The Effect of Brand Image on Customer Choices in the Zimbabwean Food Industry
1 Ishmael Vingirayi, 2 Eneresi Matanhire, 3 Wilbert Manyanga

1 Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Commerce and Law, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe
2 Research Fellow, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Commerce and Law, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe
3 Lecturer, Department of Marketing, School of Entrepreneurship and Business Sciences, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15520/jbme.v9i02.3243

Abstract: This study examined the effects of brand image on customer choices in Zimbabwean food industry. Three objectives of the study were to determine the effect of brand image, corporate social responsibility and employees on customer choices. In order to gain competitive advantage, determination of the importance of brand image concept in shaping customer choices. A mixed research design in which a sample of 91 respondents was used. Both primary and secondary data were used and research instruments used were questionnaires and interviews. Data was presented in form of graphs and tables. Generally, the study found that brand image influences customer choices. It was found that employees, customers and suppliers are key in the establishment of a positive brand image hence the recommendation made in this regard were that companies need to embrace trainings especially of the internal stakeholders so that they extend their knowledge to the customer and suppliers. Corporate socially responsibility came out among the pivotal activities that organisations should embark on so as to create good relations with the government and the general citizens which helps to position the image of the brand in the mind of customers.

Keywords: brand, brand image, customer choices, food industry, brand equity.

INTRODUCTION

A study undertaken by Kapferer (2008) established that the brand image and the organisations’ profitability are hardly separable. It follows then that brand image is one of the fundamental concepts which nations, companies and individuals need to largely invest on. World Intellectual Property Report (2013) indicated that successful local, international and global companies in the dawn of the 21st century are tirelessly working on building and maintaining superior brand image. According to Ramesh et al. (2019), the studies on brand image and its impact, though important are still at its embryonic stages. With this view, Ramesh et al. (2019) challenged the future researchers to urgently consider further researches on and surrounding issues to do with brand image. Solomon (2016) also acknowledged the infancy of this discipline and even noted that some companies have not yet invested much on building and sustaining a positive brand image despite the fact that it matters more than what people can think. Quotable statements from Solomon (2016) regarding brand image read, “You can probably spot an Apple device, a piece of Tiffany’s jewellery or a can of Coca Cola from afar. It may look simple but it takes a lot to make your brand this recognisable to consumers”. Companies may not put more effort in maintaining a positive brand image every time their brand interacts with customers, they will find it difficult to develop an easily recognisable brand (Solomon, 2016).

International companies such as Old Mutual have also taken the brand image so seriously. Old Mutual noted among many benefits surrounding corporate social responsibility, the issue of brand image enhancement cannot be overstated (Kapferer, 2008). Companies like Lafarge Cement are involved in cleaning the environment as a way of giving back to the society. Nyaradzofuneral service is now a talk of every Zimbabwean as far as corporate social responsibility activities is concerned. These facts among others prove that successful companies are hinged on the creation of a positive brand image. Maintaining positive brand image helps companies to build credibility and loyalty among customers and also contribute to customers having strong relationship with the company's brand (Solomon, 2016). Ramesh et al. (2019),indicated that over and above giving the employees direction and motivation to embrace the company values and priorities as their own, brand image has the power to attract an ideal clientele base for the company. According to Ramesh et al. (2019),a company can build or improve its brand image through community involvement, sponsorship and a variety of marketing communication. This research therefore unearthed the effects of brand image on consumer preferences and tried to give prescriptions through which companies can build and preserve a positive brand image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Latif, Islam and Halim (2015) proposed four outcomes of brand image which have the potential to give organisations competitive edge in the market place and thus increase their overall brand image in the long run. Brand image lead to brand familiarity, customer satisfaction, brand trust, attitudinal loyalty and finally customer choice.

Brand:
A brand can be a person, place or an organisation. Keller (2013) rightly quoted the American Marketing Association (1960) and thus defined a brand as a name, sign, term or design, or combination of them, intended to identify goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition. It can also be thought of as the promise of the bundles of attributes that someone buys and provide satisfaction. Yasmin (2017)
viewed a brand as a product, service or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services, or concepts so that it can be easily communicated and usually marketed. It is argued that when customers go into a shop to buy, they do not buy a product but they actually buy a brand. Kotler and Pförtisch (2006) identified three brand elements which they identified as key in the formation of the visual identity of a brand and these elements are: brand name, logo and slogan. Keller (2013) indicated that brand elements or components as others would want to call them, are particularly important for differential and identity effect they bring to the brand. Brand elements need to be selected with the view that they have to create a strong, favourable and a completely different brand association as well as leading to positive perception and judgement of the brand (Keller, 2013). Keller (2013) established that the choice and design of brand elements help a lot in the construction of brand equity. In choosing brand elements, companies can be directed at any of the six criterions as specified by Keller (2013). These criteria are according to Farhana (2012) put into two groups with memorability, meaningfulness and likability forming the first group which takes the offensive role and the remaining three namely, transferability, adaptability and protect ability assuming the defensive role. Neupane (2015) added that successful brands need also to be reliable, they must be consistent with their promise. Neupane (2015) gave the view that successful brands have no obstacle, they are unstoppable due to the fact that they have a lot of dimensions and innovative

**Brand equity:**
Brand equity can be defined as the value which is attached to the brand that is unique from other competing brands that are available in the market. Heding et al. (2009) postulates that brand equity can explained from two standpoints that is the objective or financial viewpoint and the customer or the subjective perspective. From the financial stand, brand equity, as postulated by Heding et al. (2009) is considered to be a balance sheet entry showing how much in financial value the brand equity holds similarly to the good will. The customer centric view of brand equity as put across by this trio suggest that brand equity is the perception held by the customer that brand equity is the value added to the functional product or service through associating it with the brand name.

**Brand equity model:**
Bivainienė and Šliburytė (2008) reviewed some of the brand equity models among them the two-dimensional model, commonly known as the Iceberg model of brand equity.

---

**Iceberg brand equity model**

![Image of Iceberg brand equity model]

---

Bivainienė and Šliburytė (2008) tried to present the brand equity model clearly showing how brand image feeds into it. As per the model it is shown that brand equity is a sum of two parts namely brand image and brand assets. Brand image consists of elements that are visible to consumers while the brand assets is made up of the covered elements which of course are not seen by consumer. It is evident that brand image comprises of short-term measures which are visible to the customer such as packaging, promotion, advertising and product among others.

**BRAND IMAGE**

Various definitions are provided through previous researches of what really brand image is all about. The definition provided by Įsoraštis (2018), which was also the view taken by Arora and Stoner (2009) suggests that brand image can be viewed as the emotional aspects that identifies a brand of a company or its products. Furthermore, Įsoraštis (2018) echoed the mind of Kalieva (2015) who noted that brand image can
be thought of as a generalised portrait of a branded object perceived by target audience. Saleem and Raja (2014) established that brand image can be taken to mean how customers remember the brand. A simplified definition of brand image was however given by Durmaz et al. (2018) when they noted that the very first thing that comes into the customer’s mind when he or she wants to buy the brand is the brand image. Onyancha (2013) brought out the view that a positive brand image has a capacity to help organisations to hold their market positions.

Of interest is the view that in the definition of brand image provided by Durmaz et al. (2018) is the realisation that brand image can likewise be spoken from the stand point of potential customers as is with current ones. According to Durmaz et al. (2018), brand image is the perception held in the minds of both current and future or potential customers about the organisation’s products or services. Yasmin (2017) held the view that brand image is a distinct or unique bundle of associations which are held in the minds of the target customers.

**Components of brand image:**
The general components as highlighted by Wijaya (2013)and Deheshtii et al. (2016) include but not limited to the following: services, brand, variety, quality, employees, brand campaigns and logo. Wijaya (2013) established that a good management of the above components leads to a positive brand image and a maladministration of the same brings about disastrous or negative brand image.

**Environmental concerns:**
Keller (2013) highlighted that organisations can create their brand image through ensuring that their operations are considerate of the environment. Ali (2009) defined environmental concerns as the degree to which people are aware of the environmental challenges and assist in the struggles to solve them or exhibit their readiness to contribute personally to their solution. Keller (2013) spoke of simple, refillable and recyclable packaging as one of many strategies that eco-friendly organisations can use in their operations. Companies such as Nyaradzo Funeral services among others have embarked on tree planting programmes as a way keeping the environment in a usable state for the future generations.

**Merchandising:**
Companies can also make use of merchandising as a strategy of enhancing their brand image. Keller (2013) signified that companies can use attractive displays for their products as well as detailed posters which are strategically located close to the points of sale in the shops. The use of brochures is also among other merchandising skills which companies can employ to create a strong, favourable and unique brand image.

**Staff:**
In order to create a favourable brand image there is need for organisations to invest in its staff. According to Keller (2013), organisational employees need to be empowered with every vital information about the brand to be able to assist their customers. Keeping a highly motivated staff also aids in the zeal of employees to treat the customers alike which is vital in the creation of a good brand image. Hooley et al. (2015) reinforced that maintaining an enthusiastic workforce has an effect of promoting a positive image to the consumers. The view that uniforms also aid in reinforcing brand image was also held to be true by Lovelock, Wirtz and Chatterjee (2011).

**Social action programs:**
The pay-out for corporate social investment, commonly known as corporate social responsibility, as is provided in the Old Mutual Report (2014), is an empowered community. In this report it was highlighted that the beneficiaries of the CSI become advocates of the company and by so doing, the brand equity is strengthened. Notably also is the fact that community involvement is not about hoodwinking the society because no sooner than later, consumers will figure it out. Corporate social investment is actually a hearty commitment of the organisation. CSR is the firm’s commitment in contributing to the development of both the economy and the community at large (Mohamed&Daud, 2008; Dlamini, 2016).Dlamini (2016) pointed out that CSR is a way of taking care of all stakeholders of the company in an ethical manner. Hooley et al. (2015) established that the organisations which are not careful and serious about corporate social responsibility end up with poor record and are more likely to experience large-scale consumer boycotts, weaker brand image and reduced sales. Singh et al. (2014) noted that the company’s community involvement through CSR activities increases the consumers’ knowledge of the brand which is one of the most vital tools for positive brand image enhancement.

**Role of corporate design in reinforcing brand image:**
Lovelock, Wirtz and Chatterjee (2011)identified corporate design as another dimension through which a desired brand image can be reinforced. Lovelock, Wirtz and Chatterjee (2011)postulates that in a bid to further strengthen the brand image, companies can use such features as stationery, promotional materials, retail signage, uniforms, and vehicle colour schemes, equipment and buildings interiors. Corporate design according to Lovelock, Wirtz and Chatterjee (2011), can be achieved through but not limited to the following ways: Use of colours in corporate designs; trademark symbols rather than company names; symbol in conjunction with company name.

**BRAND MANAGEMENT**
M’zungu et al. (2010) proposed strategic brand management to enhance brand image. Strategic brand management according to M’zungu et al. (2010) results in a brand personality with unique symbolic features and valued experience to the customer making the brand more difficult for competitors to copy. Through their study M’zungu et al. (2010) identified three stages of strategic brand management aimed at building and protecting brand equity namely: brand orientation mindset, internal branding capabilities and consistent delivery of the brand.

**Brand orientation mindset:**
Brand orientation mindset is explained well by M’zungu et al. (2010) and in summary, the brand creation, development and protection hinges around the customer so as to gain a competitive edge. Through this orientation the organisation’s management focuses much on the needs of the market, an approach known as outside-in. Erdiland Ergin (2017) echoed the outside-in approach but added that brand development
needs however to be guided by the organisation’s vision, mission and values.

**Internal branding capabilities:**

Internal branding is a corporate strategy measure to enable and motivate employees to not only keep the brand promise but to “live” it. According to brand glossary successful brand is rooted in the company when all the employees understand it and act accordingly, the result of which is a sharpened brand image (Bye, 2007). M’zungu et al. (2010) established that internal branding can take up to four sets of activities which are explained below.

**Coordination:**

This is ensuring that there are structural mechanisms and processes that allow employees to improve their focus on the customer. Four C’s of coordination are considered here as follows: Cooperation is encouraging organisational people through cultural means, incentives and allocation of power to work together for the customer. Then capability entails that employees need training and development for them to deliver. M’zungu et al. (2010) noted that for the employees to have customer-focused solutions, they need some skills. It is also in the view of M’zungu et al. (2010) that capability can also be taken to mean that the employee’s career path is clearly defined with proper skills to deliver the brand. Connection generally gives a view that no one can operate in a vacuum, there is need for some associations. According to M’zungu et al. (2010) it was shown that there is need to develop external relations so that they can deliver the brand in a cost-effective manner

**Consistent brand delivery:**

M’zungu et al. (2010) postulates that the brand needs to be delivered. The brand should always be made available to the market which calls for consistency in delivery of the same. Consistency in the delivery of the brand according to M’zungu et al. (2010) earns the brand a good reputation which is a valuable asset to organisations. Consistence in the delivery of the brand to the market ensure the brand earns familiarity which helps to instil a positive perception of the brand in the minds of customers (M’zungu et al., 2010).

**OUTCOMES OF BRAND IMAGE**

There are four possible outcomes of brand image as proposed by Latif et al. (2015). This entails that if an organisation works to build its brand image the results will be at least one of the following: brand familiarity, customer satisfaction, brand trust and attitudinal loyalty. These four possible outcomes facilitate the customer’s purchase choice.

**Brand familiarity:**

Refer to how much the brand is known by the target market. Latif et al. (2015) were of the view that brand familiarity comes out as a result of the customer’s direct or indirect experience with the brand. This view is also supported by Chinomona and Maziriri (2017) in their review when they noted that the number of product related experiences which consumers accumulate counts for brand familiarity. A good brand image gives birth to brand familiarity (Latif et al., 2015). An interesting argument by Chinomona and Maziriri (2017) posit that if consumer choices are not a matter of life or death consumers will use brand familiarity to make their choices because there is an insignificant difference among brands. Brand image is therefore very important in the creation of this familiarity. Direct experience may be obtained through using the brand whereas the indirect experience can be gained through word of mouth or watching someone while using the brand among others. Lamb et al. (2011) suggests that brand familiarity speaks of how well consumers can see and admit the company’s brand. This obviously means that there will be a lot of competing brands but through good brand image which resulted in the brand being well known, consumers can clearly recognise the organisation’s brand out of thousands of available brands.

**Customer satisfaction:**

Kotler and Keller (2014) defined customer satisfaction as the customer’s feelings of pleasure or disappointment which is a result of a comparison between products’ perceived performance and the customer’s expectations. The review made by Onyancha (2013) puts more light on Keller (2014)’s views by telling the world that customer satisfaction is viewed from two ends that is before and after the purchase. Onyancha (2013) stated that customer satisfaction is what the customers expect before the purchase and the perception about the performance after the purchase is made. According to Kotler and Keller (2014), if the performance of the product is below the customers’ expectation, then a dissatisfaction but when the performance matches the customer’s expectation the customer will be satisfied. In fact, Onyancha (2013) had a clearer view worth noting that having a positive brand image is simply exceeding what the consumers expect. More so, if the product performance exceeds the level which the customer was expecting then, the customer will be delighted. In a bid to summarise the definition given by Kotler and Keller (2014), Latif et al. (2015) believed that customer satisfaction is the emotional response that focuses on expectations and consumption experience. It was also noted by Rai (2013) as referenced by Latif et al. (2016) that a customer satisfaction is through a, “cognitive response post subjective assessment and comparison of pre-purchase and actual performance subsequent to the consumption of the product or service”.

**Brand trust:**

Ahmed et al. (2014) postulates that brand trust helps in the creation of brand loyal consumers. Trust, as suggested by Latif et al. (2015) can be thought of as a solid bond that occurs in this case, between a customer and the brand of an organisation. Naggar and Bendary (2017) in their definition of brand trust used such phrases as, “feeling secure, reliable and responsible, and consumer willingness to rely on the brand”. According to Chinomona and Maziriri (2017), the extent to which consumers believe that a certain brand will satisfy their desire, is yet another definition of what really is brand image. Mckinney and Benson (2013) established that credibility, care or empathy and congruency are the three main factors that help customers to build brand trust, whereas Naggar and Bendary (2017) are of the view that brand trust emanates from the consumers’ previous experience and prior interactions with the brand. Brand trust can be looked at as an organisational asset in the sense provided by Chinomona and Maziriri (2017)that it reduces risk perception in the mind of consumer by giving him or her line of thinking that the brand is safe and dependable.
Attitudinal loyalty:
Attitudinal loyalty is the same as brand loyalty. Latif et al. (2015) brings out an idea that attitudinal loyalty is a “commitment unto a brand”. As cited by Latif et al. (2015), Rai (2013) noted that through loyalty, customers display positive attitude and on a number of times, customers unconsciously engage in favourable actions towards the brand. Keller (2009) noted that attitudinal attachment forces the consumers to see the brand as being something special. It can be concluded that loyal customers are organisational assets. Sulibhavi and Shivashankar (2017) indicated that the collaboration of brand image and customer satisfaction lead to loyalty which when the customers are willing to purchase more often, use more money and recommend more customers to use the organisations products, the organisation will immensely benefit. Moreover, loyalty can be used as a barrier to discourage customers from switching hence Sulibhavi and Shivashankar (2017) indicated that customers will repeatedly purchase the organisation’s products.

Consumer choice:
Dhar and Sherman (1996) noted that when people speak of consumer choice it entails that there will be a lot of alternatives available and hence the consumer will be compelled to make comparisons. Brand features that are common or shared by the various brands are cancelled and the consumer focuses much on unique features in making choices (Dhar & Sherman, 1996).

Influence of brand image on consumer choice:
Chao et al.(2016) revealed that when consumers look at the brand image, they consider it as a type of information which helps them in purchase decision making. Chao et al. (2016) shared a view that good brand image help consumers to perceive a higher value for the organisation’s products hence their purchase behaviour is positively stimulated. Onyancha (2013) challenged organisations to go an extra mile in ensuring that a favourable brand image is created bearing in mind that it strengthens the intentions of customers in selecting a brand. Basing on the fact that product performance is a vital component of brand image, Zhang (2015) postulated that good brand image brings about customer satisfaction. Sallam (2016) was convinced that if the organisations strive to build positive brand image in the minds of the consumers, value for the brands will be created which eventually facilitates the choices consumers make in their purchases. Sallam (2016) further indicated that when the brand image is strong superior brand messages for that particular brand is created which helps it to overtake its competitors.

Link between brand image and customer loyalty:
According to Neupane (2015), there is a strong link that exists between brand image and customer loyalty. Neupane (2015) made it clear that a positive brand image contributes immensely to the enhancement of customer loyalty. If customers develop trust on a brand, they become committed to the brand which helps organisations to charge premium price because customers will not be price sensitive. Neupane (2015) noted that an unfavourable brand image erodes customer brand trust.

Other factors that influence consumer choice:
Onyancha (2013) through a study of consumers’ choice for fast foods established some of the factors which influence consumer choices as including brand name, labelling, quality, price, healthiness and associated socio-cultural considerations. Ali and Kapoor (2010) grouped these factors into various groups such as economic, cultural, psychological and lifestyle factors, a view that Kotler and Keller (2012) later adopted.

Socio-cultural factors:
Kotler and Keller (2012) indicated that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping a person’s relationship with others in the society. Through these cultural groupings, people create social groupings hence they influence each other’s buying and brand preference. Kotler and Keller (2012) postulated that those people who share the same social grouping generally exhibit a homogeneous product and brand preference in many areas from food to clothing, leisure and even language. Social groups include reference groups, family, social roles and status. So, these factors including reference and family groups influence on consumer choice decisions. People usually have points of reference when they make purchases particularly of new products in the market. Normally they would want to make choices which are acceptable within their socio-cultural set up. Kotler and Keller (2012) defined reference groups as groups that have both direct and indirect influence on one’s attitude and behaviour. Kotler and Keller (2012) also made it clear that groups have the power to influence a person to have a new behaviour or lifestyle, attitude and self-concept or can build pressure for conformity which eventually has the effect on that consumer’s product or brand choice. Kotler and Keller (2012) noted that there are two types of families available namely, a family by orientation and a family of recreation. Kotler and Keller (2012) stressed that as children grow up, they also have the ability to recognise some characters, logos and specific brands and thus influence choice.

Economic factors:
Lee et al. (2017) noted that economic factors include but not limited to price, inflation and unemployment, these three factors have an influence on how the consumer behave. This situation is worsened if the levels of unemployment are high (Lee et al., 2017). The researcher supports the thinking exhibited by Chao et al. (2016) that price is important in the purchase intention of consumers. If it happens that products that are highly priced are discounted, a lot of consumers will buy them.

Role of motivation on consumer choices:
Sallam (2016) noted that the level of needs one wants to satisfy is a strong motivation of a consumer’s choice of a product or brand. The way Sallam (2016) applied the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs in explaining the role of motivation indicates that one can buy a product being motivated by the physiological pressure and the next time the same brand is being bought will be to satisfy social needs. Sallam (2016) established that consumer choices can also be influenced by the country of origin. Wang and Tsai (2014) expressed that there is high probability that consumers choose the brands they have full knowledge about their image due to the fact that a more positive brand image lowers the consumers’ perceived risk but lifts up the perceived value.
Research objectives:
1. To determine the effect of brand image on customer choices.
2. To explore the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer choices.
3. To ascertain the effect of employees on customer choices.

Research questions:
1. What effect does brand image have on customer choices?
2. What effect does corporate social responsibility have on customer choices?
3. What effect does employees have on customer choices?

Data and methods:
The study methodology covers research design, sampling and methods used to collect data.

Research design:
Kumar (2019) believes that a research design is a plan, structure or strategy of carrying out an investigation to obtain answers to the research problem, a research design can be thought of as a campus that guides the researcher during the process of collecting, analysing and interpretation of data. Kumar (2019) also provided a layman definition of a research design as a complete scheme or programme of the research. An analysis of the above definition leads to a conclusion that a research design provides an outline of what the researcher will do from the time he or she writes a research problem up until the presentation of the final data.

Mixed research design:
The researchers employed a mixed research design in undertaking this study. Creswell (2012) indicated that a mixed research design is actually a procedure for collecting and analysing data using both qualitative and quantitative research in a single study. Applying a mixed research design helped the researchers to fully access the knowledge levels and opinions of customers, consumers, employees and management from the food industry on brand image and its effects on consumer preference. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) indicated through a research continuum that mixed research takes the middle position between qualitative and quantitative research which further suggests that it capitalises on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research.

Targeted population:
According to Johnson (2010), a target population means a set of all elements. It is a large group from which the researcher would want to generalise the sample results. The following table provides the population which the researchers intends to work with.

Table I: Category of respondents and target population

| Category of respondents | Population |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Consumers               | 45         |
| Vendors                 | 25         |
| Sales manager           | 11         |
| Sales representatives   | 15         |
| General Employees       | 22         |
| **Total population**    | **118**    |

Sample size:
Johnson (2010) defined sampling as a process of drawing a sample from a population. According to Johnson (2010), a sample is a subset selected from a large group for the purposes of understanding the characteristics of a large group. It can also be thought of as a set of elements extracted from a large group called a population. In this study a formula proposed by Israel (2003) on how to calculate the sample size was used and the margin of error applied was 5%. The Sample determination formula used as given by Israel (2003) is

\[ n = \frac{N e^2}{(N-1)e^2 + N} \]

Where \( n \) is the sample size, \( N \) is the population targeted, \( e \) is the level of precision or sample error. The sample, \( n = \frac{118}{1+118(0.05)^2} \). The sample size used is therefore 91.

Research instruments:
Instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interviews. Zohrabi (2013) confirmed that the questionnaire and interviews are among the widely used methods of collecting data in research. Closed ended questionnaire was used to gather data. Face to face and telephone interviews were carried out. Zohrabi (2013) postulated that interviews are a second main form of data collection after the questionnaire. Interviews were used to gather qualitative data.

Validity and reliability of the research instruments:
Taherdoost (2016) highlighted that validity of an instrument is a way of ensuring that the research instrument being used will measure what it is intended to measure. Zohrabi (2013) indicated that the whole idea surrounding the issue of validity is whether the research is believable and truthful. Reliability on the other hand according to Creswell (2012), speaks of stability and consistence of the used instrument. Zohrabi (2013) noted that reliability is a measure for the degree of dependability. In a bid to ensure both validity and reliability, the following strategies were employed as recommended by Creswell (2009), that is, triangulation, test re-test, pilot testing of instruments and peer examinations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:
Data was presented in form of tables and graphs.

Response rate:
The sample size of 91 people was used comprising of 20 interviewees and 71 questionnaire respondents. Of the 20 interviewees which were chosen only one respondent failed to make it into the survey due to some commitments. The percentage response rate for one-on-one interviews settled at 95%. Out of 71 questionnaires which were administered, 10 were not fully completed hence were not included in this analysis. The percentage response rate for questionnaires settled at 86 % which was a very good response rate for generalisation into the population used.

Demographics:
The demographics of the study is given below on table II.

Table II: The distribution of respondents using their age

| Age group in years | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 18-24              | 27        | 34         |
| 25-34              | 22        | 27         |
| 35-44              | 14        | 18         |
| 45-54              | 7         | 9          |
| 55+                | 10        | 12         |
| **Total**          | **80**    | **100**    |
The 18 to 24 years age group is more ready to respond to both interviews and questionnaires. This age group thus scored the highest percentage of response clocking 34% which is more than one third of the people who responded. The 25 to 34 years age group occupied the second highly responsive group and the 45 to 54 realised the least.

### Table III: Distribution of respondents by gender

| Age group   | Male | Female |
|-------------|------|--------|
| 18-24       | 10   | 17     |
| 25-34       | 9    | 13     |
| 35-44       | 8    | 6      |
| 45-54       | 3    | 4      |
| 55 and above| 4    | 6      |
| Total       | 34   | 46     |

Male respondents constitute 34 people which is 42% whereas female respondents are 46 people which constitutes 58%.

### Analysis of responses on brand image:

A lot of questions to test the respondents’ knowledge of brand image were asked. Some questions aimed at gathering the position of employees as far as their duty of safeguarding the company’s brand image was concerned. The questionnaire also sought to give the researcher some first-hand information regarding the effect exerted by suppliers and customers on the organisation’s brand image.

### Knowledge of brand image:

Out of eighty respondents who fully answered the questionnaire, sixty-nine indicated their understanding of what really is meant by the term “brand image”. There were eleven respondents who highlighted that they had a partial knowledge. The researcher used a pie chart as shown below to illustrate the respondents’ knowledge of the term, “brand image”.

### Table IV: Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge of brand image

| Knowledge of brand image | Full knowledge | Partial knowledge |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Percentage frequency     | 86%            | 14%               |

### Enhancing brand image:

There are a lot of strategies that are available for companies to ensure that their brand image captures the totality of the mind of the current and new customers. Confining this analysis to the findings of this particular research the researcher noted the strategies which will be explained soon as key in building and enhancing the organisations’ brand image.

### Creating brand awareness:

According to Koniewski (2012) brand awareness has a strong impact on the customer’s purchasing choices. Ahmad et al. (2014) established that the awareness of the brand creates positive or negative image in the mind of customers hence it is critically important for companies to work on creating brand awareness. There are a lot of ways through which brand awareness can be created. these include marketing communication through advertising, personal selling, exhibitions and digital marketing.

### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This is in fact the company’s involvement in community activities, giving back to the communities through such activities as drilling boreholes in the surrounding communities, clean-up campaigns in the surrounding suburbs and provision of bins for safe refuse disposal. According to Durmaz et al. (2018), stressed the point that organisational involvement in social causes lead to more positive feelings and judgements about the brand in the minds of the customers. The perception of the brand increases or decreases due to company’s participation and failure to participate in corporate social programmes (Durmaz et al., 2018). It is therefore imperative for organisations willing to enrich their brand images to actively start on social activities behaviours. Further analysis by Durmaz et al. (2018) points to the fact that companies which actively participate in social causes reap the benefits of improved brand image. The following is a graphical illustration on responses regarding the organisation’s involvement in community activities.
Benefits of corporate social responsibility:
A significant number of respondents strongly believed that the companies should be involved in social responsibility, it is equally important to look at the benefits derived from being socially responsible. The following are some of the benefits of corporate social responsibility as put forward by Asemah et al. (2013): Winning the goodwill support from various stakeholders; increased financial performance; being an employer of choice through attracting better employees; staff turnover rate is reduced; reduction of operating costs through improved efficiency; customer attraction and retention leading to increased sales volumes.

Brand image motivates purchase decision:
Whilst there is other motivation to purchase decision such as the price, quality of the product or service, environment where the product is purchased, this research unearthed that consumers have high concern of the brand image for them to make a choice. Most people were in support of the fact that brand image in some way motivates the purchase decision. Heding et al. (2009) noted that a positive brand image has the potential to affect consumer confidence in the quality of a product eventually thus lifting the amount of demand for these products. Heding et al. (2009) also stressed that consumers who have a positive image of a given brand are more likely to make purchases of that particular brand. It can be concluded that if companies are not particular to ensure that their brands occupy the largest share in the mind of the prospective buyer, a significant volume of sales can be lost and the company can eventually find itself out of the business.
Figure III: Bar graph on brand image motivates purchase decision

Influence of organisational suppliers, customers and employees on brand image:
The questionnaire carried questions which wanted the respondents to indicate their line of thinking regarding the role employees, suppliers as well as that of customers in relation to the company’s brand image. Respondents noted their strong belief that the way employees behave in and away of the company has a bearing in the brand image of the company they are representing. The highest percentage of respondents indicated that they strongly believe that companies are not at loss if they invest in training their customers, suppliers and largely their employees to be brand ambassadors of the company’s brand.

Employees and brand image:
The work of King and Grace (2008) was significant in the review of the role of employees in the brand image. King and Grace (2008) indicated that, “investment in the organisational brand is considered to be a strategic weapon in the quest for an edge over competitors. The creation of a strong brand and the deliverance of perceived service quality are premised by employees’ ability to deliver on customers’ expectations.” Organisations need to ensure that they have highly motivated employees whose morale is always on the positive. According to King and Grace (2008) companies need to train its employees so that they shape their behaviour in line with the expectations of customer. Erkmen (2018) highlighted that the whole idea of training and engaging in dialogue with the employees aim to educate the employees about the brand about the company’s brand and brand values so that they can extend these to organisational customers as brand experiences. If the behaviour of employees matches the customers’ expectations, customers feel respected and this results in a plus on the brand image.

Customer choices:
An analysis of the data on customer choices shows that customers are motivated by brand familiarity to make repeat purchase decisions. This claim is ascertained by the highest percentage of respondents who were at least agreeable that if customers are familiar with the brand, they are more likely ready to choose it in their next purchase. 92.5% of the respondents were at least agreeing that brand familiarity is key in purchase decision making. Whilst price is one of the fundamental pillars of the marking mix customers earn pride through buying products which have a positive brand image than buying cheaper products that have bad image. 12.5% of the respondents indicated that price is key in purchase decision, the other 12.5% took a neutral stage but the host which amounted to 75% indicated that they were at least in in disagreement to the fact that customers are more on the lookout of price than brand image. A positive brand image has the potential to influence prime pricing. Companies can therefore invest much on the image of their brand. Brand image also helps the organisations to have satisfied customers. Customers who are satisfied by a brand image of a company are highly likely to choose the same brand in their next purchase. Satisfied customers become brand ambassadors unknowingly, they speak positive about the brand. If customers are satisfied with the brand image, they unconsciously become referral points for new customers. Good brand image locks customers to the organisation, customers become so loyal to the organisation such that for them, switching becomes costly to them.

Summary of findings:
This study was on examining the effect of brand image on customer choices in Zimbabwean food industry. The study adopted the mixed research approach that is simultaneously using quantitative and qualitative research. One major model
of brand equity called “Iceberg brand equity model” was instrumental in the success of the review of related literature. After the completion of research methodology in which the research design was justified, targeted population as well as the sample were defined and the data collection instruments were fully explained, the researchers summarised and analysed the data and came up with various findings from which the recommendations were framed. Brand image was found to have an effect on customer choices. Corporate social responsibility was found to have an effect on customer choices. Also, employees were found to have an effect on customer choices.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY:

Conclusions of the study are as follows: Brand image leads to brand familiarity which influences customers’ choice. Customer choices are also triggered by customer satisfaction, brand trust and customer loyalty which all have their roots in brand image. Organisations need to engage in corporate social responsibility as a way of enhancing brand image. Although quality and price are fundamental for customers purchase decision in the volatile economy like the Zimbabwean case, customers still look on the image of that brand to purchase food. Employees are important in the establishment of brand image; companies need to train and motivate their employees so that they become brand ambassadors. Customers and suppliers are equally important in the building of brand image. Companies therefore need to invest on curving relationship with both customers and suppliers so that they talk positive about the company’s brand. Integrated marketing communication which takes form of advertising, personal selling, exhibition, publicity and social media are critical in creating brand awareness which helps in reinforcement of brand image. Brand names are vital hence must not be misunderstood by customers. This is achieved if the company uses a unique brand name, which is easy to pronounce and not confused with similar names in the market. Satisfaction is one of the things that makes customers think of the brand each time they make purchase decision.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study identified the following implications: A research carried out by Alhaddad (2015) highlighted that by the year 2014 the world had already recorded around three billion internet users, hence corporates in the food industry need to take advantage of the increasing growth of information and communication technology and use social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp as cheaper, far reaching and fast means of promoting the organisations’ brands to build and enhance the brand image. There is need for companies to incorporate continuous training of their employees about the brand image, how to construct a positive brand image and the maintenance of a good brand image. The role of employees in upholding the positive brand image need to be clearly elaborated to the organisational employees. Corporates should work towards improving the standards of living of their employees. Satisfied employees are motivated to save customers to their satisfaction which uplifts the company’s brand image. Yazdanifard et al. (2011) reinforced this line of reasoning by noting that employee branding promotes employee-brand identification. This raises the connection between the employee and the brand which gives a good attitude for employees facing the customers. The employees’ good attitude towards the customers improves customer retention hence the likability of the brand raises too.

Through the work of Naqvi et al. (2013), it was established that various activities which are conducted by firms which are socially responsible aid the organisations to enhance their brand image. As such it is therefore advisable that companies in the food industry must invest on programs that give back to the communities. Such community involvements are key in the development and enhancement of their brand image. Ramesh et al. (2019) postulates that there is a strong link between brand image and customer loyalty; positive brand image enhances brand trust while a negative brand image destroys the reputation held by the brand in the customers’ mind. It is therefore advisable that companies should invest in programs that gives their brand the largest share in mind of customers. Chances of choosing that brand when the attitude towards it is positive are very high.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

The researcher focused on brand image of food industry and delineated to a single organisation. Future studies may sample more companies in the food industry and use a larger sample. Future researchers may break down brand image variables and focus on a single variable and test it on customer choices or introduce mediators or moderating factors.

REFERENCES

[1]. Ahmad, A., Ahmad, N., & Nadeem, M. (2014). The study of brand credibility and brand awareness as positive predictors for brand loyalty. Nigerian Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review, 62(1890), 1-7.

[2]. Ahmed, M. U., Kristal, M. M., & Pagell, M. (2014). Impact of operational and marketing capabilities on firm performance: Evidence from economic growth and downturns. International Journal of Production Economics, 154, 59-71.

[3]. Alhaddad, A. (2015). Perceived quality, brand image and brand trust as determinants of brand loyalty. Journal of Research in Business and Management, 3(4), 01-08.

[4]. Ali, A. (2009). Business and management environment in Saudi Arabia: challenges and opportunities for multinational corporations. Routledge.

[5]. Ali, J., Kapoor, S., & Moorthy, J. (2010). Buying behaviour of consumers for food products in an emerging economy. British Food Journal.

[6]. American Marketing Association. (1960). American marketing association. Marketing definitions: A glossary of marketing terms.

[7]. Arora, R., & Stoner, C. (2009). A mixed method approach to understanding brand personality. Journal of Product and Brand Management, 18(4), 272-283.

[8]. Asemah, E. S., Okpanachi, R. A., & Edegoh, L. O. (2013). Business advantages of corporate social responsibility practice: A critical review. New Media and Mass Communication, 18(3), 45-52.
[9]. Bivainiènè, L., & Šlīburyté, L. (2008). The Brand Image As An Element Of Brand Equity. Socialiniaityrimai, 2008(2).
[10]. Bye, D. J. (2007). The Brand Glossary. Reference Reviews.
[11]. Chao, M. C. H., Li, F., & Chen, H. (2016). Perceived ethicality of moral choice. Nankai Business Review International.
[12]. Chinomona, R., & Maziriri, E. T. (2017). The influence of brand awareness, brand association and product quality on brand loyalty and repurchase intention: a case of male consumers for cosmetic brands in South Africa. Journal of Business and Retail Management Research, 12(1).
[13]. Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches. London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
[14]. Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: planning. Conducting, and Evaluating.
[15]. Deheshi, M., Adabifirouzjah, J., & Alimohammadi, H. (2016). The relationship between brand image and brand trust in sporting goods Consumers. Annals of Applied Sport Science, 4(3), 27-34.
[16]. Dhar, R., & Sherman, S. J. (1996). The effect of common and unique features in consumer choice. Journal of Consumer Research, 23(3), 193-203.
[17]. Dlamini, B. (2016). The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Company Profitability in Zimbabwe: A Case of a Listed Telecommunication Company. International Journal of Social Science and Economics Invention, 2(04), 333-330.
[18]. Durmaz, Y., Çavuşoğlu, S., & Özer, Ö. (2018). The Effect of Brand Image and Brand Benefit on Customer Loyalty: The Case of Turkey. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 8(5), 528-540.
[19]. El Naggar, R. A. A., & Bendary, N. (2017). The Impact of Experience and Brand trust on Brand loyalty, while considering the mediating effect of brand Equity dimensions, an empirical study on mobile operator subscribers in Egypt. The Business & Management Review, 9(2), 16-25.
[20]. Erdül, A., & Ergin, H. (2017). Two-sided matching with indemnities. Journal of Economic Theory, 171, 268-292.
[21]. Erkmen, E. (2018). Managing your brand for employees: understanding the role of organizational processes in cultivating employee brand equity. Administrative Sciences, 8(3), 52.
[22]. Farhana, M. (2012). Brand elements lead to brand equity: Differentiate or die. Information management and business review, 4(4), 223-233.
[23]. Heding, T., & Knudtzen, F. C., & Bjerre, M. (2009). Brand management: research, theory and practice.
[24]. Hooley, T., Shepherd, C., & Dodd, V. (2015). Get yourself connected: Conceptualising the role of digital technologies in Norwegian career guidance.
[25]. Iloraité, M. (2018). Brand image development. Ecosforum Journal, 7(1).
[26]. Israel, G. (2003). PEOD-6. Determining sample size. University of Florida IFAS.
[27]. Johnson, B. (2010). CHRISTENSEN (2014). Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches.
[28]. Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. Educational researcher, 33(7), 14-26.
[29]. Kalieva, O. M. (2015). Development of territory brand image: The marketing aspect. Rev. Eur. Stud., 7, 23.
[30]. Kapferer, J. N. (2008). The new strategic brand management: Creating and sustaining brand equity long term. Kogan Page Publishers.
[31]. Keller, K. (2013). Strategic brand management: Global edition. Pearson Higher Ed.
[32]. Keller, K. L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. Journal of marketing communications, 15(2-3), 139-155.
[33]. King, C., & Grace, D. (2008). Internal branding: Exploring the employee's perspective. Journal of brand management, 15(5), 358-372.
[34]. Konieński, M. (2012). Brand awareness and customer loyalty. PMR Research, 1-5.
[35]. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. (2012). Marketing Management (Fourteenth ed.). Nuncalopan de Juárez: Pearson Education.
[36]. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. (2014). Marketing management. Saddle River.
[37]. Kotler, P., & Pfoertsch, W. (2006). B2B brand management. Springer Science & Business Media.
[38]. Kumar, R. (2019). Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners. Sage Publications Limited.
[39]. Lamb, P., Sandberg, J., & Liesch, P. W. (2011). Small firm internationalisation unveiled through phenomenography. Journal of International Business Studies, 42(5), 672-693.
[40]. Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., & Halim, A. A. (2015). Outcomes of Brand Image: A Conceptual Model. The 2015 world of UAV international conference, Mahsuri international exhibition centre, Langkawi, Malaysia.
[41]. Lee, P. V., Pemagy, V., Scullary, J., & Stevens, C. (2017). Marketing Matters. Covered California.
[42]. Lovelock, C., Wirtz, J., & Chatterjee, J. (2011). Service Marketing: People, Technonologies, Strategy.
[43]. Mckinney, M., & Benson, A. (2013). The value of brand trust. Journal of Brand Strategy, 2(1), 76-86.
[44]. Mohamed, R. N., & Daud, N. M. (2012). The impact of religious sensitivity on brand trust, equity and values of fast food industry in Malaysia. Business Strategy Series.
[45]. M‘zungu, Simon DM, Bill Merriiles, and Dale Miller. "Brand management to protect brand equity: A conceptual model." Journal of Brand management 17.8 (2010): 605-617.
[46]. Naqvi, S. R., Ishiaq, M., Kanwal, N., & Ali, M. (2013). Impact of job autonomy on organizational commitment and job satisfaction: The moderating role of organizational culture in fast food sector of Pakistan. International Journal of Business and Management, 8(17), 92.
[47]. Neupane, R. (2015). The effects of brand image on customer satisfaction and loyalty intention in retail super market chain UK. International Journal of Social Sciences and Management, 2(1), 9-26.
[48]. Old Mutual (2014). Anchoring communities CSR report. www.oldmutual.co.zw.

[49]. Onyancha, G. K. (2013). The impact of bank brand image on customer satisfaction and loyalty: A case of Kenya commercial bank. European Journal of Business and Management, 5(21), 35-39.

[50]. Rai, N. (2013). Impact of Advertising on Consumer behaviour and attitude with reference to consumer durables. International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy, 2(2), 74-79.

[51]. Ramesh, K., Saha, R., Goswami, S., & Dahiya, R. (2019). Consumer's response to CSR activities: Mediating role of brand image and brand attitude. Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 26(2), 377-387.

[52]. Saleem, H., & Raja, N. S. (2014). The impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and brand image: Evidence from hotel industry of Pakistan. Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research, 19(5), 706-711.

[53]. Sallam, M. A. (2016). The impact of brand image and corporate branding on consumer’s choice: The role of brand equity. International Journal of Marketing Studies, 8(1), 98-106.

[54]. Singh, R., Yavuz, R., & Toker, A. (2014). Location sharing on social networks: Implications for marketing. Marketing Intelligence & Planning.

[55]. Solomon, L. (2016). The librarian’s nitty-gritty guide to content marketing. American Library Association.

[56]. Sulibhavi, B., & Shivashankar, K. (2017). The impact of brand image on customers’ loyalty towards private label brands: The mediating effect of satisfaction. International Journal of Marketing & Financial Management, 5(8), 43-50.

[57]. Taherdoost, H. (2016). Validity and reliability of the research instrument; how to test the validation of a questionnaire/survey in a research. How to Test the Validation of a Questionnaire/Survey in a Research (August 10, 2016).

[58]. Wang, Y. H., & Tsai, C. F. (2014). The relationship between brand image and purchase intention: Evidence from award winning mutual funds. The international journal of business and finance research, 8(2), 27-40.

[59]. Wijaya, B. S. (2013). Dimensions of brand image: A conceptual review from the perspective of brand communication. European Journal of Business and Management, 3(31), 55-65.

[60]. World Intellectual Property Organization. (2013). World Intellectual Property Report 2013: Brand-Reputation and Image in the Global Marketplace. World Intellectual Property Organization.

[61]. Yasmin, A. (2017). Impact of brand image on consumers’ purchase decision. International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, 7(10), 627-644.

[62]. Yazdanifard, R., Danbala, H., Yusoff, W., & Nikrousha, N. (2011). The Influence of Employee Attitudes and Company Brand on Customers loyalty in global market. In 2011 International Conference on Computer Communication and Management, Proc. of CSIT (Vol. 5).

[63]. Zhang, Y. (2015). The impact of brand image on consumer behavior: A literature review. Open journal of business and management, 3(01), 58.

[64]. Zohrabi, M. (2013). Mixed Method Research: Instruments, Validity, Reliability and Reporting Findings. Theory & practice in language studies, 3(2).