and Dube, 2017). The term brand should suggest something about the product i.e., purpose and quality. As such, it should be simple, short, and easy to pronounce and remember. In addition, it should be capable of being registered and protected legally, and it should be attractive (Rundle-Thiele and Bennett, 2001). Hence, a brand should create and provoke loyalty, trust, faith and should have a mass-market appeal (Coelho et al., 2018) which propagates preference tendency, especially among alcoholic beverage customers depending on how the different factors such as marketing, advertisements, promotions and price among others, play out in their totality around the individual customer. Therefore, brand characteristics and triggers of human tendencies work together to propagate brand preferences among consumers. This makes it important to explore further and look at the theories and factors that work to influence brand preferences to enhance our understanding of the purchase and product use decision process in the Namibian setting and see how such factors compare with the theories and factors at a global scale. But before, one can look at brand preferences, it is important to have a thorough understanding of what brands are and what they represent as well as their role in the purchase or consumption choice.

2.2 Brand Preference

The process to sell and promote goods cannot be effective unless the seller has a good understanding of the way consumers make decisions and act in relation to the consumption of brand products promoted by the company (Dharmaraj and Sivasubramanian, 2011). Understanding consumer preference or behavior is focused on the process how people, or organizations select, acquire, and eventually develop an interest for a certain brand over the other (Ismail et al., 2012; Kaupa, 2016). Hence, brand preference can be regarded as a set of individual or subjective tastes resulting from using various bundles of goods. Tastes and preferences allow the customers to conduct a post-use evaluation on usage of products and help the individual build a preference based on the product meets or fails to meet expectations (Anderson et al., 2007). Brand preference is regarded as a key step in consumer decision making, involving elements of choice (Rundle-Thiele and Bennett, 2001). In establishing brand preference, consumers compare and rank different brands by focusing on their uniqueness (Dharmaraj and Sivasubramanian, 2011). Brand preference refers to the extent to which the customer favors the designed service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to

the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration set, with a consideration set referring to brands that a consumer would consider buying in the near future (Jin and Weber, 2013). Also, customer's advisory has a positive effect on establishing a positive effect on brand and consumer preferences (Güngör and Bilgin, 2011). For decades the value of a company was measured in terms of its real estate, then tangible assets, plants, and equipment. Today the business dynamics have shifted such that the primary capital of many businesses is their brands (Isik and Yasar, 2015). Businesses recognise that the company's real value lies in the minds of potential buyers or consumers. Therefore, business strives to build brands that have a positive reputation to be successful and consequently attain profit (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). Hence, the primary function of brand is to guarantee performance and speak to the expectations of the customers (Oh, 2007; Asa et al., 2013).

2.3 Factors Influencing Brand Preferences

Several theories exist that attempt to describe factors influencing the purchase decision process of customers. The factors which influence brand preferences include brand popularity, price, product attributes, social influences and marketing communications (Madodo, 2015). Social influences include roles, family, reference groups, opinion leaders, social classes, lifestyles, and culture or sub-cultures (Hult et al., 2012). These factors can be generalized in terms of the self-concept i.e., individual factors and stimulus-response (external factors) theories as the underpinning framework for understanding how factors work to influence brand choices. Often, consumers will tend to choose a brand that they consider congruent with their self-image (De Bruijn, 2011). In this way everyone will try to reflect his or her own identity through choice. While when the individual is part of a larger social group, consumer preferences tend to converge to a certain pattern thus forming the basics of an individual social identity.

2.3.1 Individual Factors Influencing Brand Preference

A consumer's buying preference is influenced by socio-cultural, personal, and psychological factors.

Socio-cultural factors

Culture is the distinctive way of life of people and it is one of the most fundamental factors influencing an individual's wants and behavior and represents the social heritage, distinctive norms and adaptation of society (Madodo, 2015). It includes a set of learned beliefs, values, attitudes, morals, customs, habits and forms of preference that are shared by a society and transmitted from generation to generation within that society (Kuloba and Wesonga, 2015). The socio-cultural entity is alive, moving and ever-changing system depending of the impact of the various internal and external pressures related to technology, schooling, language, and tradition among others (Kuloba and Wesonga, 2015). Thus, sociocultural influence is a force shaping both patterns of consumption and patterns of decision-making in an individual's life from a young age. Other aspects of sociocultural factors include role and responsibilities and social class of an individual in their society. And some of the brand preferences in alcoholic beverages can be linked to the social class to which the consumer belong or to which they aspire, rather than by their economic status only (De, 2011; Madodo, 2015). Broadly speaking, we have three distinct social classes: upper, middle, and lower classes. Therefore, consumers belonging to middle classes usually place emphasis on rationality, exhibit greater sense of choice making, whereas consumers of lower classes have essentially non-rational purchases and show limited sense of choice-making (Kuloba and Wesonga, 2015).

Family and reference groups

Customers as individuals commonly belong to one group or the other and to a reasonable extent, the group they belong to or wishes to belong has influence on one's purchasing decisions and often contribute to brand choices and preferences (Madodo, 2015). An individual often belongs to several groups, but those that influence behavior are called reference group. A reference group is useful for self-evaluation and attitude formation (Dharmaraj and Sivasubramanian, 2011; Sriram, et al., 2005).

Group influence can be seen in brand preferences and brand choices. A family, a circle of friends, a local club, an athletic team, and college living groups are examples of small reference groups in

which members have face-to-face interactions (Goldsmith, 2015). Word-of-mouth communication is the process by which messages are passed within a group from member to member. It is often a critical factor in determining who buys what product and brand.

Personal factors

Alcoholic brand preference is also influenced by personal characteristics. These include the buyer's age and stage in the life cycle, occupation, economic circumstances, life style, personality and self-concept (Bruijn, De, 2011). Product choice is also greatly affected by economic circumstances, like income, savings and assets, economic status, and attitude toward spending and saving. Lifestyle relates to the person's pattern of living in the world expressed in activities, interests, and opinions. Lifestyle captures something more than the person's social class or personality. Thus, it bears a great influence of the brand preferences of individuals particularly in various situations i.e. at dinner of business partners or when having a drink with friends (Amadi and Ezekiel, 2014).

Psychological factors

A person's buying choices are also influenced by four major psychological factors i.e., motivation, perception, learning and beliefs. A motive is a need that is sufficiently pressing to direct the person to seek to satisfy their needs (Bruijn, De, 2011; Madodo, 2015; Sriram et al., 2005). Henceforth, satisfaction is the emotional connector to a product brand. On the other hand, perception is the process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world. People can form different perceptions of the same stimulus. Customers have to interpret value, preference, and taste. The perceived quality of an alcoholic beverage has a significant relationship with brand preference and it is basis on which a customer rank a brand as superior or inferior (Schultz et al., 2014). The perceptions of an individual can change as they learn and broaden their experience. This also tend to influence the way they respond to stimuli and how their behaviour and foundation evolves in terms of how they perceive value and quality of a brand (Sriram et al., 2005).

2.3.2 External Factors Influencing Alcoholic Brand Preferences

Several organization specific factors affect customer satisfaction in different ways. Some of these relate to the quality of the products and services. Brewery firms need to integrate value, preference, and taste, and perform activities that appeal to the cognitive elements of clients mind, mannerism, and purchase habits (Amadi and Ezekiel, 2014).

Marketing and brand promotion

Advertising is a non-personal paid form where ideas, concept, products or services and information are promoted through media (Ayanwale et al, 2005). Of all marketing weapons, advertising is renowned for its lasting impact on viewers mind and its exposure is much broader (Katke, 2007). Brand promotion is one of the essential because it is the process of communicating the various attributes of the products to the potential and actual consumers. The promotional mix comprises, among others personal selling, sales promotion and advertising as well as publicity and direct marketing (Sriram et al., 2005). Promotion enhances brand image, and it is crucial for customer satisfaction because it creates a mental image of the product qualities, value and product attributes and thereby allow the consumers to form positive perceptions about the product (Thakur and Singh, 2012).

Product attributes

The issue of quality of a product has been of great importance in business. This is because those consumers have such great exposure to information, making it important for both manufacturers and consumers have been that value in a product (Achana and Shrivatava, 2013). The quality of a product implies the hidden and the apparent characteristics of the product that serve to attract the

customer. The product quality is highly imperative when it comes to customer satisfaction and improving brand image which shapes brand preferences among customers (Ali, 2013).

Product price

The product's ability to provide value for money is one of the major instruments used by firms to enhance their brands. A product price is a sensitive decision for both the manufacturer and the customer especially in a competitive market such as the beer market (Chang and Wildt, 2008). Price is the principle means through which the customers judge a product in the market and is indicative of the quality of the product (Jakpar, 2012). While the beer companies perceive price in terms of the extent to which they facilitate the profit objective, customers perceive the products in terms of their ability to provide value for money in terms of quality (Musia, 2013; Nautwima and Asa, 2022). The price of a product is a fundamental factor in customer satisfaction, and it affects the choices of the customer (Kotler et al., 2009). Consumers are very cautious about the cost there incur when they purchase a product and when they have to part with a lot of cash, they demand value for their money. According to Li (2013), customers do exercise a lot of control on spending limit and would drag when it comes to paying for products that are priced outside their intended expenditure limit.

2.4 Factors Influencing Brand Preference Of Namibia Breweries Alcoholic Products

NBL's strategic intent is to focus on achieving growth in major markets by placing its marketing managers in various markets, working closely with distribution partners in the country, and providing advertising and promotion support. Recently market studies have focused on the major internal and external factors affecting Namibia Breweries Limited and in the strength weakness opportunity and threats (SWOT) analysis. However, a gap exists in literature particularly regarding how the theoretical framework underpinning brand preferences in Sub Saharan Africa works to influence such brand preferences.

3. Research Methodology

This research is exploratory in nature as it attempts to explore the experiences of consumers of NBL alcoholic beverages. As such the subjective perceptions in respect of the factors that influence the brand preferences of the respondents formed the core data of the study; hence a research design that addresses the exploratory nature of the study was chosen. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the qualitative descriptive research design was adopted. A qualitative descriptive approach is based on the belief that that respondent's experience and perceptions create the most meaningful data when studying phenomena that cannot be measured numerically (Creswell, 2014). It also gives large volumes of quality data from a limited number of people; hence it is adapted for those studies with a sample size that is typically small (Saunders and Thornhill, 2009). In this study the population was delimited by time and location in that it was comprised of consumers who were found in the Windhoek area during the specified time of data collection. Therefore, it included consumers who use NBL alcoholic brands in Windhoek the time of study which were estimated to be about 40% Of the Windhoek population i.e., approximately 160 000 people. The success of this research was highly depended on the co-operation of subject; therefore, the convenient sampling method was used. This is a non-probability sampling method that helps the researcher to selects objects of the sample based on the criteria that they are easy to recruit, access and work with. This is a highly suitable sampling method because it is in line with the researcher's concerns, which are to find respondents that cooperate and help researcher to adequately address the research questions that define the purpose of the study. Hence the main criteria for inclusion were:

The respondent uses (consumes) at least one of the NBL alcoholic beverage brands.
They are willing to cooperate and offer voluntary consent to participate in the study.
The sampling size limit is not attained where a limit of 50 respondents was found to be sufficient.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data regarding the personal characteristics of the respondents as well as to capture their brand preferences and underpinning factors influencing those brand preference that they perceive to have. This was found to be an appropriate tool because it helps the researcher ensure that fundamental information was collected from the respondents (Flick, et al., 2004; Heaton, 2008; Thomas and Heck, 2001). In this case special focus was placed on assessing how respondent' variables such as age, gender and economic status relate with the self-concept and stimuli factors to shape the brand preferences. Designing an effective questionnaire instrument involves performing a pre-test to ascertain the appropriateness of the structure and order of questions. Pre-testing and piloting refers occurs before a full-scale study is done and it involves the process of testing the questionnaire on a small sample in order to identify deficiencies such as unclear wording, whether questions are relevant, cost and time used in completing the questionnaire (Bowden et al., 2002; Lancaster et al., 2004). Hence, pre-testing can help you determine the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire instrument and determine the steps that will be followed during the full-scale study as well as to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire instrument (Bowden et al., 2002).

In this study, pre-testing and piloting was conducted by performing random and controlled trial of the questionnaire on 5 respondents which represented 10% of the target sample of 50 respondents. The process of piloting the questionnaire was done without declaring to the respondents that this was a pre-testing and piloting activity, but the researcher remained observant to check the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. The initial step was selecting the four centers where the survey was conducted i.e., NUST Main Campus, Wernhill Park, Grove Mall and Katutura Shoprite. Subsequently data collection was done by performing interviews with the respondents during a one weeklong data collection survey. The survey process started with a self-introduction, an outline of the purpose of the study and request for voluntary participation. After the respondent gave voluntary consent to participate in the study, then a semi-structured interview was performed, and the responses were recorded as data in a notebook. Qualitative descriptive data analysis was done in this study. This was done by following a stepwise process which included the interpretation of data and trying to understand the factors influencing their preferences among NBL brand as presented in their responses. Thus, the data analysis process started organizing the responses into common themes that improved their researcher's understanding and these themes were later presented in manner that responds to the research questions that defined the study. Furthermore, the themes contained in the responses were grouped according to their similarities, and commonness, and were identified for the purpose of making sense of them in relation to the theoretical framework created in the literature review.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data represent the phenomenon under study. In this case, a valid instrument should accurately measure what it is intended to. Therefore, the data collection process should yield data that serves as a true reflection of the variables under study. Validity can also be defined as the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure i.e., whether it performs as it is designed to perform (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). It is rare, if nearly impossible, that an instrument can be 100% valid. Since this was a qualitative study, pilot testing was done to give the researcher insights onto the type of content that will be gathered and, to allow for the expansion and modification of the research instrument. By using a formative approach, focus was also placed on ensuring that the objectives of the study and measures of assessment were well defined. As such it was discovered that the findings truly represented the phenomena attempting to understand the factors influencing brand preference among NBL customers.

Reliability refers to extent to which a measurement instrument can yield consistent results each time it is applied under similar conditions (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). The focus of reliability instruments is to check for the repeatability of findings i.e., if the study were to be

done a second time, would it yield the same results? If so, the data are reliable. Hence, it is the design and make-up of a data collection instrument that causes it to obtain similar results for similar inputs (Gaysi and Azumah, 2009). Therefore, if more than one person is observing behavior or some event, all observers should agree on what is being recorded to claim that the data are reliable. In this study the questionnaire instrument was checked for bias, and it was executed without bias, so the data was comprised of experiences of the respondent in terms of which factors influenced their choices among the brand products of NBL. Relevant ethical issues such as privacy, honesty and disclosure of the research objectives were addressed. During data collection, it was clearly stated that participation was on voluntary and anonymity basis. Furthermore, an ethical clearance certificate was sought from the Faculty of Management and Human Science where the researcher openly stated that the study will involve human subjects with special emphasis on brand preference of alcohol product brands of NBL and not on alcoholism.

4. Presentation of Findings

4.1 General Information and Characteristics of Participants

The purpose of including gender in this study was to eliminate gender bias and identify whether gender on the factors influencing consumer preference among product brands. The study revealed that 32 respondents were male (64%) and only 18 (36%) participants were female. This implies that large number of participants were males. The question was asked to identify the age of participants with the purpose of identifying the eligibility of the respondents to consume alcoholic beverages and to identify whether age determine individuals on the factors influencing consumer preference among product brands. The findings under this aspect revealed that 15 (30%) participants are aged from 21-30 years old, 21 (42%) respondents aged between 31-40 years old, 9 (18%) respondents aged from 41-50 years old, 4 (8%) respondents aged 51-60 years old, meanwhile there was no participants aged 60 upward. Respondents were generally matured and more experienced and thus were expected to have useful information for the study. The question was asked to identify the highest level of education of participants with the purpose of identifying how educated the participants are and to identify whether education determine individuals on the factors influencing consumer preference among product brands. The findings under this aspect revealed that 17 (34%) participants have secondary certificate as highest level of education, while 33 (66%) respondents have tertiary as highest level of education. most of the respondents are educated. Table 4 (a) Summarizes the demographic data of participants.

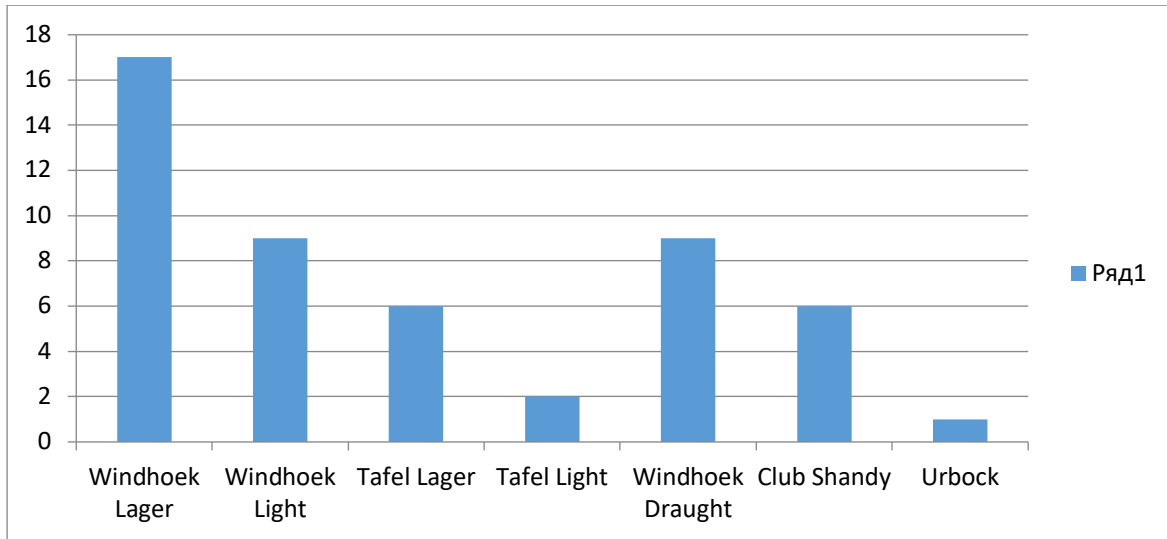
Table 1: Demographic data of participants

Demographics information	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Male	32	64
Female	18	36
Total	50	100
Age		
21-30 years old	15	30
31-40 years old	21	42
41-50 years old	9	18
51-60 years old	4	8
61 years and above	0	0
Total	50	100
Highest level of education		
Primary	0	0
Secondary	17	34
Tertiary	33	66
Total	50	100

4.2 Respondents Brand Choices

The study revealed that 17 (34%) of participants are consuming Windhoek Lager, 9 (18%) of respondents are consuming Windhoek light, 6 (12%) of participants are consuming Tafel Lager, 2 (4%) of respondents are consuming Tafel Light brand, and 9 (18%) of respondents are consuming Windhoek Draught Brand. Meanwhile 6(12%) of participants consumes Club Shandy Brand and 1 (2%) of participants consumes Urbock. The study revealed that Windhoek Lager Brand has a larger number of consumers than other brands, followed by Windhoek light, Windhoek Draught, and others. This can be further presented in table 4. (b) below.

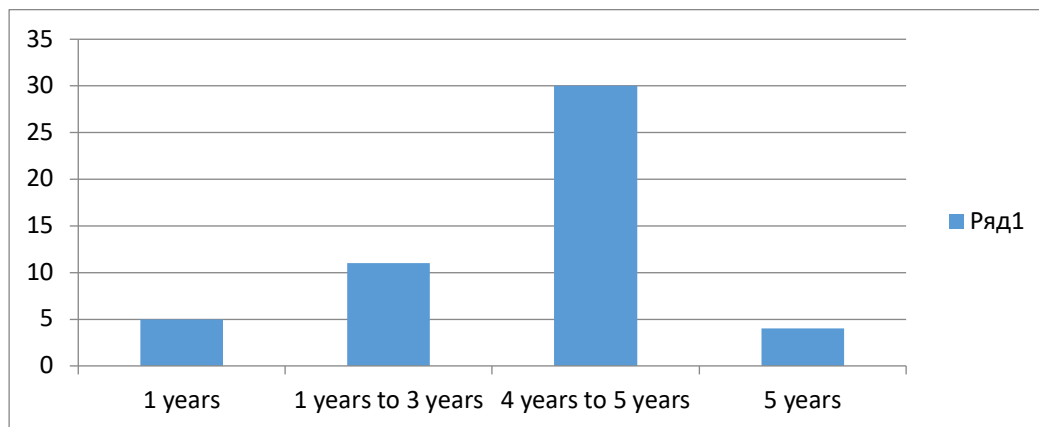
Table 2: Respondents’ brand choices



4.3 Respondents Experience with NBL Beer Brands.

The study revealed that 5 (10%) respondents have an experience of one year of consuming their favorite brands. 11 (22%) respondents have experience of one year to three years of consuming their favorite brands. 30 (60%) respondents have an experience of four year to five years of consuming their favorite brands. 4 (8%) respondents have experience of 5 years of consuming their favorite brand. This is further presented in table 4. (c) below.

Table 3

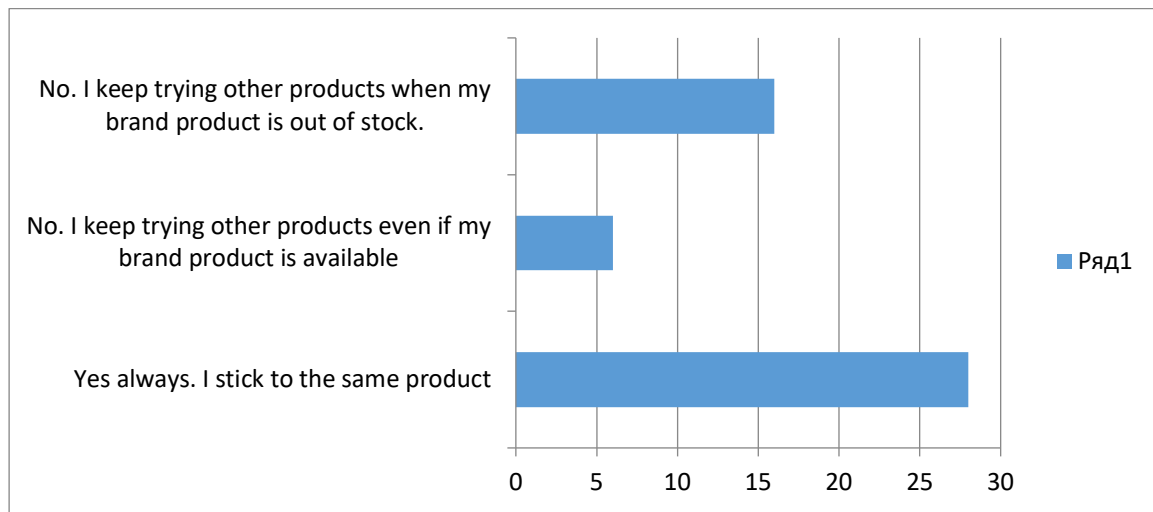


4.4 Respondents Loyalty to their Favorite Brands

A question was asked to reveal whether respondents are loyal to their favorite brands. The study revealed that 28 (56%) of respondents always stick to the same product, 6(12%) respondents keep trying other products even if their brand product is available and 16 (32%)

respondents keep trying other products when their brand product is out of stock. This is presented in table 4. (d) below.

Table 4



4.4.1 Price as an influential factor on product brand preferences

In this factor result showed that 40% responded that price is an important factor which influences their brand choices. 30% of respondents responded that price very important factors which influence their brand choices. 26% responded that price is Somewhat important factor that influences their brand choices, as well 4% of respondents showed that price is not important factor that influence brand choices. Finding in this factor is further presented in figure 4. (e) below.

Table 5

SCALE	Frequency	Percentage
Important	20	40
Very important	15	30
Somewhat important	13	26
Not important	2	4
Total	50	100

4.4.2 Marketing and advertisements as an influential factor on brand choice

The findings reveals that 24 (48%) respondents agree with advertisement as an important factor which influence brand choice and consumption. 15(30%) respondents agree with advertisement as a very important factor which influence their brand choices in beer industry. 11(22%) respondents responded that advertisement is a less important factor that influence their choices in brands. Findings are summarized in table 4. (f) below

Table 6

SCALE	Frequency	Percentage
Important	24	48
Very important	15	30
Somewhat important	11	22
Not important	0	0
Total	50	100

4.4.3 Quality, packaging and other product attributes as an influential factor on brand choice

In this factor 25 (50%) responded that packaging and quality is an important factor which influence brand choice. 18(36%) responded packaging and quality is a very important factor which influence brand choices and consumption. 7(14%) responded packaging and quality is less important factor that influence brand choices. Findings in this variable indicate that many respondents 50% responded that 26 packaging and quality is an important factor which influences their choice of brands in beer market. This is further presented in table 4. (g) below

Table 7

SCALE	Frequency	Percentage
Important	25	50
Very important	18	36
Somewhat important	7	14
Not important	0	0
Total	50	100

4.4.4 Social factors

Results in this factor showed that 32 (64%) agree that social factor is less important factor which influence brand choice and consumptions in beer beverages products. Meanwhile 18 (36%) respondents agree that social factor is not important factor that influence brand choice in beer products. There were no responses in very important and important values. This is further presented in table 4. (h) below.

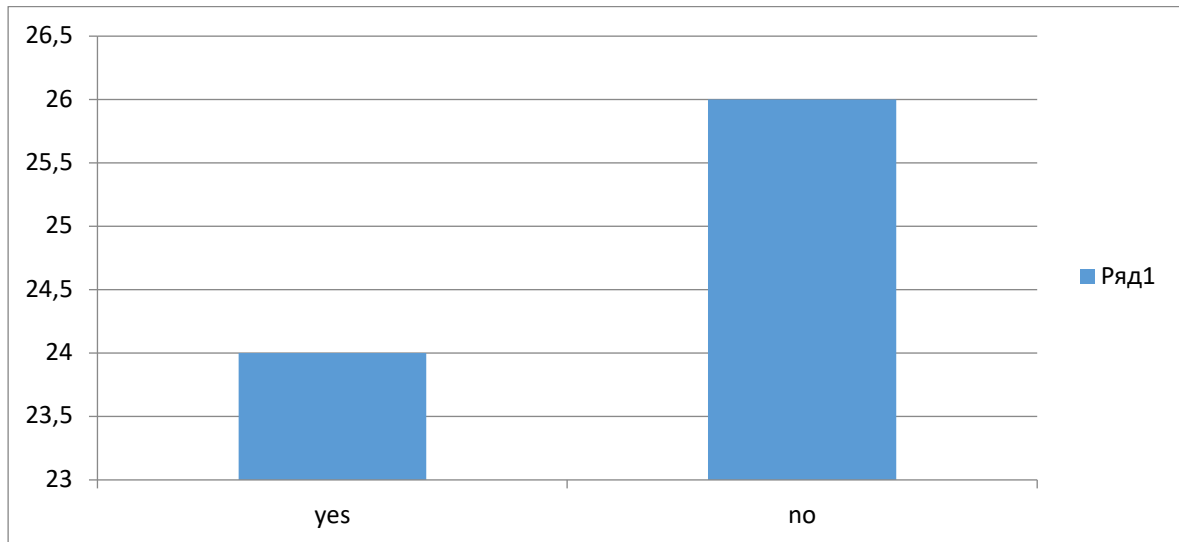
Table 8

SCALE	Frequency	Percentage
important	32	64
Very important	18	36
Somewhat important	0	0
Not important	0	0
Total	50	100

4.5 Respondents on Price Sensitive Customers

A question was asked to reveal whether customer is sensitive to price. The study revealed that 24 (48%) respondents are price sensitive customers. 26(52%) of respondents are not price sensitive customers, they buy without looking at the price as long as it is their brand This is also presented in table 4. (i) below.

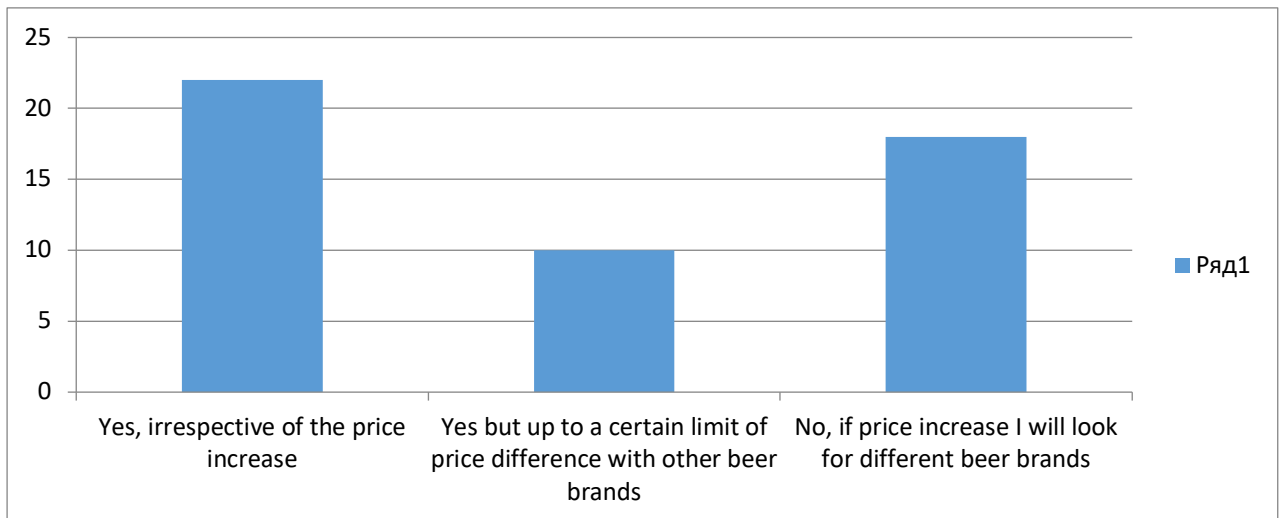
Table 9



4.6 Are You a Loyal Customer to the Beer Brand Regarding Price Increasing

A question was asked to reveal whether respondents are loyal to their favorite brands even when price increase on their favorite brand. The study revealed that 22 (44%) of respondents they will stick to their brand irrespective of the price increase, 10 (20%) respondents they will stick to their brand, but up to a certain limit of price difference with other beer brands and 18 (36%) respondents are not loyal to brands when price increase, they will look for different beer brands. This is presented in table 4. (J) below.

Table 10



4.7 Price Decreased Compared to Other Brands, Will You Perception About Its Quality and Prestige Remain the Same

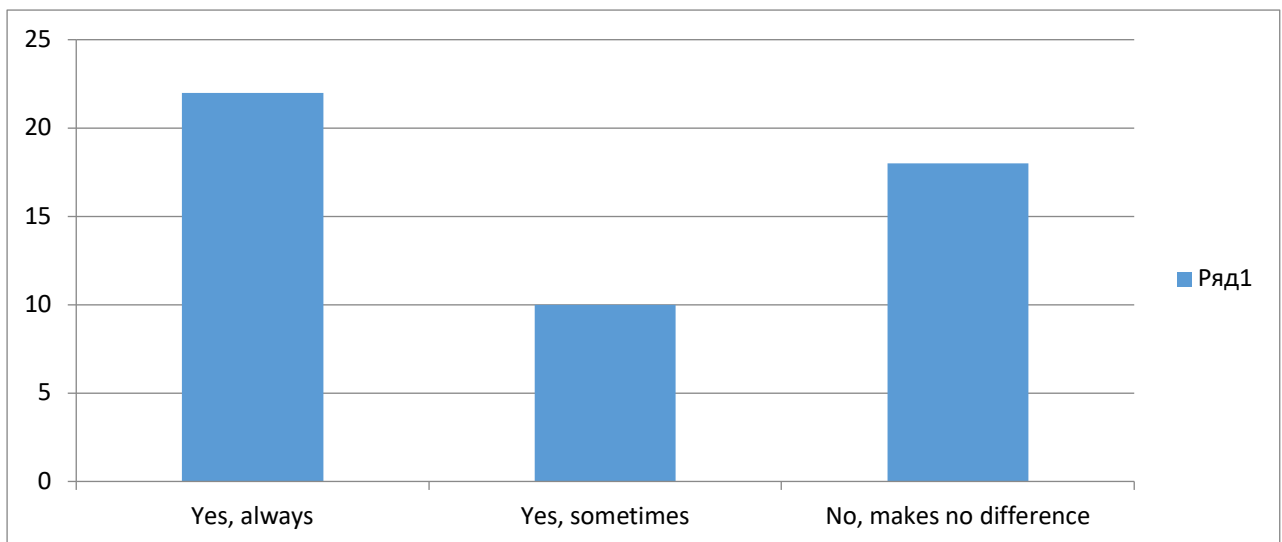
A question was asked to reveal whether respondents will still have the same perception about its quality and prestige to their favorite brand. The study revealed that 18(36%) of respondents' perception about its quality and prestige remain the same to their favorite brand, 32(64%) respondents' perception about its quality and prestige will not remain the same. This is presented in table 4. (k) below

Table 11



4.8. Are You Very Responsive to Brand Product Advertisements such that they Do Influence the Type of Beer You Drink

Findings reveals that 22(44%) respondents agree that they are very responsive to brand product advertisements such that they do influence the type of beer they drink. 10(20%) respondents agree that only sometimes they are very responsive to brand product advertisements such that they do influence the type of beer they drink. 18(36%) respondents responded that advertisement is a less important factor that influence their choices in brands. Findings are summarized in table 4. (l) below.



4.9 Do You Change the Type of Beer You Prefer to be in Line With Your Friends, Social Group, Club

In this factor the result shows that 13 (26%) respondents agree with the fact that they change the type of beer they prefer to be in line with their friend. Meanwhile 11(22%) respondents sometime that they change the type of beer they prefer to be in line with their friends. 26(52%) respondents responded that do no change the type of beer they prefer in order to be in line with their friend. Findings in this factor are presented in table 4. (m) below.

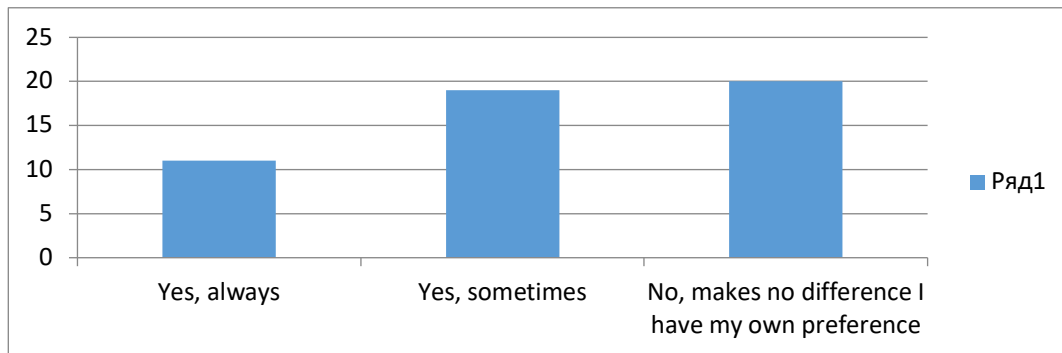
Table 12



4.10 Are You Responsive to Branding, Quality, and General Attributes of the Beer

In this factor 11 (22%) responded that they are responsive to branding, quality and general attributes of the beer packaging and labeling. 19(38%) responded only sometimes they are responsive to branding, quality, and general attributes of the beer. 20(40%) responded that they are not responsive to branding, quality, and general attributes of the beer. Findings in this factor are presented in table 4. (n) below.

Table 13



4.11 What is the Most Important Brand Attribute That Made You Prefer That Particular Beer

In this factor result showed that 70% responded that the most important brand attribute that made you prefer that beer is your idea of the taste and quality of the beer. 12% of respondents responded that the most important brand attribute that made you prefer that beer is Design and colour of the packaging/can/bottle. 18% responded that the most important brand attribute that made you prefer that beer is Size and shape of the can/bottle, and there were no responds for environment issues. Finding in this factor is further presented in figure 4. (o) below.

Table 14

Your idea of the taste and quality of the beer	35
Design and colour of the packaging/can/bottle	6
Environmental issues	0
Size and shape of the can/bottle	9

4.12 If the Beer That You Prefer Changes into Package Design and Shape You Don't Like Will You Continue Consuming

The general finding revealed that 40 (80%) respondents agree that they will continue consuming if the beer they prefer changes into package design and shape they don't like. Less number of respondents 3 (6%) responded that only sometimes they will continue consuming if the beer they prefer changes into package design and shape they don't like., as well 7 (14%) responded that they will continue consuming if the beer they prefer changes into package design and shape they don't like. Findings are presented in table below 4. (p)

Table 15

Yes, always	40
Yes, sometimes	3
No, because external attributes are also important	7

4.13 If You Were to Change Your Preferences and Purchased another NBL Beer Brand Instead of Your Regular Beer Brand, What Would be the Reason for It

Respondents were asked to assess whether if they were to change their preferences and purchased another NBL beer brand instead of their regular beer brand, what would be the reason for it. The general finding revealed that 11 (22%) respondents will change their preferences and purchased another NBL beer brand instead of their regular beer brand because of Price and special promotion. 24(48%) responded that will change their preferences and purchased another NBL beer brand instead of their regular beer brand because of better quality and taste. 10 (20%) responded that they will change their preferences and purchased another NBL beer brand instead of their regular beer brand because of new competing brand on the market. 5 (10%) responded that they will change their preferences and purchased another NBL beer brand instead of their regular beer brand because of Your interest in your current brand diminished. there were no respondents that they will change their preferences and purchased another NBL beer brand instead of their regular beer brand due Environmental greenness. Findings are presented in table below.

Table 16

Price and special promotion	11
Better quality and taste	24
Environmental greenness	0
New competing brand on the market	10
Your interest in your current brand diminished	5

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine factors influencing consumer preference among product brands in Namibia: a case study of Namibia breweries Ltd. The specific objectives of this study were 1. To ascertain the influence of prices on consumer choices of NBL brands, 2. To investigate the extent to which product attributes influence consumer choices for beverage brands, 3. To assess the extent to which brand preferences are affected by social factor, 4. To determine the effects of marketing and product promotion activities on brand preferences. Data was collected from the sample of 50 beer consumers aged 18 years and above including men and women living in Windhoek City. Data was collected through questionnaires. The study revealed that customers always stick to their beers brand. The study revealed there is a relationship between price, taste, packaging and quality, and promotion. The findings also revealed contradictory responses on factors which influence

brand switching where it was revealed that better quality and taste of one's favorite brand have significant effects on brand choices. This is inconsistent with respondent's responses on price as an influential factor on brand choice, and it is inconsistent with Urun (2011) who concluded that brand external appearance and the history of individual brand 57 in terms of price promotion are important issues for customers. Also the findings shows that customers do not switch brands as a result of advertisement of other brands, consistent with Deighton et al., (1994) who suggested that advertising induces brand switching but does not affect the repeat purchase rates of consumers who have just purchased the brand, but inconsistent with respondents previous responses on advertisements as one of the influential factors on consumer preference where they responded that it is an important factor which influence brand choice. These inconsistencies responses in price and advertisement can be interpreted that many customers are satisfied with their favorite brands and therefore change of price or advertisements of other brands cannot drive them to switch to other brands. Finally, introduction of new brands in the market showed to have a significant impact on brand switching but this switching does not last long because the switching is meant only for testing the quality of newly introduced brands.

6. Recommendations

The study depicted that price, taste, special promotion, packaging and quality, and advertisements are important elements which have significant contribution on brand choice decisions among beer customers. Brewing companies should put enough attention on those elements from the manufacturing processes and in the preparation and implementation of marketing plans and strategies to ensure that all those elements are promoted well. Brands managers should maintain qualities and invest in frequent advertisements of their brands to minimise brand switching and maintain customers. Maintaining quality and frequent advertisement of brand update current customers on the worthiness and current or future improvement of their favorite brands and they will continue to purchase the same brand.

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