

PREDICTORS OF CONSUMERS CHOICE OF NOODLE BRANDS IN ENUGU STATE

Ikpo, K.P¹; Emeter, P.O¹, Okoro, D.P¹, Muojekpe, J. C², & Onah, J.I³

1. Department of Marketing, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu Campus Enugu State.
2. Department of Business Administration, University of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences , Umuagwo, Imo State
3. Department of Marketing, Institute of Management and Technology Enugu, Enugu State

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the predictors of consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State. The specific objectives of the study were to determine the effect of prices, brand image, brand name, brand availability, and advertising on consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State. To achieve these objectives, research questions and hypotheses were raised. A descriptive survey research was conducted and survey research design was adopted. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 325 consumers from the population of consumers of noodle brands in Enugu State. A well-structured self-administered questionnaire was used for collection of data from the respondents. Correlation statistical tool was used for data analysis supported by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS. 22.0). The following findings were observed: that there was a significant effect of the predicting variables under study including prices, brand image, brand name, brand availability, and advertising on consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State. It was concluded among others that the study has achieved its objective of establishing the extent to which these predicting factors affect consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State. Hence, the study recommended that brand managers, and top management of noodle producing and marketing organizations should key into the predicting factors to ensure improvement in consumers' choice of their noodle brands in Enugu State.

Key Words: Price of brands, Brand Image, Brand Name, Brand Availability and Advertising

Introduction

The Nigerian business scene has witnessed a paradigm shift of perceived increase in the number of instant noodle brands that crop up in different markets in every town and city within the past two decades. As at 2007, the market size for instant noodles in Nigeria was about 250 million cartons. However; after a decade, the market size is estimated at about 1.82 billion serving and worth about \$1 billion with about 14 million Nigerian households consuming the food products and the country ranked as the 12th largest consumer of noodles in the whole world (World Instant Noodles Association, 2019; Egbekwe & Anyasor, 2020).

This suggests that the instant food products of the consumer goods industry are gaining acceptance among customers (Anudu, 2019). Trends such as the increasing population of Nigerians as well as the consequent rising costs of living amongst others lend credence to the perceived phenomenal increase in the number of instant food products in the country (Egbeh & Anyasor, 2020). Also, family centered issues such as womenfolk taking white collar jobs, non-availability of domestic servants, emergence of nuclear families, media exposure of the instant noodle brands, busy schedules of family members, ease of preparation amongst others have contributed to the increase in the availability and consumption of instant noodle brands in Nigeria (Tan, Hanif, Amalina, & Laily, 2016).

This paradigm shift has led to heightened competition among instant food manufacturers and marketers in the country (Anudu, 2019). This has resulted in major implications for the customer such as increased choice, greater demand for value for money and augmented levels of service. Furthermore, various consumer-centered parameters such as changes in their lifestyles, the statistical distribution of the population of the country where up to 50% of the estimated population of Nigeria of 200 million people are below 30 years and who are obvious patrons of the instant food products, changing family roles and statuses as well as rural urban migration (Egbeh&Anyasor, 2020) are impacting heavily on the marketing of Instant Food products in Nigeria.

Putting all these into proper perspectives, it has become inevitable for producers of instant noodles to seek competitive advantage in order to survive and remain in business. One approach to gaining a competitive edge is to understand how to attract and retain customers. Several authors have argued that the ability to attract and retain customers remain the tenet of every successful business (e.g. Baumann, Elliott, & Burton, 2012; Jones & Taylor, 2017). However, customer retention has remained a paradox as it cannot be achieved without first attracting the customer to patronize the business, (Jones & Taylor, 2017; Soderlund, 2016). According to Uncles, Shea and Weaver (2013), at a most general level, customer retention is devotion, commitment or addiction that consumers may exhibit to brands, services, stores, firms, organizations, product categories and activities.

Therefore, in the highly competitive environment facing the instant noodle brands, it becomes imperative that organizations that need to gain competitive advantage through customer attraction and retention should first understand the determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands. In order to be successful in business, firms must understand how customers perceive their product attributes and the determinants of the customers' choice (Oneni, 2017). Those organizations with a clear vision of the factors that predict consumers' choice of their instant noodles can develop strategies to attract and retain the customers leading to their survival and growth. Understanding the factors that predict consumers' choice of instant noodles in order to better determine their future intentions is vital to the business success of noodles producers (Anudu, 2019).

Tan, Hanif, Amalina, and Laily (2016) stated that due to the diversity, market complexity and the homogeneous nature of the noodle brands, factors such as product attributes (quality, taste, crispiness, brand image), convenience, subjective norms, advertising, sales promotion amongst others are crucial elements in creating competitive advantage that will lead to sustenance and maintenance of performance and growth. Furthermore, failure to pay attention to these factors in selection intention could reduce the opportunity of repeat patronage by the customer. Hence, relying on studies on extant literature; (Tan et al, 2016; Anudu, 2019; Oneni, 2017) factors such as product attributes, product availability, promotion, convenience, , social class etc need to be investigated to help organizations involved in noodles production and marketing to better understand their customers' selection behavior.

Statement of the Problem

Evidences within the extant literature show that a lot of studies have been carried out on determinants of customers' choice of noodle brands from different stand points and perspectives (Inoni, 2017; Egbeh & Anyasor, 2020) and each study profiling different factors influencing consumers' choice of noodle brands (Ahmad, Ghazali & Othman, 2013). However, majority of these studies were conducted in the developed nations of the western world (Mathew & Oliver, 2014). There are very few context specific empirical investigations on the determinants of customers' choice of noodle brands. Unfortunately, very little is understood about the Nigerian consumers and the determinants of their choice of noodle brands especially as it relates to the study area. Hence, there is need for a Nigerian context specific study on the determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands.

Yet due to environmental differences, dynamics and shifts, these studies on consumer choice criteria conducted in the Western or Asian perspectives appear inadequate in explaining the determinants of choice of noodle brands by consumers in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a need for a research that focused on Nigerian consumers and the attributes that determine their choice of noodle brands.

Also, findings of many studies on determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands show different results among researchers (such as Inoni, 2017; Tan et al 2016, Egbeh & Anyasor, 2020 and Anudu, 2019). Factors ranging from quality, taste, crispiness, brand name, and brand image as well as convenience, availability, availability, social class, promotion, subjective norms have been found as determinants of consumers' choice of instant noodle brands in areas with different cultural, environmental, demographic and socioeconomic specifics. The results seem confusing, contradictory and far from conclusive, (Nazi, 2010). Thus, engendering and informing different growth policy implications. Supporting this view, Tan, et al (2016) noted that the pattern of choice of instant noodle brands may vary due to the differences in culture, climate, socioeconomic status, and many more. In fact, the habit of consuming instant noodles among the inhabitants of a country may change due to

several factors. However, because of these differences in the findings of scholars, it is not yet clear which factors determine consumers' choice of noodle brands in the area of this study. Therefore, this study is poised at contributing to the debate towards narrowing the points of conflict and improving the understanding in respect to the determinants of consumers' choice of instant noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationship between brand name and consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.
2. Examine the relationship between brand availability and consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.
3. Determine the relationship between brand image and consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.
4. Examine the relationship between packaging and consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.
5. Determine the relationship between advertising and consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State Nigeria.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Concept of Consumer Choice

Brand choice or preference is one of the unique features for the customer before purchasing any product (Kwok, Uncles & Huang, 2006). If the overall functional value of a brand is excellent, then it could satisfy a customer's needs. However, if it fails to maintain quality and sustainably, then customers will not want to continue with the same brand for a long time (Aaker, 1996; Pitta & Katsanis, 1995). Consumer brand choice is an essential element for competitive business. Due to this, customers mainly switch to another business organization which creates competition (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003). When the mindset for brand choice is set up by customers, it reduces the complexity of purchase decisions (Gensch, 1987).

At the very beginning customers are exposed to many other brands and follow the complex decision-making process (Cătălin & Andreea, 2014). Later on, customers delete some of the brands from their memory and leave only the favourite one for the future purchase (Roberts & Lattin, 1991). Similarly, consumer choice is an integral part of brand loyalty that helps to increase the sales margin (Rundle and

Mackay, 2001). The business organization always takes the challenges to make the brand favourite for the customer and exposes a range of products (Mathur, Moschis & Lee, 2003). On the other hand, the customer looks for the brand based on the product attributes of interest. Understanding consumer brand choice is an essential factor that helps to identify the impact on the appropriate outcome (Isik & Yasar, 2015). Thus, consumer brand choice shows the level of interest by the consumers that involves high cost and makes a massive impact on consumer life (Rijnsoever, Farlia & Dijst, 2009). Product/brand image is one of the significant components in consumer choice (Lema & Wodaje, 2018).

Considering the income level of the consumer and product image, they intend to purchase the product from other competitors in the market (Kumar & Pinakapani, 2019). Consequently, consumer choice for a specific product might change due to the changes in prices. In terms of substitute products, when the cost of the product alters, e.g. when the price rises exceptionally, customer switches to another (Apéria & Back, 2004). A consumer failing to discover the first preferred brand in point of sale will logically buy the second chosen one (Kwok, Uncles & Huang, 2006).

Determinants of Consumers' Choice of Noodle Brands

A number of factors are known to affect consumer purchase behaviour towards a product or service; and they include cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Although these factors are ordinarily outside the control of the marketers, manufacturers explore several marketing strategies to influence consumers' response to their products offerings. Given the intense competition in the instant noodles market in Nigeria, producers are employing different marketing strategies such as product quality, packaging, pricing, distribution and promotion as well as subjective norms, convenience, brand name, brand image, and brand availability to sustain consumer trust, continued patronage and loyalty (Inoni, 2017).

Relying on insights from similar studies on extant literature (Inoni, 2017; Tan and Romano, 2016, Egbeh and Anyasor, 2020) this study seeks to examine the determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria using product attributes, promotion, price, social class, convenience, brand name, brand image, and brand availability as major factors understudy.

Price of the brand

Price and brand value are directly correlated, and a brand should justify the expense to receive priority (Bosona and Gebresenbet, 2018). According to Diallo et al. (2013), price plays the most substantial role in choice criteria for customers, especially for those who obtain inaccurate knowledge about the brand. Through various researches, it was identified that consumers try to acquire comprehensive knowledge about prices of multiple products (Estelami, 1998; Evanschitzky et al., 2004; Jensen and Grunert, 2014).

In food retailing, consumers react quite sensitively to price changes (Estelami and Lehmann, 2001; Evanschitzky, Kenning & Vogel, 2004; Kenning, Hartleb & Schnieder, 2011). Price remains the prime factor for product and brand choice in the food industry (Estelami & Lehmann, 2001).

Conspicuously, when the difference in the position of distinctive brands is slight, the attribute of the price is consequently of superior importance for both sellers and customers. As declared by Diallo (2012), customers' brand price images are affected by the costs of private labels brands. Khan and Rohi (2013) opine that prices represent the variable that generates a significant impact on brand preference and buying behaviour on the purchase process. They further explain that organizations set up the price based on the economic situation, target customer, competitors, location, and culture of the country. Hence it is hypothesized that:

Ho₁: Price of the brand has a significant relationship with consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Brand Image

Brand image represents dominant features regarding marketing activities, branding, and market offering with wide-ranging explanations and approaches to its conceptualization (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Martinez and Pina, 2003). A universal outlook is that brand image reflects customers' perceptions of a brand as revealed by the brand associations held in the customers' mind (Keller, 1993). However, Apéria and Back (2004) argued that these connections could initiate from customer's direct experience or information accessed on a market offering or due to the force of pre-existing involvements with an organization. Brand image is, therefore, the mental portrait or sensitivity that contains symbolic denotations relating to the particular aspects of a product or service (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Padgett and Allen, 1997). Low and Lamb (2000) think that brand image embodies the consistent or emotional insights consumers connect to specific brands. It is a set of trusts and built-in that customers have about a particular brand, based upon some inherent and extrinsic attributes of a market contribution accompanying the perceived quality and customer satisfaction (Aaker, 1994; Cid and Rodríguez, 2001).

A high brand image helps an organization to introduce modern brands as well as uplift the profit margin of current brands (Diallo, Chandon, Cliquet & Philippe, 2013; Martenson, 2007). Brand image helps to broaden awareness and influence the consumer to purchase a product from the brand (Norazah, 2013a). Consumer intends to purchase products with whom they are familiar with (Norazah, 2013b). He also said that brand image increase through the endorsement of celebrities or distinguished historical figures. However, integrated marketing communications and the word-of-mouth strategy exert a persuasive

influence on the brand image (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003; Šerić and Gil-Saura, 2012). Hence it is hypothesized that:

Ho₂: Brand image has a significant relationship with consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Brand Name

Brand name is one of the elements of a brand that constitute the foundation on which brand perception or preference is built (Isik and Yasar, 2015). The brand name can promote intrinsic strength to a brand (Kohli and Labahn, 1997; Klink, 2001). Brand names need to be actively managed to control customers' viewpoints. From a traditional branding perspective, the marketing team utilizes the brand name as an instrument to dispose of their strategies and thoughts by forming a symbol to affect consumers' perceptions of products or corporations' attributes (Yorkston and Menon, 2004). Lerman and Garbarino (2002) explain that a brand name works as a psychological possession of consumers. They more significantly added that brand name plays the role of an anchor for a product's identity.

The brand name is a significant, core symbol of the brand, origin of awareness, and interaction effort (Aaker, 1991). Kohli and Leuthesser (2001) equally find that brand names are viewed as long-term commitments because they cannot be transformed without a significant risk of losing all fairness. To such a degree, the brand name represents a primarily integral element because it frequently reflects the overarching theme or key associations of a product in a very compact and economical style. Brand names can be extremely efficient shorthand modes of communication. If we compare marketing communications and brand names, a brand name endures a more effective and long-lasting existence in the customer's mind. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Ho₃: Brand name has a significant relationship with consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Brand Availability

Brand availability plays a vital role in establishing a position in consumers' minds (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). This is because, if the product is not visible and available, consumers will forget the product as well as its features and most likely switch to the product substitutes. Put differently, if a product is available at the retail spaces at the right time with a significant amount of in-store merchandising support, which might better define the push-based brand awareness, it helps in influencing consumer choice of such product. In terms of instant food business, the availability of a brand retains a compelling influence on consumers' purchase decisions than others (Khan, Salman, Nadeen & Rizwan, 2016). A

brand's availability could be referred to as psychological availability, which creates the likelihood that a buyer will observe, distinguish, and imagine a brand in buying circumstances (Emari, Jafari & Mogaddam, 2012). The researchers further explained that it depends on the quality and quantity of remembrance configurations related to the brand.

Based on the brand availability, a consumer can take the experience of the products, which is also helpful for the company to achieve its goals (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Brand availability increased customer participation in product campaigns (Blanchard & Markus, 2004). Numerous activities of a company ensure the availability of the brand in the minds of the consumers. Marketing communication methods such as advertisement, sales promotion techniques, word-of-mouth referrals, viral marketing, social media marketing, etc ensure that brand availability is reiterated in the minds of customers thereby influencing choice and purchase decisions. Each of them is used to make the brand available for the customer and develop a strong market identity. According to Amaldoss (2005), brand availability helps in shaping consumer perception toward a brand and their buying intention. Hence it is hypothesized that:

H0₄: Brand availability has a significant relationship with consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Advertising

Advertising is an element of marketing communication. Marketing communication otherwise known as promotion has a great influence on consumer purchase decisions, and it has direct effects on consumer brand preferences (Cătălin & Andreea, 2014). Outside Advertising marketing communication or promotion maintains other four crucial elements which include sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing.

Advertising is a planned phenomenon that has become an essential element of the corporate world and hence companies allot a considerable amount of fund as their advertising budget. Experts in the field make use of their knowledge of advertising techniques to promote likeness on the part of the consumers and to change their behavior towards a product at any time (Osuagwu, 2014).

Advertising is a powerful marketing communication tool used by companies to fulfill the promotional task. In essence, all about advertising is a sponsor sending a message called advertisement through one or more mass media (radio, television, Newspapers, Magazines) etc to reach large number of potential users of a product.” By this “Advertising is a vital marketing tool that helps to sell goods, services, images, ideas, and thoughts, through information and persuasion. Therefore, effective product packaging and labeling provide an opening to advertising which aims to create awareness about the product

through information and this persuades the consumer at the point of purchase (Atkin, Garcia & Lockshin, 2006; Wigley & Chiang, 2009). Hence it is hypothesized that:

H0₅: Advertising has a significant relationship with consumers' choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Theoretical Review

Folarin (2005) opines that theories help researchers to understand and manage reality and explain phenomena under investigation. The study is anchored on the theory of reasoned action and is extended by other factors that apply in the consumer brand choice context.

Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The theory of reasoned action was derived from a previous research that started out as the theory of attitude, which led to the study of attitude and behaviour. The theory was "born largely out of frustration with traditional attitude-behaviour research, much of which found weak correlations between attitude measures and performance of volitional behaviours" (Hale, Householder & Greene, 2002)

The theory of reasoned action has received considerable and, for the most part, justifiable attention within the field of consumer behaviour. The model does not only appear to predict consumer intentions and behaviour quite well, it also provides a relatively simple basis for identifying where and how to target consumers' behavioural change attempts" (Sheppard, Hartwick & Warshaw, 1988). Ibrahim and Vignali (2005) noted that consumer researchers have applied the theory of reasoned action to a wide variety of behaviours over the years, including consumer behaviour towards automobiles, banking services, computer software, coupons, detergents, food choice, fast food restaurant choice and hotel choice. The TRA model has however proved its efficacy by exuding a strong predictive utility, even when utilized to investigate situations and activities that do not fall within the boundary conditions originally specified for the model". Ibrahim and Vignali(2005) noted that the extent to which the theory succeeds in predicting behavioural intention is usually evaluated by means of linear multiple regression analysis.

This study is anchored on the theory of reasoned action because the theory is widely viewed as one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in consumer behavior (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Friman et al. 2002). The theory of reasoned action is a model for the prediction of behavioral intention, spanning predictions of attitude and predictions of behaviour. According to the theory, behaviour is determined by the behavioural intention to emit the behaviour.

Conceptualized Framework of the Determinants of Consumers' Choice of Noodle Brands in Enugu State Nigeria

A conceptual framework is a visual or written description that explains the key factors, concepts or variables under study and the hypothetical relationships among them (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The framework is based on adoption of a combination of results/variables from many different studies on the subject of consumer brand choice. Relying on insights from studies reviewed on extant literature; (Inoni, 2017; Egbeh & Anyasor, 2020; Anudu, 2019, Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003; Šerić and Gil-Saura, 2012, Kohli and Labahn, 1997; Klink, 2001, Estelami and Lehmann, 2001; Evanschitzky, Kenning & Vogel, 2004; Kenning, Hartleb & Schnieder, 2011; (Dhivya & Chadrakumar, 2012)) the researcher presents below a proposed conceptualized framework of the factors determining consumers' choice of Noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. In this study and as shown in the schema below, the predicting factors are the independent variable with the following factors under study: price of brand, brand image, brand name, brand availability, and advertising while the dependent variable is consumers' choice of noodle brands.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

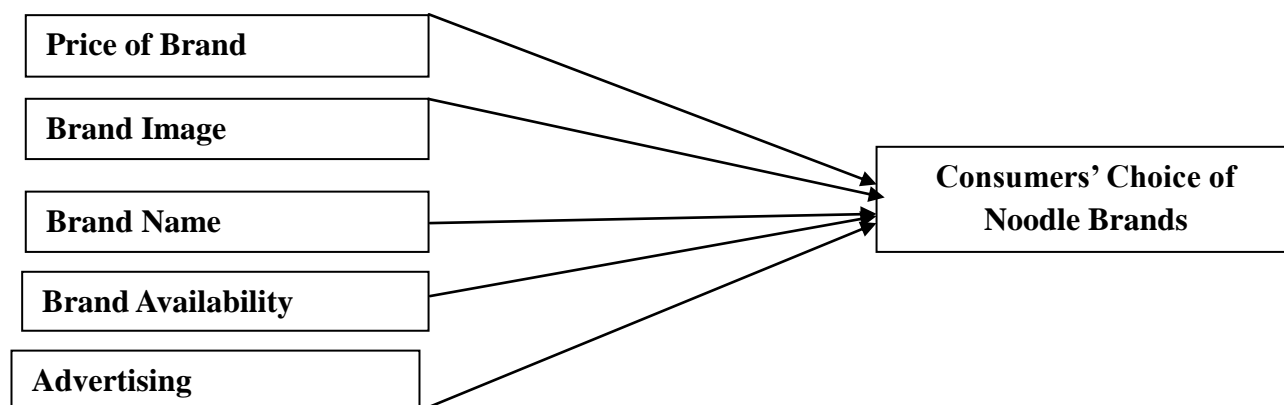


Fig 2.1: Proposed Conceptual Model

Empirical Review

Research has shown that myriads of studies have been conducted by marketing experts who sought to establish the determinants of consumer choice of instant foods like noodle brands. A review of such studies is carried out below.

Umeanyika, Azuka, Marcus and Anetoh, (2021) investigated the determinants of consumer patronage of food vendors in Nigeria with reference to South Eastern part of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to investigate the influence of food familiarity, price and vendor's physical environment on consumer patronage of food vendors. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population size was unknown while the sample size was 384. Primary source of data was used while the

instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the research instrument were checked and established. The study used a convenient sampling technique in reaching the respondents. Multiple regression statistical technique was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 5% level of significance. The finding showed that menu familiarity and price had positive significant influences on consumer patronage. The finding also showed that vendor's physical environment had no significant influence on consumer patronage. The findings of the study have many implications to the stakeholders, policy makers, marketers, consumers, potential vendors and future researchers. The study recommended that street food vendors should continue to provide familiar menu options in order to boost consumers' patronage. It was also recommended that food vendors should continue to provide menu at affordable price in order to increase consumer patronage. The study also recommended that the physical environment of the vendor's sales outlets should be more clean, appealing, neat and modern as these will help to increase consumer patronage of food vendors in southeastern part of Nigeria.

Liew, Mat Zain, Hashim , Abu Bakar, Mahshar and Rosli (2021) carried out a study to explore the key factors affecting consumer buying behaviour of instant food products: a case study of Kota Bharu, Malaysia. With modernization and lifestyle changes, instant food emerges as a fast-growing food product in the food industry worldwide, and Malaysia makes no exception. Most people like to eat food that can be prepared quickly, thereby saving time and energy. Instant food satisfies the convenience seekers' demand since it is a convenient food that requires minimal preparation before consumption. To dominate the competitive handicap in the marketplace, marketers must have a good grasp on consumer behaviour and preferences that determine buying decisions. However, information on what constitutes buying behaviour of consumers from Kota Bharu, Kelantan towards instant food products is relatively limited. In this context, a survey study is presented to explore the key factors affecting consumer buying behaviour of instant food products in Kota Bharu. The questionnaire, validated by the Cronbach's Alpha Test had been distributed to 384 Kota Bharu respondents who were sampled by convenience sampling. Demographic characteristics of respondents were summarized by the descriptive analysis. Exploratory factor analysis unveiled eight underlying factors prompting consumers to buy instant food products which include, brand name, brand image, brand availability, price of brand, quality, crispness, packaging, and advertising. These eight factors accounted for around three-fifths of the total variance explained. It was found that the factor "marketing and branding attributes" had the most decisive influence on consumers.

Egbeh and Anyasor, (2020) carried out a study to ascertain the underlying predictors of buyers' preference for instant noodles brands in Owerri urban, Imo State, Nigeria. Data collection was with a close-ended questionnaire. The sample size was 60 respondents. Data analysis was with tables and

percentages. The major finding of the study was that brands within the choice set of buyers of instant noodles in Owerri urban was a function of (in descending order) quality, taste, nutritive contents, price and brand image which are largely product features. Other findings arising from the study are that patronizers of noodles brands in the study location lay emphasis on product appearance, texture, flavour and aroma as well as vitamin contents. High brand exposure and value for money were also emphasized. The study established that it was these factors and invariably the 20 year head start of “Indomie brand” in Nigeria that gave the brand 80% market share in Owerri urban. Companies wishing to achieve significant market penetration in the study location are therefore advised to lay emphasis on these variables in product development and promotion. Particular emphasis should however be laid on the critical noodles choice determinants of quality and taste. This is because as marketing theory and practice postulates, the absence of the first and/or second predictor variable on the demand for a product will result in non-patronage.

Imran and Tahreen (2020) conducted a study to establish the factors influencing brand preferences for instant foods- A comparative study between Sweden and Bangladesh. This study aims to investigate the factors that influence consumers' brand preferences for instant foods focusing on the graduate-level students of Sweden and Bangladesh. The research applied a qualitative approach. Semi-structured online interviews were conducted with ten graduate-level students from Sweden and Bangladesh. The collected primary data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis by comparing with the literature reviewed within distinct themes. The main findings of the study includes that culture, and religious values have a significant influence on Bangladeshi consumers compared to consumers in Sweden; and quality plays a predominant role in determining instant food brands in both countries as it can have a direct effect on the health of consumers. It was also found that eye-catchy packaging creates fascination among consumers' about a brand in both countries and price is considered as a critical factor due to limited purchasing power of Bangladeshi consumers'; whereas in Sweden, consumers' are ready to compromise with the price if they could get a superior quality.

Akachukwu (2018) investigated the factors that affect consumers in their choice of instant noodles brands in Nigeria. Data for the study were collected using questionnaire. The population of the study consisted of consumers of instant noodles in Nigeria. 1,120 consumers were selected and sampled using convenience sampling technique. The data were analyzed using simple frequency tables, Chi-square and T-test. Findings from the study point out that price, sales promotion, advertisement, social class and nutritional information do not significantly affect consumers' in their choice of instant noodle brands. Rather, consumers are more concerned with and influenced by the product taste and flavor, distributional activities (availability), age and family choice. First mover concept also had a significant effect. The

findings from this research suggest that instant noodle producers and distributors can improve their businesses and market share by paying attention to these factors which affect consumers in taking a decision on the brand of instant noodle to buy. Noodle value chain is a very competitive one with new players joining the market regularly; the players should not concentrate on using price and discount to gain more market shares but should also keep their eyes on product characteristics such as taste, flavor and other sensory factors in addition to factors of distribution.

Methodology

The survey research design was used for this investigation. Consumers of noodle brands in Enugu State formed the population of the study. Three hundred and twenty five consumers of noodle brands (325) were chosen as the unit of analysis or sample size for the study using a purposive sampling procedure. Most of the study's data came from primary sources, and it was collected using a structured questionnaire with 25 items. Each of the variables had five (5) items. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing strongly disagree and 1 strongly agree, all of the items were appropriately evaluated. To avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding, a small-scale pretest was used to validate the research instrument. Selected respondents were interviewed about the formulations and wordings of the questionnaire, and then the researcher undertook a minor revision of the questionnaire. Also, expert opinions were sought from few research experts. Pearson correlation analysis was used to establish the discriminate validity of the constructs.

The test-retest approach was utilized to assess internal consistency for instrument reliability. This required distributing the same kind of questionnaire to the responders again. In this case, the same respondents received the identical questionnaire twice, separated by four weeks. By utilizing Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the items representing each construct, the reliability was determined. Since all co-efficient values were more than 0.6 and met the minimum threshold of 0.6 as advised by Malhotra (2004) in a Cronbach alpha test, scores were generated for all questions. The association between the predicting factors and consumer choice of noodle brands was ascertained using Pearson correlation analysis. The impact of predicting factors such as price of the brand, brand image, brand name, brand availability and advertising was also examined using multiple regression analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The respondents comprised consumers of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. The researcher also tested the hypotheses formulated in the introductory stage of the research, and presented and analyzed the findings from the data collected.

Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

The researcher produced three hundred and forty six (346) copies of questionnaire and distributed same to the respondents comprising consumers of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Questionnaire Distributed	Number	Percentage
Returned	325	94%
Not Returned	21	6%
Total Distributed	346	100%

Source: Field Survey 2025.

As shown in the table 1 above, a total of three hundred and forty six (346) questionnaires were produced and distributed to the selected sample of respondents comprising consumers of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. Out of the three hundred and forty six (346) questionnaires produced and distributed to the selected sample of respondents, three hundred and twenty five (325) which represents 94% of the total distribution were properly filled and returned to the researcher, while twenty one (21) which represents 6% of the total distribution were not returned. This showed that the survey was 94% successful which is significant enough to draw a conclusion and a valid generalization about the respondents captured.

Respondents' Demographic Data

Below is presentation of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Factor	Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender Distribution	Male	184	56.6
	Female	141	43.4
MaritalStatus	Married	165	50.8
	Single	160	49.2
Age Distribution	< 25yrs	99	30.5
	25 – 34yrs	82	25.3
	35 – 44yrs	58	17.8
	45 – 54yrs	56	17.2
	≥ 55yrs	30	9.2
Occupation of Respondents	Civil Service	104	32.0
	Private Sector	154	47.4
	Self-Employed	67	20.6
Educational Qualification	WAEC/GCE	36	11.0
	OND/NCE	98	30.2
	BSC/HND	105	32.3
	MSC/MBA	54	16.6
	PhD	32	9.9
Length of Consumption	< 5yrs	30	9.2

	6 – 10yrs	56	17.2
	11 – 15yrs	99	30.5
	16 – 20yrs	82	25.3
	≥ 21yrs	58	17.8

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Gender Distribution of Respondents: Out of the 325 respondents who responded favourably in the survey, 184(56.6%) of them said they were males while 141(43.4%) others were females. The implication of this is that, the survey was not gender biased.

Marital Status of Respondents: Out of the 325 respondents, 165(50.8%) were married while 161(49.2%) others were still singles. The implication of this demographic data is to reflect that the survey was not on the excess on one part than the other – i.e. it captured adequately from both sides.

Age Distribution of Respondents: In terms of the ages of the respondents, 99(30.5%) of them indicated that they were < 25years old, 82(25.3%) said they were 25 – 34years old, 58(17.8%) said they were 35 – 44years old, 56(17.2%) said they were 45 – 54years while 30(9.2%) others said they were ≥ 55years old. From this analysis, it would be noted that majority of the respondents were 25 – 34years old followed by those within the age bracket of 35 – 44years. It is obvious that this is the age group that contains the largest consumers of noodle brands in Enugu state.

Occupation of Respondents: Out of the 325 respondents, 104(32.0%) were civil servants, 154(47.4%) of them were working in the private sector while 67(20.6%) were self-employed. The implication of this demographic data is that majority of the people that consume noodles in Enugu State were working in the private sector which comprises of professionals and people working in non-governmental establishments in Enugu State.

Education Qualification of Respondents: Based on the survey, 36(11%) of the respondents indicated that they were WAEC/GCE holders, 98(30.2%) of them indicated that they were OND/NCE holders, 105(32.3%) of them indicated that they were BSc/HND holders, 54(16.6%) indicated that they were M.sc and MBA holders while 32(9.9%) others indicated that they were PhD holders.

Length of Consumption of Noodle Brands: In terms of the length of consumption of the noodle brands by respondents, 30(9.2%) of them indicated that they have been consuming the noodle brands for less than 5years, 56(17.2%) said they have been consuming the noodle brands for about 6 – 10years,

99(30.5%) said they have been consuming the noodle brands for about 11– 15years, 82(25.3%) said for about 16– 20years while 58(17.8%) others said for more than 20years. From this analysis, it would be noted that majority of the respondents have been consuming the noodle brands for a long time

Reliability and Validity Analyses

To test the reliability for the items of each concept the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was calculated for each variable as shown in the table below:

Table 3: Reliability Statistics of Determinant Factors and Customers' Choice

S/N	ITEM	NO OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
1	Price of the brand	5	.856
2	Brand Image	5	.905
3	Brand Name	5	.851
4	Brand Availability	5	.795
5	Advertising	5	.846

Source: SPSS 22.0. output result

As shown in table 3 above price of brand has five items with a coefficient of 0.856, brand image has five items with a coefficient of 0.905, brand name has five items with a coefficient of 0.851, brand availability has five items with a coefficient of 0.795, and advertising has five items with a coefficient of 0.846. All the variables have Cronbach Alpha Coefficients higher than the benchmark of 0.7 (Hair et al, 2019).

Analysis and Test of Research Hypotheses

Correlation Analysis of the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable

Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to establish the effect of each of the independent variables (hotel location, service quality, guest security, prices of hotel services and general hygiene) on the dependent variable (consumer choice of noodle brands). The results are shown below:

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Price of brand has no significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

H₁: Price of brand has a significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Below is a summary of the statistical analyses of the effect of price of brand on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to establish the effect of price of brand on consumer choice of noodle brands in Nigeria.

Table 4: Correlation result on the effect of price of brand on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

	Price of Brand	Consumer Choice of noodle brands
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.840**
Price of brand (Sig 2 tailed)	.	.000
N	325	325
Pearson Correlation	.840**	1.000
Consumer Choice of noodle brands (Sig 2 tailed)	.000	.
N	325	325

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS 20.0)

Table 4 above is a Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation result of the effect of price of brand on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State showing the correlations coefficient, significant value and the number of cases as facilitated by SPSS 20.0. There was a correlation between price of brand and consumer choice of noodle brands [$r = 0.840$, $N = 325$, $p = 0.000$]. The correlation coefficient shows a strong relationship (0.840) with a significant value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This implies that there is a strong, positive and significant effect of price of brand on consumer choice of noodle brands.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Brand Image has no significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

H₂: Brand Image has a significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Below is a summary of the statistical analyses of the effect of brand image on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to establish the effect of brand image on consumer choice of noodle brands in Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation result on the effect of brand image on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

	Brand Image	Consumer Choice of noodle brands
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.720**
Brand Image (Sig 2 tailed)	.	.000
N	325	325
Pearson Correlation	.720**	1.000
Consumer Choice of noodle brands (Sig 2 tailed)	.000	.
N	325	325

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS 20.0)

Table 5 above is a Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation result of the effect of brand image on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria showing the correlations coefficient, significant value, and the number of cases as facilitated by SPSS 20.0. There was a correlation between brand image and consumer choice of noodle brands [$r = 0.720$, $N = 325$, $p = 0.000$]. The correlation coefficient shows a strong relationship (0.720) with a significant critical value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This implies that there is a strong and significantly positive effect of brand image on consumer choice of noodle brands.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Brand name has no significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

H₃: Brand name has a significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Below is a summary of the statistical analyses of the effect of brand name on consumer choice of noodle brands. Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to establish the effect of brand name on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Correlation result on the effect of brand name on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

	Brand Name	Consumer Choice of noodle brands
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.688**
Brand Name (Sig 2 tailed)	.	.000
N	325	325
Pearson Correlation	.688**	1.000
Consumer Choice of noodle brands (Sig 2 tailed)	.000	.
N	325	325

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS 20.0)

Table 6 above is a Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation result of the effect of brand name on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria showing the correlations coefficient, significant value and the number of cases as facilitated by SPSS 20.0. There was a correlation between brand name and consumer choice of noodle brands [$r = 0.688$, $N = 325$, $p = 0.000$]. The correlation coefficient shows a strong relationship (0.688) with a significant value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This implies that there is a strong and significantly positive effect of brand name on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: Brand Availability has no significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

H₄: Brand Availability has a significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Below is a summary of the statistical analyses of the effect of brand availability on consumer choice of noodle brands. Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to establish the effect of brand availability on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 7: Correlation result on the effect of brand availability on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

	Brand Availability	Consumer Choice of noodle brands
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.640**
Brand Availability (Sig 2 tailed)	.	.000
N	325	325
Pearson Correlation	.640**	1.000
Consumer Choice of noodle brands (Sig 2 tailed)	.000	.
N	325	325

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS 20.0)

Table 7 above is a Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation result of the effect of brand availability on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria showing the correlations coefficient, significant value and the number of cases as facilitated by SPSS 20.0. There was a correlation between brand availability and consumer choice of noodle brands [$r = 0.640$, $N = 325$, $p = 0.000$]. The correlation coefficient shows a strong relationship (0.640) with a significant critical value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This implies that there is a strong and significantly positive effect of brand availability on consumer choice of noodle brands.

Hypothesis Five

H_{05} : Advertising has no significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

H_5 : Advertising has a significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State.

Below is a summary of the statistical analyses of the effect of advertising on consumer choice of noodle brands. Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to establish the effect of advertising on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 8: Correlation result on the effect of advertising on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

	Advertising	Consumer Choice of noodle brands
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.620**
Advertising (Sig 2 tailed)	.	.000
N	325	325
Pearson Correlation	.620**	1.000
Consumer Choice of noodle brands (Sig 2 tailed)	.000	.
N	325	325

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (SPSS 20.0)

Table 8 above is a Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation result of the effect of advertising on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria showing the correlations coefficient, significant value and the number of cases as facilitated by SPSS 20.0. There was a correlation between advertising and consumer choice of noodle brands [$r = 0.620$, $N = 325$, $p = 0.000$]. The correlation coefficient shows a strong relationship (0.620) with a significant critical value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This implies that there is a strong and significantly positive effect of advertising on consumer choice of noodle brands.

Discussion of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The relationship between price of brand and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Also, the first objective of this study sought to establish the extent of the relationship between price of brand and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, null hypothesis one (H1) was formulated and correlation analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis. According to the correlation table; r value of 0.840, indicates that the price of the brands contributed to consumer choice of noodle brands decision by 84%. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which shows that price of brand has a significant and positive relationship with consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the findings of Inoni (2017) who discovered that packaging is a necessary determinant in the choice of noodle brands by consumers.

The relationship between brand image and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The second objective of this study sought to establish the relationship between brand image and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, null hypothesis two (H2) was formulated and correlation analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis. According to the correlation table; the r value of 0.720, indicates that brand image contributed to consumer choice of noodle brands decision by 72%. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which shows that brand image has a significant strong, and positive relationship with consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with findings of similar studies on extant literature. The finding is consistent with the research findings by Davies (2018) who found that brand image is one of the determinants of consumer choice of noodle brands.

The relationship between brand name and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The third objective of this study sought to establish the relationship between brand name and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, null hypothesis three (H3) was formulated and correlation analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis. According to the correlation table; the r value of 0.688, indicates that brand name contributed to consumer choice of noodle brands decision by 68.8%. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected which shows that brand name has a significant strong, and positive relationship with consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with findings of similar studies on extant literature. The study findings support the research which was done by Imran and Tahreen (2020) on factors influencing brand preferences for instant noodles- A comparative study between Sweden and Bangladesh. In their study, they revealed that brand name was a very important determinant of selection of a noodle brand by consumers.

The relationship between brand availability and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Similarly, the fourth objective of this study sought to establish the relationship between brand availability and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, null hypothesis four (H4) was formulated and correlation analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis. According to the correlation table; the r value of 0.640, indicates that availability contributed to consumer choice of noodle brands decision by 64%. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which shows that availability has a significant and positive relationship with consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the findings of Akachukwu (2018) who

investigated the factors that affect consumers in their choice of noodles brands in Nigeria. The study revealed that product availability is one of the important attributes in consumer choice of noodle brands. This view was also shared by Lee & Hu (2013) who said that availability improves customer perception of any noodle brand and helped in facilitating repeat purchases.

The relationship between advertising and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Finally, the fifth objective of this study sought to establish the relationship between advertising and consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. To achieve this objective, null hypothesis five (H5) was formulated and correlation analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis. According to the correlation table; r value of 0.620, indicates that advertising contributed to consumer choice of noodle brands decision by 62%. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which shows that advertising has a significant and positive relationship with consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the findings of Haire (2016) which revealed that advertising is rated as one of the important attributes in consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study investigated the determinants of consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State Nigeria. After data collection and analysis, it was observed that the noodle brand attributes understudy such a price of brand, brand image, brand name, brand availability, and advertising have a positive and significant effect on consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria. Generally, these results are important because they provide evidence of the aggregate explanatory power of the predicting factors on consumer choice of noodle brands. Accordingly, the learning point is that price of brand, brand image, brand name, brand availability, and advertising are very fundamental in influencing consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State Nigeria.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher proffered the following recommendations:

- 1) Marketers of noodle brands should work towards building a competitive pricing strategy to ensure effectiveness of marketing of their noodle brands in Enugu State.
- 2) Marketers of noodle brands should work towards building a reputable image through public relations since it was established that brand image has a significant and positive effect on consumer choice of their noodle brands in Enugu State.
- 3) The researcher recommended that marketers of noodle brands in Enugu State, Nigeria should aim to ensure that their companies have good and reputable brand name since it was statistically

proven that brand name has a significant and positive effect on consumer choice of their noodles in Enugu State.

- 4) Since it was observed that availability of the noodles significantly and positively affects consumer choice of brands, noodle marketers should ensure that their brands are always available in all nooks and crannies of Enugu State.
- 5) Marketers of noodle brands should always utilize advertising for regular creation of awareness about their noodle brands since it was ascertained that advertising has a significant and positive effect on consumer choice of the noodle brands in Enugu State.

Contributions to Knowledge

The research concentrated on empirically investigating the predictors of consumer choice of noodle brands in Enugu State Nigeria. The quantum of literature reviewed in this study established that majority of the studies investigating the determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands were carried out in the industrial and developed economies of the Western and Asian countries.

In this current study, the researcher focused on shifting the study center to the emerging and developing economies like Nigeria, Enugu State in particular. This study has added to existing literature by using context specific data for conducting the research and extending the knowledge on the determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands. The findings from this study are important in aiding corporate managers in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods sector in formulation of relevant policies and making practical implementation of programmes for inducing consumer choice of their noodle brands. This study also filled the gap existing in the marketing literature as it relates to determinants of consumers' choice of noodle brands especially in the developing countries and particularly in Enugu State Nigeria.

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