EFFECTS OF BRANDING ON RESTAURANTS' IMAGE:
A CASE OF SELECTED RESTAURANTS IN NAIROBI, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

A brand is a trademark connected with a product or producer. Brands have become increasingly important components of culture and the economy, now being that consumers associate with a specific brand, expressed in terms of human behavior and desires, but that also relate to price, quality, and situational use of the brand. This study was carried out aiming at discussing the temperament of product image based on a product's name and the purpose was to identify the nature, challenges and strategies of product branding in selected restaurants in Nairobi, Kenya. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. 25% managers believed that the brand name had earned them repeated guests. 25% indicated that their brand name could attract customers easily. 25% stated that their brand name had made them popular among the market, while the rest 25% declared that their name had greatly influenced their record of high sales.

Keywords: *Branding, product image, brand image, restaurants.*

INTRODUCTION

Well recognised brands make shopping easier. Consumers usually rely on well-known brands as an indication of quality. Brand promotion has advantages for branders as well as customers. A good brand speeds up shopping for the customer and thus reduces the marketers selling time and effort and when customers repeatedly purchase by brand, the brander is protected against competition from other firms. This can increase sales volume and reduce promotion cost. Good brands can improve the company's image, speeding acceptance of new products marketed under the same name. Importance of a good customer image has led some restaurants to change their corporate name to make it more descriptive of the firm activities (William D, 2000). Brand name can be confusingly similar to a competitors mark even though not identical. If it sounds, looks or has the same connotation as the competitors thorough search should be made of existing records by competent legal counsel and will generally involve searching one or more sources.

Branding is the use of a name, term, symbol or design or a combination of these two identities of a product; it includes use of brand names, trademarks, and practically all other means of product identification (Kotler P, et al., 2003). Branding has become an increasingly important component of culture and the economy because it refers to how a corporation is perceived and it is the generally accepted image of what a company stands for. A brand is a name or trademark connected with a product or producer and it is a term that includes practically all means of identifying a product name term, sign, symbol, design or combination of them that identifies the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and differentiates them from those of competitors (Oliveira-Castro, et al, 2008)

Although branding by exotic restaurants is common and they do well, indigenous restaurants tend not to be regarded in the same light, since they are considered to be of inferior quality. *People buy certain product for certain reasons, such as; need, peer pressure, social class, money available e.t.c. all this is decided upon according to restaurant's brand names. Nowadays, there is a tendency of people buying the exotic restaurant products instead of indigenous, causing possible dissatisfaction, unnecessary expenses to the customer and low revenue to indigenous branded restaurants.* This study yielded data and information that will be useful for proper planning, decision making strategies and solutions on the effects of branding on product image especially in Nairobi, Kenya.

According to Oliveira-Castro, et al, 2008, brand image is a symbolic construct created within the minds of people and consists of all the information and expectations associated with a product or service. People engaged in branding, seek to develop or align the expectations behind the brand experience, creating the impression that a brand associated with a product or service has certain qualities or characteristics that make it special or unique. Typically, the brand image is designed to be appealing to the public, so that the company can spark an interest among consumers, and thus facilitate product sales. A brand is therefore one of the most valuable elements in advertising, as it demonstrates what the brand owner is able to offer in the marketplace.

Branding enables a manufacturer to develop a specific market position for a product, it represents a number of important product attributes to the consumer, it enables the consumer to make a buying decision with minimum of effort, the manufacturer is able to achieve repeat purchases that results in a higher market share and increased profitability, it encourages innovation, when a consumer demands the product, the manufacturer can exercise more control over its price and distribution and it carries meaning recognized by consumers and markets alike (http/www.answers.com/topic/brand-equity).

In restaurants, branding is done as a way of communicating with the customers the experience they would get when they visit the restaurant. It is done through a slogan, jingle, or song that lets them know immediately who it is, a special dish that they are famous for like *kenchick*, and also through advertising by employees' via their interactions with customers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding started during the Middle Ages when crafts guilds (similar to labour unions) and merchants' guilds formed to control the quantities and quality of production. Each producer had to mark his goods so output could be cut back when necessary -meaning poor quality which might reflect unfavourably on other guild products and discourage future trade could be traced back to gutty producer (Bowersox, &Copper, 1992). Early trademarks were also a protection to the buyer, who could then know the source of the product. Recently brands have been used mainly for identification (William D, 2000). Virtually all products introduced today have brand names. Most brand names are also registered as trademarks.

1.1CONCEPT OF BRANDING

Brands are marketed by restaurants and are definite assets and often provide a restaurant in new product development, with a very solid start in positioning their product (Judy A et al, 1999). Your brand will already say a lot about you e.g. high quality, low price or involved technology, durability or whatever. This is a definite advantage if you are introducing a new product that needs the image of your current brands (and can meet it with its own performance) therefore the brands you own or other property, what the brands you own stand for in the minds of the customer, are assets that should be considered when you are making your asset listing before preparing the guidelines for your new product development work (Judy A, et al, 1999). Name of a product is valuable detail. Success of a product is determined primarily by the worth of that product in relation to those it competes with. Known products are considered more trustworthy (Holden, S. J. S. 1993).

Names are a means of identification, a focal point for repetitions, not substance; they are cure for anonymity, yet not a guarantee of reward. Adroit naming will not make a poor product successful and it would take towering stupidity to name a good product so poorly that it becomes unsuccessful solely by reason of its name. Brand names serve to create identity- to distinguish one product from another cause without a means of identification. Identity is essential to competition because without a means of identification, there is no way of making a choice except by happenstance. Therefore not only facilitate choice, they are a spur to responsible action (Holden, S. J. S. 1993).

Naming a product is like naming a child, parents know that the successes and happiness of their child is primarily dependent on development of their characteristics, intelligence, and capacity and not their names but they nevertheless take care in naming their children. Products are manufacturers' children, unlike human children product children are never brought into the world by accident. Manufacturers have the opportunity to assess the likelihood of success for a product child, to correct flaws, if there be any and to abort if chances of success look poor (Keller, M. 1993) for example; Branding offers benefits to ultimate consumers, distributors and producers. Brand names help consumers identify and choose products quickly and with confidence. Highly brand loyal consumers are less vulnerable to competitive advertisement and promotion activity. Distributors may prefer branded products because they; realise higher profit margins, have better market acceptance, benefit from the manufacturers marketing efforts, generate customer loyalty, identify supplies, ensure quality levels, help products establish a market niche, provides a basis for price differentiation, symbolises reputation and quality of organisation that market intangible.

1.1.1. HOW BRANDING HELPS AID CONSUMERS BUYING DECISION

It helps by giving the product some recognisable and ensured identity consumer decision is a combination of a number of perceptions made up of advertising they have seen, previous experience with the product packaging, shelf placement and current mental and physical state. A brand name help customer combine perceptions into an overview that helps one make a decision brand perception lead certain expectations and allow efficient buying decision (Simon, M. F., 1970).

1.2 CONCEPT OF BRAND IMAGE

Brand image, is a symbolic construct created within the minds of people and consists of all the information and expectations associated with a product or service. People engaged in branding seek to develop or align the expectations behind the brand experience, creating the impression that a brand associated with a product or service has certain qualities or characteristics that make it special or unique (Dodds, W. B et al,. 1991). Restaurant image is the reputation of the firm with the various audiences that are important to it. These groups that have a stake in the company are known as stakeholders. Stakeholders are affected by the actions of the establishment and, in turn, their actions can affect the company. Consequently, its image in the eyes of its stakeholders is important to the company. The principal stakeholders with whom most large corporations must be concerned are: customers, distributors and retailers, financial institutions and analysts, shareholders, government regulatory agencies, social action organizations, the general public, and employees. The image that stakeholders have of the company will influence their willingness to either provide or withhold support.

1.2.1 FACTORS AFFECTING THE BRAND IMAGE OF A RESTAURANT

Image refers to how a corporation is perceived. It is a generally accepted image of what a company stands for. Marketing experts use public relations and other forms of promotion to suggest a mental picture to the public. Typically, a corporate image is designed to be appealing to the public, so that the company can spark an interest among consumers, create share of mind, generate brand equity, and thus facilitate product sales. A corporation's image is not solely created by the company: Other contributors to a company's image could include news media, journalists, labor unions, environmental organizations, and other NGOs. Restaurants are not the only form of organization that creates these types of images.

Also it is defined as the qualities that consumers associate with a specific brand, expressed in terms of human behavior and desires, but that also relate to price, quality, and situational use of the brand. For example: A brand such as The Marriot will conjure up a strong public image because of its standards. This image is not inherent in the brand name but is created through advertising. Brand image is therefore the psychological aspect; a symbolic construct created within the minds of people and consists of all the information and expectations associated with a product or service (www.answers.com/topic/brand-equity).

1.2.2 PROTECTING BRAND NAMES AND TRADEMARKS

Common law protects the right of the owners of trademarks and brand names, and the Lanham's Act 1946 spells out the exact method of protecting trademarks and what kind of marks (including brand names) can be protected, applies to foreign commerce. Lanham Act does not force registration, but a good reason to register under the Lanham's Act is to protect a trademark to be used in international markets. Before a trademark can be protected in a foreign country, some nations require that it be registered in its home country. A brand can be a real asset to a company each firm should try to see that its brand does not become common descriptive term. When this happens the brand becomes public property and the owner looses all rights to it. There are advantages of registering with a patent office; it is a constructive notice of the registrant's claim of ownership applicable nationwide to everyone interested in the mark. Evidence although rebuttable of the registrant's exclusive ownership rights, shifting the burden of proof to anyone challenging those rights. It gives federal courts jurisdiction to hear infringement and related claims of unfair completion under state law.

In many foreign countries, brand ownership is established only by priority and registration. As new products increase, so do trademarks and brands become important. Almost all products today are branded, though generics have received a lot of news coverage in recent years, they are only slowly catching on. May not meet the same quality standard but are quite suitable substitutes that cost less.

1.3 REASERCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design and descriptive statistics were used to present the findings. The target population of this study were restaurant managers and restaurant customers in selected restaurants, in Nairobi, Kenya. They are as follows;

Table 1.0 Selected Restaurants in Nairobi, Kenya.

| Indigenous restaurant	managers	customers	Indigenous restaurant	managers	customers
Belcanto caterers	1	3	Sounds restaurant	2	3
Kk restaurant	2	3	Petma Restaurant	2	3
Antonio's grill	2	3	Zeep Restaurant	2	3
City Gava foods	2	3	Friends Restaurant	2	2
Capital coffee limited	2	3	Tea house restaurant	2	3
Hot dishes	2	3	K&A coffee limited	2	3
Kahawa coffee house	2	0	Aroma Restaurant	2	2
Highlands restaurant	2	2	Spree restaurant	2	3
F&K restaurant	2	4	Mc fry's Take-away	2	2
Growers Restaurant cafe	1	3	Ken chic inn	2	3
Surf &bytes Restaurant	2	3	G& R restaurant	2	3
Anniversary Restaurant	2	3	**Exotic restaurants**	**managers**	**customers**
Calypso Restaurant	2	2	Steers	1	2
steak & ale Restaurant	2	3	Trattoria Restaurante	2	3
Tanager Restaurant	2	3	Java coffee House	2	2
The mug	1	2	Habesha restaurant	2	2
Nick's Grill	2	3	Dorman's coffee house,	1	2
Pasara restaurant	2	2	Wimpy fast food	1	2
Quality restaurant	2	3	Debonair, fast food	1	2

Simple random sampling was adopted so that every restaurant and customers in each restaurant stood equal chance of being selected. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The advantage of using questionnaires was because it allowed wide coverage, it was easy to administer and took less time. The interview schedule was mostly used on managers.

1.4 RESULTS

Table 2.0: Types of Restaurants Sampled

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Indigenous	89	92.7	92.7	92.7
	Exotic	7	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	96	100.0	100.0	

92.7% of the restaurants were indigenous and 7.3%exotic thus the study area has a large number of indigenous thus the perception created is the exotic brands have less competition and due to their scarcity and specialization on their ethnic services ,they enjoy the advantage of highly pricing their goods. Unlike the indigenous who have saturated the market with similar target market.

type of customer

- employed near by
- student near by
- visitor in town

21.87%
16.67%
61.46%
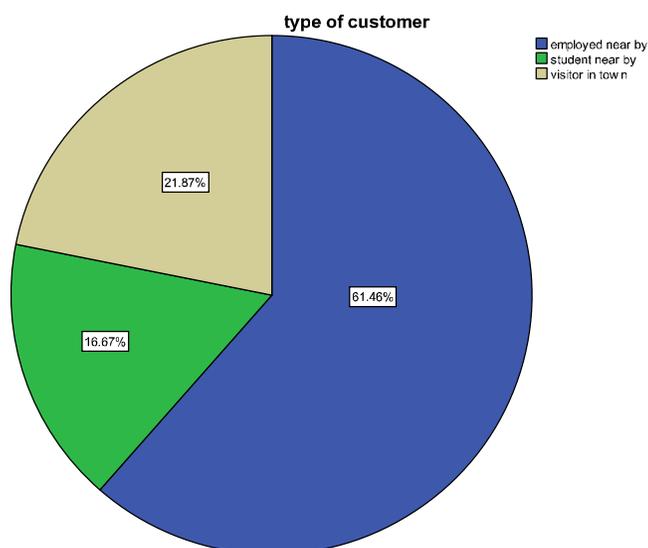
Figure 3.0 The Nature of Respondents

The above pie chart summarises that the most frequenting customers were those employed nearby so this restaurants market is for the business clientele thus the brand image created is that the restaurants suit business clients than any other guest. Students rarely use the facilities and this shows that the restaurants need to work on the image they broadcast so to attract more of the student genre and other visitors. This can be done by giving them offers, complementary and subsidized prices to get them acquainted to the products offered in the restaurants.
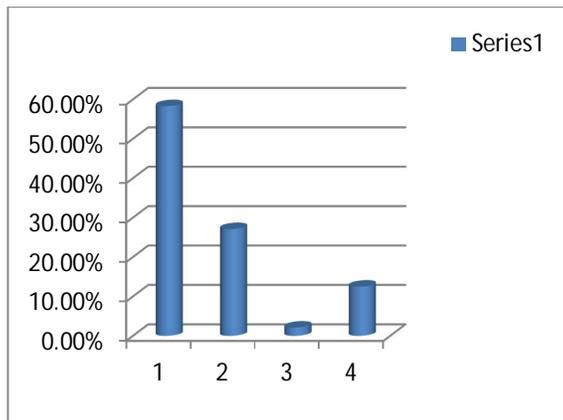
Figure 4.0 First time knowledge of the restaurant to the customer.

Figure 4.0 shows that 58.3% (labelled as 1)of the customers got to know about the restaurant they were in via local media advertisement which is a way of promoting a brand and targets changing or implicating a particular image on the customer mind so as to sell a product. 27.1% (labelled as 2) knew about the restaurant through friends, which is a brand promotion technique known as word of mouth, where the customer having encountered a good service experience, tells others and the restaurant in turn makes sales. 12.5% (labelled 4) got to know of the restaurant through other means, for example, the restaurant being near their office, through the name and by chance, that is, while passing by.
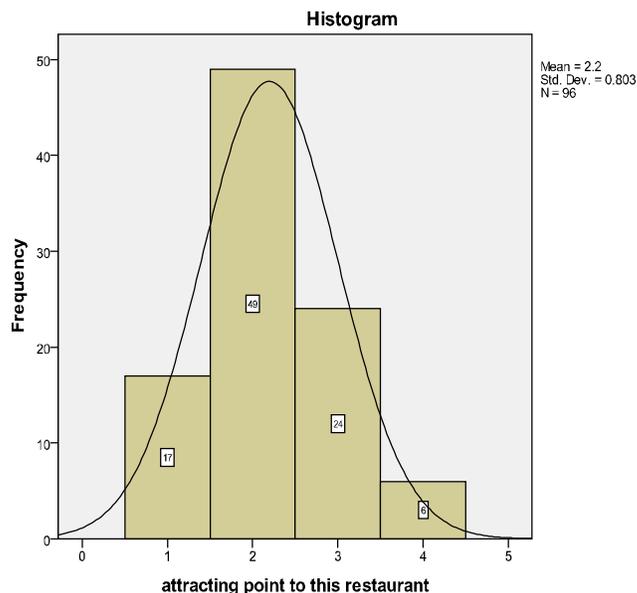
Figure 5.0 The Main Attracting Point of the Restaurant

Customers were also asked what attracted them to the restaurants the first time they chose to dine in it. Apparently, 49% of the customers were first attracted to the restaurants, by the service quality (labelled as 2), meaning, if the Nairobi clientele was not daring they would not take the risk and so, the restaurants would be having no customers, because the name of the restaurant should be an eye candy. Only 17% (labelled 1) of the customers were attracted to the restaurant of choice by the brand name concluding that the restaurants have not been branded in a way the name sells the product.
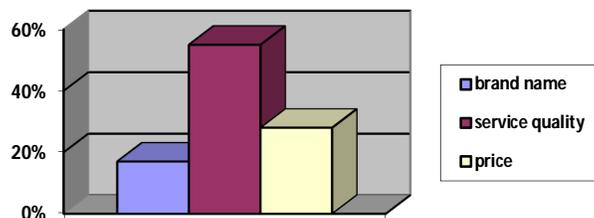

Figure 6.0 Factors Influencing Customers Purchase Decision

According to the factors that were used to measure the influence of purchase decisions, 55% which was the highest number of customers were after service quality meaning that the perception that customers had on quality and the restaurant will have a high seat turnover. 28% of customer indicated that their purchase decision was influenced by the price of the commodity. So this means that a product should be relatively priced according to the brand name and intended image of the restaurant to the customer because most customers' rate quality of a product or class of restaurant depending on the price of commodity. 17% of customers appreciated the relevant brand names, which generally mean the Nairobi clientele knew what they wanted and a name would not be all they would look for but the contents of the service provided.
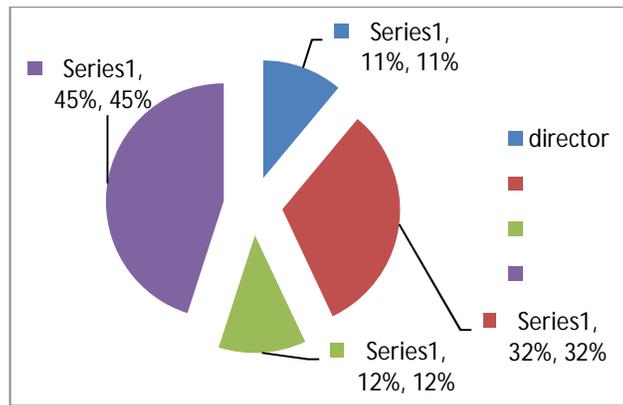
Figure 7.0 Responsibility of Maintaining the Restaurants' Image

 45% of the managers pointed out that the responsibility was left to the staff since the staff interact with customers on a one to one encounter and are thus through their interpersonal skills expected to create a good perspective of the restaurants. Image should be maintained by experts through promotional activities and not left to the staff only. 32% of the respondents said that it image was maintained by marketers while 12% done by consultants and 11% by directors. This shows that the restaurants should change their tactics in the way they maintain their image by involving every stakeholder.
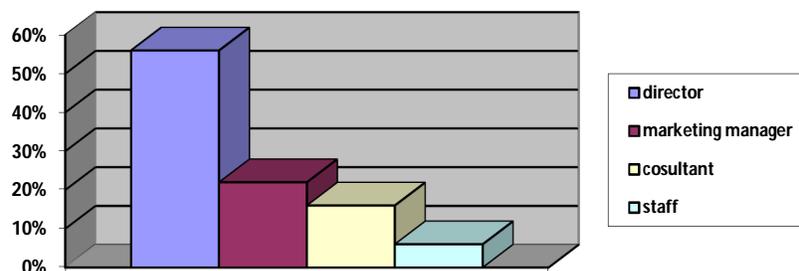
Figure 8.0 Responsibility of Coming up with the Restaurant Name

These shows that 56%of the restaurants directors were responsible for branding the restaurants and as the answer that followed they had no academic qualification even some indicated that the director just needed to have the idea of a name. Branding should also be done by a marketer who has the market knowledge and after research or by a consultant who is aware of the legal requirements and limitations. Only 22% of the restaurants using the marketing managers and 16% using the consultants are doing branding the right way.

CONCLUSION

A brand name is a highly loaded variable in the factor of branding, and is found to be the most important element affecting a restaurant's performance. From the findings, a restaurant should aim most of its advertising efforts at enhancing customer awareness so that customers at least consider that brand in the suggested set of alternatives. The results of this study implied that restaurants should strongly consider quality brand names that meet the discussed characteristics when attempting to establish good brand image

from the customers' viewpoint. Heavy and successive promotional activities through the mass media seem to vastly prevail in restaurant markets, although recent changes in the communication environment has led to more creative ways to approach customers. Besides, television commercials or magazine advertising, support activities and charity involvement in social, cultural, sports, or other kinds of public events can improve a firm's brand awareness.

Another important conclusion that may be drawn from this study lies in the fact that the perceived quality of a specific restaurant brand and products is found to significantly affect its performance. It goes without saying that restaurants should consistently provide quality products and services, such as serving food in promised time, serving ordered food accurately, and staff should be knowledgeable about menus, convenient operating hours, and ensure appearance. Not only is this good business, but it strengthens the brand. Standardization efforts are already well-known approaches for enhancing the perceived quality. What is so often forgotten is that it is the trained service personnel who enhances the core competencies in most restaurants. This study showed that service personnel should be involved in the restaurants' efforts to seek a competitive advantage at the same time as the restaurant emphasizes standardization and speed.

Restaurant managers should do more work on differentiating their image, specifically through symbols and branding, as many of them adopted specific symbols and used these on their stationery. Advertising and promotional activities should also carry these symbols effectively to provide a differentiated and familiar image to a restaurant. Brand image appeared to have the second strongest effect on the performance of restaurants. The customer's beliefs affecting image may vary from the actual attributes because of the customer's individual experiences and the effects of selective perception, selective distortion, and selective retention, in light of this potentially problematic discrepancy between image and actuality. Restaurant operators should keep in mind that the management of image components is a long-term measure for achieving high revenue goals. Therefore, restaurant marketers must be equipped with a detailed knowledge of the important attributes of brand image, such as a frequented dining area, appropriate sound level, prompt service, differentiated image, cleanliness, cheerful and enchanting, long history, and familiarity. In the real implementation, of course, this would require extensive research into the nature of the brand and its competitive positioning.

Another intriguing point here regards the positioning related to brand image. The image restaurants create in the consumer's mind and how that restaurant is positioned, are of more importance to its ultimate success. Brand managers usually position their brands so that they are perceived by the consumers to occupy a forte in the marketplace occupied by no other brands. Thus, for marketers, the value of a successful brand lies in its potential to reduce substitutability. That result implies that brand awareness alone may not be enough to achieve high sales volume and perceived quality and that brand image should be carefully managed in cycle to promote good operational performance.

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