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Brand Equity and Consumer Behaviour Among Selected Outlets of Telecommunication Companies in Kenya

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Abstract: *In today's contemporary marketplace, competition has become so high to an extent that every firm is focusing on differentiating its service and product offerings from its competitors. This product and service differentiation makes firms to have unique features in their brand. Against this background, this study seeked to assess the issue of brand equity and consumer behaviour among selected telecommunication outlets in the North Rift region of Kenya. The aim of the study was to address the following research questions; What influence does brand loyalty have on consumer behaviour among telecommunication companies in the North Rift region of Kenya? How does brand association influence consumer behaviour in the telecommunication industry in North Rift region of Kenya? What influence does brand awareness have on consumer behaviour among telecommunication outlets in North Rift region in Kenya? Does perceived quality influence consumer behaviour among telecommunication outlets selected in the North Rift region? Given these research questions, the study was anchored on a Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) theory. A descriptive survey design was adopted which targeted about 22,510761 customers visiting the selected telecommunication outlets in the region. To collect information effectively, The study utilized a stratified sampling technique, which selected 384 participants. Using questionnaire, data was collected from the respondents who gave insights on the study's research questions. The data was analysed in Spss program to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. sing simple and multiple linear regression analysis, the study found that the four components of brand equity have a significant relationship with consumer behaviour.*

Keywords: brand equity, brand loyalty, brand association, brand awareness, and perceived quality

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

One of the greatest achievements in the telecommunications sector, mobile money transfer was first offered in Kenya in 2007. Since its launch, the number of users on the mobile transfer has increased dramatically as a result of many players' growing popularization of the brand. However, the increasing number of subscribers has led to many investors channelling their capital into the industry, leading to increased competition. In a similar vein, businesses are beginning to recognize that they must strive for more revenue to gain a larger market share due to the growing competition. Notably, intangible assets may be used to increase revenue and market share (Ahuja 2015; Rahman et al., 2019). These assets include; knowledge resources, organizational structure, staff expertise, customer size, research and development (R&D), inventive capability, market share, or a known brand, and are referred to as a firm's dynamic capabilities.
A brand's equity is the combination of its name, symbol, and related assets and liabilities that increase or decrease the value that the product or service offers. Notably, research on brand equity has revealed that one of the assets left off the balance sheet is locally created brand equity. For instance, Fejza et al. (2017) argued that brand equity is one of the most powerful intangibles within a company. Ahuja (2015) also mentioned how important branding is to a consumer's life. To prevent uncertainties and quality-related difficulties, consumers select brands and place their faith in them in the same manner as they do with friends and family.

In recent years, nations like Kenya have seen enormous advancements in their telecommunications industries. Both local and international businesses are drawn to offer services to their clientele due to the growing market and the rising usage of telecommunications goods and services (Fejza et al., 2017). As a result, to prevent ambiguity and problems with quality, customers are now picking brands and putting their faith in them in the same manner that they do with friends and family. For these reasons, it has become necessary to ascertain how and why customer behaviour in Kenyan telecommunications firms is influenced by brand equity.

The Concept of Brand Equity

Businesses always have to deal with a variety of difficulties in their working environments. Among these difficulties, growing globalization and competitiveness are major ones. According to Aaker (2020), businesses must use a variety of tactics to keep their competitive advantage in the face of growing globalization and competition. Because of this, most businesses gravitate toward branding in an effort to establish strong brand equity and gain a long-term competitive advantage over their competitors in the market (Jin-Su & Tong, 2015). Unlike other strategies, this strategy tends to give companies the ability to influence their self-image and the perception consumers have regarding their brand. As a result, businesses tend to not only increase their sales but also stand a high chance of increasing the amount they can charge for a product or service compared to their competitors, hence increasing the company's profit margin per customer.

Thus, a marketing term that characterizes a brand's worth is brand equity. As customers engage with the brand and its surroundings, their views and experiences shift, giving rise to this value. Aaker (2020) opines that brand equity value establishes the brand's relative performance in the market and can be either positive or negative. For instance, a brand offers positive brand equity whenever customers think well of it; in contrast, a brand has negative value if its performance continuously runs short of consumer expectations to the point where it should be avoided (Chinedu et al., 2019). As a result, high brand equity and a loyal customer base that is resistant to switching brands are seen to be indicators of positive brand equity.

Notably, marketing practitioners always endeavour to build strong brand equity to attract and retain customers.

Creating brand loyalty has been the major goal of every company nowadays in order to increase sales and preserve strong brand equity. Nonetheless, research like that done by Akkucuk and Esmaeili (2016) recognizes that brand equity, which is what creates brand loyalty, is developed gradually as the brand moves from its inception through the phases of introduction, growth, and finally maturation. In this approach, customers' perceptions of the brand and their actual behavior toward it are used to establish its worth (Akkucuk & Esmaeili, 2016). A company's brand often engages with customers and the general public through a variety of media, forums, and in-person interactions as it carries out its marketing mix. This influences how customers react toward the brand by enabling them to form connections that might be favorable or undesirable (Aaker, 2020). In this case, the positive associations may result in product brand trials, brand purchases, and recurring brand purchases, which come from perceived consumer value. Consumers' perceptions of the benefits of using a brand significantly outweigh the sacrifices made to obtain it (Jin-Su & Tong, 2015).

Therefore, as stated by Aaker (2020), enterprises should value brand equity because it raises the worth of proprietary companies and makes a good impact on how people view a brand, which leads to favourable consumer behaviour. Companies with strong brand equity have the capacity to successfully expand their brands, which is crucial for maintaining company continuity and boosting sales and profitability levels (Aaker 2020). By preventing the impacts of rival companies, particularly those with low brand equity, strong brand equity helps businesses gain a competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In this investigation, brand equity will be assessed via the lenses of perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand associations.

Brand loyalty, on the other hand, is used to denote a favourable consumer behaviour towards a given product or company. This favorable consumer behaviour grows into continued usage of the brand from time to time (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Chinedu et al. (2019), also contend that brand loyalty is the ability of the brand to attract, retain, and grow its customer base over a long period of time. Aaker (2020) affirms that brand loyalty, particularly behaviourally, has an effect on brand equity. Bui, Nguyen, and Khuc (2021) proposed a brand loyalty model that outlines purchase loyalty as leading to more market share while attitudinal loyalty as leading to higher premiums on pricing.

In today's fiercely competitive market, businesses want to draw in, hold on to, and expand their base of loyal clients. Satisfying consumers is no longer sufficient because competitors can get the same results. Instead, businesses must go above and beyond to cultivate a happy and loyal client base. Because a company may eventually think about brand expansions based on high brand loyalty, this is significant for brand equity. Marketing professionals concur that by using brand extensions, businesses may achieve high sales and lower advertising costs by taking advantage of strong brand loyalty. Aaker (2020) posits that the success of brand expansion is contingent upon several aspects, including product quality.

According to research on brand loyalty, it fosters a sense of relationship between consumers and brand owners (Pedeliento et al., 2015). But customers' brand recognition also plays a role in brand loyalty; brand awareness and image are crucial components of brand loyalty (Lua et al., 2015). To secure the success of the brand and the product, each brand aims to draw in and hold on to a faithful client base (Zavattaro et al., 2015). When evaluating brand loyalty, two factors are taken into account: the practical and emotional aspects. In contrast to actual purchase behavior, emotional loyalty indicates a consumer's desire and propensity to acquire a specific brand. Simultaneously, practical loyalty depicts the real purchasing behaviour of a customer for a certain brand (Lin, 2015)

Customers' conversations regarding a brand serve as an indicator of that brand's awareness (Zavattaro, 2015). It is the degree to which customers can recall a brand and link it with a certain product category based on factors like packaging, logos, and advertisements (Aaker, 2020). This indicates that the target audience is aware of the brand and can quickly identify it with particular goods or categories. Claire asserts that consumer behaviour about a product's marketing is influenced by brand recognition. When a customer has a clear, vivid mental image of the goods, they are aware of it (Zhuowei, Liping, 2015). Thus, brand knowledge is acquired by consumers through both direct and indirect experiences, such as using the product or service and indirect experiences, such as advertising and marketing.

When assessing brand awareness, it is critical to create a connection between the brand and the product category. Additionally, brand awareness should be assessed along a continuum, from a sense of uncertainty about the brand's recognition to a conviction that the brand is the only one in the category (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Bui et al., 2021). This is due to the fact that brand awareness is defined as the consumer having a vivid and distinct mental image of the product (Bui et al., 2021). This results in a spontaneous awareness that is linked to brands connected with their respective categories; the more the brand equity, the higher the spontaneous awareness. Moreover, brand recall and recognition are components of brand awareness. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), when an individual receives a brand cue, brand recognition indicates that they had previously been exposed to brand elements. Interestingly, this kind of brand awareness generates other components of brand equity, such brand association and brand loyalty, and even inspires confidence in customers.

The value of a brand that is frequently derived from the connections it is associated with is known as brand association. Associations such as the Ronald McDonald might foster positive attitudes or feelings for the brand that has been associated with it. The correlation between application areas like aspirin and heart attacks may serve as a driving force behind purchases and ultimately draw in clients. Strong connections may serve as a foundation for brand expansion (Aaker, Joachimsthaler, 2000). Notably, this strong association is created when a business uses aggressive promotion to persuade customers to purchase and utilize the brand, as well as when other people spread the word about the brand.

According to Aaker (2020), brand associations comfort consumers and lessen their incentive to test other brands in circumstances where brand connections are not significant when selecting a certain brand. Because of this, brand custodians' primary responsibility in daily brand management is to work to change customers' perceptions of brands and their positioning (Ashraf et al., 2017). In order to improve consumer behaviour, the main goal is to establish a positive brand association that is favourable to the brand and stands out from the competition. This positive brand association is crucial because it fosters favourable brand associations, which benefit the company by increasing repeat business and brand referrals. The connection with the brand. The brand association also tends to influence the processing and recall of information by consumers, enabling a brand to be differentiated and giving consumers reasons why it should be bought.

The last metric for assessing brand equity is perceived quality. This shows customers' assessments of the brand's superiority, quality, legitimacy, and distinction from other brands. In addition to influencing other facets of the brand, perceived quality influences how customers categorize the product (Aaker, Joachimsthaler, 2000). When consumers have faith in a brand, they will choose it over a variety of options, even if it costs more than items from other companies (He, Wang, 2014). Kotler and Keller (2016) state that because of the market's ongoing rivalry, providing more functional may raise a brand's perceived value

and emotional advantages and lowering related expenses in comparison to competitors. This would raise the brand's perceived value.
Practically, companies communicate with customers through distribution and selling, usage and experiences, advertising and platforms, and word-of-mouth recommendations. This strengthens consumer behaviour by enabling customers to evaluate products and brands according to their own perceptions (Abulazeez, 2022). Successful brands are frequently enhanced so that customers perceive and feel relevant and receive special extra benefits. Positive long-term brand experiences via use provide additional values, familiarity, and dependability, all of which contribute to the perception of good quality. Notably, among other sources, usage, labelling, and placement provide the additional values (Bansah et al., 2015). This gives rise to the idea that a brand can effectively fulfil its promises. For instance, in pack design that distinctly presents the brand aspects and manufacturer in the most credible manner and in accordance with customer expectations, it is possible to make references to promised satisfaction and provided uniform and consistent quality.

The Concept of Consumer Behaviour
Customer behaviour and the customer's experience with telecommunications businesses are strongly linked. According to Bui, Nguyen, and Khuc (2021), consumer behaviour is the propensity of a client to give favourable word-of-mouth, return later, stay longer, and spend more than they had planned. In the meanwhile, Adam and Akber (2016) said that consumer behaviour relates to a pleasant customer experience. Satisfied consumers are more likely to stay loyal, suggest a business, and return, as well as be willing to spend money and pay the best rates.

Customer behaviour demonstrates how a customer feels about ideas, services, and product experiences. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), consumer behaviour is the actions that customers take to find, acquire, use, assess, and discard goods and services that they believe will meet their requirements. Every manufacturing and marketing activity revolves on the needs and desires of the consumer. Notably, the client assumes the three separate roles of payer, buyer, and user in this behaviour, which is predicted based on the customer's purchasing behaviour. Nonetheless, their actions frequently have a big impact on how profitable and successful a corporation is.
Customers have varied views of brands in today's fiercely competitive marketplace. As a result, they will always have various opinions on a given brand, and they will frequently have to choose between a variety of brands and items that are almost identical in terms of functionality or price. Their ultimate choice in these situations is based on the perceptions they have about various brands (Ashraf et al., 2017). Customers must, for example, choose among a wide range of brands and items that are almost identical in terms of functionality or cost. In these kinds of circumstances, their ultimate choice is based on the perception they have of different brands. According to Adam and Akber (2016), word-of-mouth marketing, purchase intents, and on-going interactions may all be used to depict consumer behaviour. In this study brand preference, purchase intention and brand switching will measure consumer behaviour.
Brand preference is one indicator demonstrating the power of a brand consumer's mind. Brand preference is also defined" as "the bias a customer holds toward a particular "rand" (Chang & Liu, 2009). Hellier et al. (2003) defined brand preference" as "the extent to which the customer favours the designated service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration set. Measuring brand preference is an attempt to determine the impact of marketing activities on the minds of current and potential customers.

Researchers have focused a lot of emphasis on purchase intention, which has emerged as a key problem in studies of consumer behaviour (Chang & Liu, 2009). Customers' intentions are the sole factor that can predict their behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Consequently, the capacity of the consumer to buy that brand in the future is the definition of purchase intention (Cronin et al., 2000; Tolba & Hassan, 2009). It speaks to the likelihood that a consumer would select a specific brand while making a purchase from a category of goods (Crosno, 2009). The likelihood that a client will buy a product in the future is another way to describe purchase intention (Naeini et al., 2015). The real purchasing behaviour of consumers is frequently represented by future purchase intentions (Newberry et al., 2003; Keller, 2003).

When a shift in the level of competition in the market prompts a consumer to consider their options, this is known as switching (Appiah et al., 2017; Seiders & Tigert, 1997). Similarly, Hogan and Armstrong (2001) proposed that the goal of brand switching is to obtain a competitive advantage by substituting a higher valued resource for an existing one. According to Sathish et al. (2011), brand flipping is a reflection of how satisfied customers are with different brands or suppliers. Therefore, the act of becoming devoted to one good or service and then moving to another as a result of discontent or other issues is known as brand flipping. Even in the event that a brand can win over a customer's loyalty, if the brand does not satisfy his or her needs, the consumer may switch to a competing brand.

The Telecommunication Industry in Kenya

According to the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) report (2014/15), the development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry has driven global economic development in an extraordinary way. Advancements in technology, infrastructure, and fair pricing are attributed to the rapid growth in ICT, enabling increased connectivity to billions of people around the world. By the end of 2014, the number of mobile subscriptions was 7 billion across the globe. In Sub-Saharan Africa, mobile telephony continues to revolutionize the uptake of ICT services such as mobile broadband and mobile money transfer services. In respect to mobile money uptake, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of mobile money accounts. In East African nations, 50% of mobile phone subscribers have mobile money accounts, with the majority being in Kenya (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2021).

In the context of Kenya, the World Bank reports indicate Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been growing at an average of 5.44% between 2004 and 2018. Amongst key contributors to this growth is the information and communications sector. One of the key contributing sub-sectors is mobile telecommunications, which has four major players such as Safaricom Kenya Limited, Airtel Networks Kenya Limited, Telkom Kenya Limited (Orange), and Finserve Kenya Limited (Equitel) (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2021). The Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) report (2016/17) summarized that by the end of June 2017, the number of mobile subscriptions stood at 40.2 million (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2021). Notably, Safaricom had the largest share of subscriptions with 72.6 %, followed by Airtel at 15.3 %, Orange at 7.2%, and Finserve at 4.6% (Chepkwony et al., 2018). These percentages indicate the extent of competition as they compete for consumers by offering their products and services to win consumers. This is done through innovation and branding of their product and service offers, branded customer service centres, branded promotional and advertising activities, offering attractive pricing mechanisms, and rolling out new products and services, amongst other activities.

Globally, the telecommunications industry continues to play a significant role in countries' growth; studies have been interested in the impact of brand equity on consumer behaviour in this industry. A study by Adam and Akber (2016) found that brand equity enhances consumer purchase decisions for cell phones. Notably, brand equity is accompanied by other factors such as price, status, self-concept, and lifestyle, which are key components in influencing customers' purchase decisions (Bansah et al., 2015). Another study by Abulazeez (2022) also revealed that branding influences consumer behaviour in both the long and short run since consumers are considered valuable assets that determine the profitability and competitiveness of MTN Nigeria Communications in Mubi Metropolis. Also, Abdul-Aziz (2014) concurs with the findings where the study revealed that there is a correlation between a brand and the behaviour displayed by consumers with regard to their purchase decisions in MTN Ghana, where consumers are very much enlightened about the various brands on the market and as such, their image is very crucial when it comes to making a purchase decision, especially a first time purchase.

In Kenya, a larger population has access to mobile phones, and that alone stimulates the quest for understanding the influence of brand equity and, consequently, their behavioural response (Ahuja, 2015). Musera (2019) unanimously agreed that consumer behaviour is dynamic and sophisticated, which makes it significant for decision-makers to understand and employ the right marketing strategies. Telecommunications firms in Kenya have witnessed monumental growth, and the high spate of competition has truly become serious in the late 21st century due to the increase in the population. This has led to a high toll of development in innovation and the desire to promptly access data when needed (Kariuki, 2015). In light of these competitive scenarios, aided by the rapid growth in technology and information sharing, telecommunications service providers were forced to rethink their brand equity strategy (Wamwandu, 2018). It is against this backdrop that the study aims to examine brand equity and consumer behaviour among selected telecommunications outlets in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The consumer is the cause and purpose of all production and marketing activities. Customer behaviour is based on consumer buying behaviour, with the customer playing the three distinct roles of user, payer and buyer. Consumer behaviour determines profitability. There are many factors or attributes of consumers affecting their views and decisions (Chinedu et al., 2019). As markets continue to grow in terms of competitiveness, and consumers differ in their perceptions; they would necessarily hold different images for any specific brand and often have to make a choice among a range of products or brands in the market that differ very little in its price or function (Ashraf et al., 2017). In such circumstances, their final decision depends on the image they associate with different brands.

However, the mobile market shares in Kenya, measured by the number of subscriptions, have maintained a similar trend a period, with Safaricom PLC holding the largest market share (66.1%) in subscriptions despite it being in the midst of competition amongst rivals Airtel (27.2%), Telekom Kenya (3.6%), Finserve Africa (2.3%) and Jamii Telecoms (0.6%) (CA, 2023). It is assumed that in a perfectly competitive market, consumers have the freedom to choose from among the available alternative service providers. In such a case, the market leadership is expected to shift from one service provider to another. However, that has not been the case for Kenyan mobile phone companies, where Safaricom PLC has dominated the market leadership. Interestingly, while Safaricom is making the highest profits in East and Central Africa (CA, 2023), the other mobile service providers have been making huge losses that have led their management to consider leaving the Kenyan market, this raises a big question of why are the other firms in the industry not able to measure up to the market leaders such as Safaricom.

Deriving arguments from other industries, Wamwandu (2018) revealed that there is a significant relationship between brand images and consumer's buying behaviour and brand attitude, brand attributes, and perceived benefits. For instance, in a study by Kavengi (2013), it was concluded that a positive bank brand image would improve customer loyalty directly and also improve customer satisfaction through the enhancement of perceived service quality. Najafi, Rahmani, and Safari (2014) also added that there is a positive relationship between brand and customer satisfaction and loyalty. Chinedu, Ike-Elechi, and Izogo (2019) revealed that elements of bank marketing communications are significant predictors of customer loyalty. These researches warrant a conclusion that at any time, proper brand equity should be the leading way for outlets in the telecommunications industry to gain a competitive edge. However, despite the existence of this knowledge, there is still a gap across Kenyan telecommunication companies to clinch a competitive edge over Safaricom Co. Ltd (Kariuki, 2015; Musera, 2019). It is against this background that this study is proposed to assess brand equity and consumer behaviour among selected telecommunications outlets in Kenya.

Research Question

What is the relationship between brand loyalty and consumer behaviour among outlets of selected telecommunications companies in the North Rift Region of Kenya?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between brand loyalty and consumer behaviour among outlets of selected telecommunication companies in the North Rift Region of Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study was achored on four critical theories; the Consumer or Customer Brand Based Equity (CBBE) Theory, the Brand Relationship Theory (BRT), Brand Asset Valuation (BAV) theory, and the Five-Asset Model of Brand Equity (FABE) will be adopted as they relate to the study's concepts.

Consumer Brand Based Equity (CBBE) Theory

Being a significant factor affecting the financial equity and stability of brands, perpetual equity from customer and customer perspectives, known as consumer or customer-based brand equity (CBBE), has received attention in many different fields. The groundwork of this theory began in the early 90s by Aaker and Killer. Aaker (1992) stated, that strong brand equity is based on awareness, association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty" (p.58). Killer similarly opined "that "a strong brand equity occurs when consumers are familiar with the brand and hold some favourable, strong or unique brand association in m" mory"(p.1). The theory, therefore, adopted that brand equity is a set of four categories of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to a firm's customers.

Aaker (1991) summarized these categories of assets or liabilities as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary assets such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships (Aaker, 2012). He further highlighted that brand identity includes a core and an extended identity in terms of the brand extension concept. Based on the theory, the most important phase in the brand equity concept is for one to determine brand identity using what the consumers perceive in the brand. Aaker (2012) explains that brands have a unique set of brand associations based on what they represent, stand for, and promise to consumers. Aaker (1996) further pointed out that to determine brand identity, one can use its dimensions and highlight brand dimensions, including product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin organizational attributes, local versus global dimensions, consumer relationships, visual imagery/metaphors, symbols and brand heritage amongst many others (Fournier & Glick, 2004).

In this study, the CBBE theory will be a significant resource in understanding the relationship between brand equity and customer behaviour. For instance, higher brand awareness is perceived to have the capability of affecting consumer behaviour. This denotes that when customers have strong brand awareness, they develop the likelihood of choosing a company's brand over its competitors. This will help to understand why customers have high preferences for companies such as Safaricom compared to competitors such as

Airtel and Telkom in the Kenyan telecommunication industry. Similarly, on consumer perception, the CBBE model emphasizes the importance of brand meaning. This includes brand associations and their perceived quality. Using these concepts will enable us to broaden our understanding of how positive brand perceptions can impact customer or consumer behaviour for giant companies such as Safaricom, leading to increased purchasing intentions, willingness to pay for premium services, and the development of positive word-of-mouth.

Even though the CBBE theory raises significant insights into understanding brand equity and customer behaviour, it has been criticized for several aspects. Keller (1993) and Erdem and Swait (2014) state that CBBE theory lacks a measurement instrument that encompasses several diverse brands of products and services with the ability to avoid dubious responses on brand equity in competitive contexts and is capable of leveraging these metrics to the brand level. Current measurements are perhaps diverting from the focus on competitiveness, ignoring the brand level (Tolba & Hassan, 2009; Wang & Finn, 2012). That is, claiming that a brand has a high brand equity rating without considering the ratings of other alternatives in the market seems to be missing the point of evaluating brand equity in a context that involves rival brands (Erdem & Swait, 2014). The CBBE theory also fails to capture the complexity of the brand equity construct and its benefits in terms of key consumer behavioural outcomes (Wang & Finn, 2012). More complex and dynamic models focusing on CBBE theory as a process often lack empirical support, particularly from more than one country. Many of these dimensions are found in Keller's framework; however, the emphasis on some of these brand equity dimensions differs.

Brand Relationship Theory

This theory underscores the process of a consumer possessing and consuming products through constructing one's social identity and communicating it to others. Organizational brands are collections of tangible and intangible attributes correlating with consumers' needs. Brand functional elements consist of names and logos, while elements of symbols are personality, equity, picture and loyalty (Gummesson, 2002). The theory assumes that having loyal customers implies that customers have an emotional connection to the brand, which increases their relationship and creates a stronger customer-brand relationship, a goal that all businesses strive for (Gummesson, 2002). Rosenbaum-Elliot, Percy and Pervan (2011) assert that brand equity that has a positive impression is helpful in establishing consumer loyalty based on specific resources and liabilities that purchasers connect to brand names or brand learning is produced from telecommunications companies' mindfulness and brand picture and is conceptualized by the attributes and connections of brand affiliations. Brands are, in this manner, essential partners that add to purposive and dynamic associations with highlights portrayed by dedication and dependability (Fournier & Glick, 2009) and saturated with individual implications dependent on the value, cooperation proclivity and strength levels (Gummesson, 2002).

Telecommunications companies have an arrangement of brands with which they have relations. These are impacted by reality universes and personalities, connected to individual ideas, and go about as significance-based correspondence frameworks (Fournier & Glick, 2009). There exist connections between people and buyers that characterize the brand association from their points of view, and the brand connection and social esteem are particularly customized in the brains of customers or buyers (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2011). Clients create singular connections dependent on their view of brand esteem, mark meaning, and their encounters. That is, clients make the brand individually through their correspondence over different settings.

This theory is relevant to the study as it will help the outlets of Airtel Company, Jamii Telecom, Finserve, and Telkom Kenya to understand how the customers perceive different brand names they encounter, thus increasing consumer behaviour in the company. One significant strength of this theory that will help broaden the understanding of the association between brand equity and consumer behaviour is its focus on relationships. According to Percy and Pervan (2011), the theory recognizes the importance of building and maintaining relationships over time. In the telecommunication industry, fierce competition implies a high preference for customer loyalty. Therefore, understanding and nurturing these relationships.

Another notable strength of this theory is its holistic perspective. Gummenson takes a holistic view of brand relationships. As Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou (2011) stated, the theory considers diverse dimensions such as emotional, social and functional aspects. Its comprehensive approach can enhance a deep understanding of how consumers perceive and engage with telecommunication companies in Kenya. This can extend beyond their functional attributes, a relevant concept in an industry where brand differentiation can be challenging. Furthermore, the theory's emphasis on creating long-term brand equity rather than short-term gains is a significant strength. Gummesson's perspective aligns with the strategic goal of many telecommunication companies that aim at fostering customer loyalty and maximizing customer lifetime value.

Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) Theory

This theory measures brand equity for thousands of brands across many categories. It uses four key components that measure brand equity, brand differentiation, brand relevance, brand esteem and brand knowledge (Al-Abdallah et al., 2013). Brand differentiation measures the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be different; relevance assesses the brand's span and appeal; brand esteem deals with how consumers regard and respect the brands, while brand knowledge ascertains familiarity and intimacy of a brand with consumers. The second construct, brand relevance, evaluates how well a company's brand can meet customer needs and preferences. Third, brand esteem measures the perceived quality and reputation of a company. The last construct of this model, brand knowledge or familiarity, measures customers' awareness and familiarity with a brand.

The BAV theory can be utilised to understand how brand equity relates to customer behaviour in the context of selected telecommunication companies in Kenya. For instance, when companies such as Airtel focus on providing differentiated services such as 5G network coverage and competitive pricing plans, the differentiation can attract customers who value cutting-edge technology and affordability. This can increase Airtel's market share and customer loyalty (Borsaly, 2022). Similarly, companies in the telecommunication industry that focus on offering flexible plans and services that cater to diverse customer needs are likely to drive higher customer satisfaction and retention (Salamovska & Todorovska, 2016). This implies that by focusing on the four pillars of the BAV model, it is possible to derive how telecommunication companies such as Airtel strengthen brand equity and leverage it to positively impact customer behaviour and drive business growth and performance relative to their competitors.

Five Asset Model of Brand Equity

Another critical theory that will be adopted in this study is the Five Asset Model of Brand Equity by Aaker (1992). The Five Asset Model of Brand Equity is a framework that clearly outlines the critical assets contributing to brand equity within an organization. This theory helps to understand the key components that make up brand equity and how they affect customer behaviour and business performance. According to (Davcik et al., 2015), brand equity comprises five properties: awareness, association, perceived quality, loyalty and proprietary assets such as patents and trademarks. Brand awareness is the capability of a prospective buyer to identify or remember a brand that belongs to a particular class of product. At the same time, the association is the strength of a brand name and can be measured by how consumers are familiar

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with and "like" the brand. The association also indicates brand commitment and consideration during purchases (Çifci et al., 2016). Perceived quality is the degree to which a brand is viewed as one to provide quality, whereas brand loyalty is the degree to which people are dedicated to a brand.

The theory acknowledges that modern-day living in contemporary societies would be very different without the proliferation of brands and their ramifications on the livelihoods of individuals. Branding, therefore, becomes a significant societal construct, as little remains unbranded in the current competitive marketplace (Çifci et al., 2016). For firms, the symbols of loyalty to brands include trade leverage, reduced costs in marketing efforts and influx of new customers. Proprietary brand dimensions such as patents and trademarks are essential in sustaining the firm's competitive edge and customer loyalty (Aaker, 2012). Aaker (1992) asserts that the five assets model demonstrates that brand equity accords worth to the company and customer. In addition, customer value is significant for a company's value.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework adopted for this study. According to the figure, brand loyaty is the independent variable, while consumer behaviour among telecommunications outlets is the dependent variable. Brand loyalty, which is a component of brand equity, builds and creates value in the mind of the customer. Products are what companies make, but customers buy brands. Marketers go for brand equity in order to distinguish their offerings from similar products and services provided by their competitors (Bansah et al., 2015; Abulazeez, 2022; Kariuki, 2015; Wamwandu, 2018). Additionally, it carries an inherent assurance to the customers that the quality of a purchase will be similar to earlier purchases of the same brand. Strong brand loyalty implies strong brand equity that leads to high sales, price premiums, high market share, and subsequently, good firm performance and consumer behaviour (Aaker, 2020).

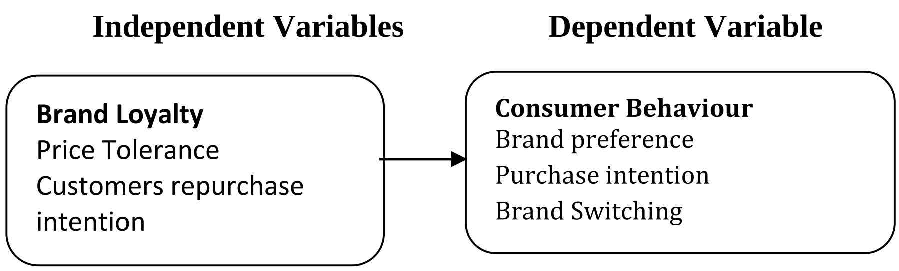

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: (Bansah et al. 2015; Abulazeez, 2022; Kariuki, 2015; Wamwandu, 2018).

Empirical Review

Lim et al. (2022) acknowledge the role of empirical review in research, including identifying knowledge gaps, highlighting the methods previously employed to study similar concepts and spotting limitations of prior work. Having these insights helps to offer recommendations for directing future research (Lim et al., 2022). For the sake of this study, Aaker (1992) based the empirical review on the four constructs of the Consumer or Customer Brand Based Equity (CBBE) Theory: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and customers' perceived quality. All the constructs have significant impacts on customer purchasing behaviours. Many researchers have been conducted on brand loyalty and consumer behavior (Møller et al., (2006, Pinar et al., (2014) Abdul-Aziz (2014; brand awareness (Gitau & Bor, 2021, Shahid, Hussain and Zafar (2017), Muigai (2017) and Jeyalakshmi and Kengatharan (2020); brand association (Alaka, (2015), Jin Su, (2016) and Auila (2017) and perceived quality (Hanslim et al., (2020), Calvo-Porral and Lévy-Mangin, (2017), and Jhamb et al., (2020).

Brand loyalty is among the first factors believed to explain consumer brand choices. It has aroused enormous interest among researchers as well as practitioners in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour. Businesses with large numbers of loyal consumers have become concerned about the significance of attaining a large market share in order to achieve higher rates of return on investment. As discussed by Atulkar (2020), brand loyalty favors positive word-of-mouth and greater resistance among loyal customers to competitors' strategies. Such findings from scholars have encouraged marketers to end up focusing on building and maintaining brand loyalty among customers. However, when striving to achieve those goals, information regarding the factors that determine the creation of brand loyalty among consumers becomes important.

The article an empirical explanation of brand loyalty by Møller et al., (2006) attempted to present empirical findings on the association between brand equity and consumer behaviour in diverse industries. To achieve this objective, this study focussed on relative attitude as a latent two-dimensional second-order factor and investigated relative attitude and repeat purchasing. The study utilized a conceptual model of attitude-behaviour consistency and brand loyalty and was empirically tested in the context of frequently purchased consumer goods. The study also utilized structural modelling on survey data from about 395 households to examine the model and corresponding hypothesis (Møller et al., 2006). The study found that relative attitude is a composite of purchase involvement and perceived brand differences. Being the first study to attempt to measure relative attitude as a second-factor composite of perceived brand differences and purchase involvement, the study found that relative attitude has.

Findings from this study may have certain implications for managers in diverse industries inc, including the Kenyan telecommunication industry. For instance, the results show that consumers with a high relative attitude are less prone to variety-seeking and more resistant to out-of-stock situations and competitors' offers, and this implies they are consequently likely to be loyal to their usual brand (Atulkar (2020). Therefore, marketers can create loyal customers by building a positive attitude towards their products and services. The concept behind this argument is relative attitude as a composite of purchase involvement and perceived brand differences, which helps to enhance customer or brand loyalty.

However, it is also worth recalling that while relative attitude can have an impact on consumer behaviour, the study by (Møller et al., 2006) categorically focussed on the frequently purchased consumer goods market. The results obtained from the study may, therefore, not necessarily be generalized to other market types. This creates a gap for other studies to test the model on other market types and industries, such as the telecommunication industry in Kenya. Furthermore, the study's results were limited by the nature of measuring repeat purchases. For instance, every respondent was asked to indicate how many times in the last five purchases they bought the same brand for each product category (Møller et al., 2006). Therefore, as much as this could be a measure of consumer past purchasing behaviour, different industries are likely to have different natures of consumer behaviour given this measure of consumer behaviour. This warrants the need for future researchers to conduct similar studies on industries such as telecommunication, which is categorized in the service sector.

In another empirical study by Pinar et al. (2014), the emphasis was on dimensions that affect brand equity in the context of the university. The study was triggered by high competitiveness among universities and colleges while they seek to develop sustainable strategies while utilizing the concept of branding as a major strategic solution. The objective of this study, therefore, was to apply the brand equity concept in determining how universities could apply the brand equity dimensions in their framework. The study borrowed concepts of consumer-based brand equity and used them to test and measure identified core dimensions (Pinar et al., 2014). This led to the researchers adopting an exploratory design to carry out the study. The collected data was also presented and retested to improve its quality and validity. The results obtained from this study showed that brand equity dimensions vary in importance based on the industry an organization belongs to when developing strong brands. The study found that as universities developed stronger brands, students perceived the quality of the university's faculties as a key contributor to the brand equity dimension (Pinar et al., 2014). This implied that there was a relationship between brand equity dimensions, which suggested an inter-relationship between the study's dependent and independent variables. However, one significant limitation of his study was the perception of a university as a brand. This limitation presents a gap for future research where a need lies in future research giving a holistic approach such as sampling out alums and other stakeholders, including the community, parents and organizations linked to the university, to determine the impact of brand equity on consumer behaviour. Given this limitation, studying brand equity across Kenyan telecommunication companies may call for this study to utilize company stakeholders in determining the impact of brand equity on consumer behaviour rather than focusing on consumers alone.

Chepkwony and Langat (2018) conducted a similar study but focused on the influence of brand equity on the financial performance of mobile telecommunication firms in Nairobi, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed methods research design. The study utilized convenience sampling, stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires, while secondary data was obtained from financial statements. Data was summarized and analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics methods. The research findings indicated that brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness and brand association have a significant influence on the financial performance of mobile telecommunication firms, implying that the stronger the brand equity, the stronger the financial performance of the firms (Chepkwony and Langat (2018)). There is potential to enhance financial performance by addressing elements of concern to subscribers such as pricing, variety of products and services, and reliability of network services, amongst other issues, which directly improves brand equity.
Another study was done by Abdul-Aziz (2014) on the impact a brand has on the behaviours of consumers with special regard to their purchase behaviours. For the study, a sample size of 50

respondents was selected from the rom Adabraka region of Accra in Gana, through ugh non-probability sampling technique. The results revealed that consumers are attracted to packaging and labelling as it enhances the image and creates visual appeal. It was also found that consumers are influenced by the quality of a product or service before making a brand selection (Abdul-Aziz, 2014). It was also evident that consumers are becoming more enlightened and fashionable and would, therefore, prefer well-developed brands. MTN's insurance brand needs easier recognition and popularity in the minds of consumers. Based on the findings, the author recommended that MTN calls for massive improvement in the services rendered, innovation and differentiation and further research on how to improve its brand.

While it can be true that packaging and labelling enhance a brand's image and create a visual appeal, consumer behaviour remains a complex and multifaceted concept. This implies that packaging and labelling are just among the aspects of the broader range of factors that can affect purchasing decisions (Atulkar, 2020). Many factors, including product quality, price, and brand reputation, also come into play, especially when dealing with highly competitive industries such as the telecommunication industry. Some consumers may also prioritize sustainability and may be turned off by excessive or environmentally unfriendly packaging. Similarly, while consumers may be influenced by the quality of a product or service when making a brand selection, quality alone may not fully capture the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior. Other factors, including customer service, convenience and brand reputation, may come into play. These limitations, therefore, present gaps in research and call for future research, including this study, to consider the multifaceted nature of brand equity by exploring pricing strategies, brand reputation, product quality, and convenience, among other factors likely to affect consumer behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. As stated by Wood, Marilynn & Ross-Ker, (2006), a correlational design is a study design for examining the relationships between or among two or more variables in a single group, which can occur at several levels. It is a type of non-experimental design that examines the relationship between two or more variables. The design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. It also reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two or more variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative (Esser, & Vliegenthart, 2017). This research design is appropriate because it helped establish if there was relationship between brand equity and consumer behaviour among selected outlets of telecommun**ication companies in Kenya. statistics.**

Target Population

The study targeted four selected outlets that showed a subscription share below 30%. The companies that fallen within this range included; Airtel (27.2%), Telekom Kenya (3.8%), Finserve (Equitel) (2.3%) and Jamii Telecom (0.6%). The target subscribers were estabished at 22,510761, who had subscribed to the selected outlets of telecommunication companies in Kenya. According to the Communication Authority of Kenya Report (2023), 18,074,576 subscribers for Airtel Company, 2,522,887 subscribers for Telkom Kenya, 1,501,749 subscribers for Finserve (Equitel) and 411,549 subscribers for Jamii Telecom. The study will be conducted in one week in May 2024.

Table 1: Target Population

Company	**Target population**
Airtel Company	18,074,576
Telkom Kenya	2,522,887
Finserve (Equitel)	1,501,749
Jamii Telecom	411,549
Total	22,510,761

Source: (Communication Authority of Kenya Report, 2023).

Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedures: A sample size is representative of the whole population (Kothari, 2019). The size of the sample in this study that the researcher will use is determined by the Krejcie & Morgan table (1970), and its sample will be 384 respondents. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) propose the following formula to determine sample size:

$$S = \frac{x^2\,\mathrm{NP}(1-\mathrm{P})}{D^2(\mathrm{N}-1) + x^2\mathrm{P}(1-\mathrm{p})}$$

Where:

S = Required Sample size
x = Z value (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence level)
N = Population Size
P = Population proportion (expressed as decimal) (assumed to be 0.5 (50%)
D = Degree of accuracy (5%), expressed as a proportion (.05); It is margin of error.

$$384 = \frac{1.96^{\,2} * 22{,}510{,}761 * 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(22{,}510{,}761-1) + 1.96^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

=384 customers

The 384 customers were selected using a stratified sampling technique. This is supported by Kothari (2019), who asserted that stratified sampling involves the division of a population into smaller subgroups known as strata. In stratified sampling or stratification, the strata are formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics, such as income or educational attainment.

Table 2: Sample Size

Company	Target population	Procedure	Sample size
Airtel Company	18,074,576	18,074,576/22,510,761*384	308
Telkom Kenya	2,522,887	2.522,887/22,510,761*384	43
Finserve (Equitel)	1,501,749	1,510,749/22,510,761*384	26
Jamii Telecom	411,549	411,549/22,510,761*384	7
Total	22,510,761		384

Source: (Researcher, 2024).

Description of Research Instruments:
The study utilized survey questionnaires as data collection instruments. According to Kothari, (2019) questionnaires take little time to administer and can be given to a large number of respondents. The questionnaire had both structured and unstructured questions consisting of five parts. Part A, contained structured closed-ended questions and address the demographic characteristics of respondents. In contrast, parts B, C, D, E and F focussed on addressing the influence of brand equity dimensions on consumer behaviour among selected outlets of telecommunication companies in Kenya. A five-point Likert scale was adopted to collect information, enabling respondents to indicate their level of agreement, neutrality or disagreement with the questions asked. The questionnaires were administered to the customers visiting outlets of Airtel Company, Telkom Kenya, Finserve (Equitel) and Jamii Telecom.

Pilot Study
The data collection instrument was pilot-tested to ensure its reliability and validity. A pilot test is a small-scale trial run of all procedures planned for use in the main study (Monette et al., 2002). The pilot test was carried out across 31 customers who did not participate in the actual study. Pretesting enabled the study to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire concerning question format and wording.

Validity of Research Instrument
Validity refers to the extent to which the measurement of a test is intended, and it addresses the problem of whether an instrument actually measures what it is intended to measure. To evaluate the validity of the instrument the study sought views from experts in the telecommunication industry. This facilitated any necessary reviews and modification of the questionnaire, thereby improving validity. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the standard procedure to evaluate the content validity of a measure is to use an expert opinion or professional in a specific field of study. For all the variables employed in the study, expert opinion and pretesting methods were used to measure the validity of the research instrument (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

Reliability of Research Instrument
The reliability of a measure is concerned with the consistency of a measure and the ability of an instrument to produce the same results when used repeatedly (Shanghverzy, 2003). For the sake of this study, the questionnaire was subjected to a test-retest method with 31 respondents selected from the target population at four outlets of Airtel Company: Airtel, Jamii Telecom, Finserve (Equitel) and Telkom Kenya in North Rift Region on two different occasions within two weeks and the relationship between two scores computed to provide results on the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was utilized as a test-retest method to test the questionnaire's reliability, and the respondents used in the pilot study were excluded from the final sample. Following Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient rule, a value of $\alpha > 0.7$ will be considered to be reliable and above will be used as a threshold for determining the reliability of the questionnaire (Cronbach, 1951).

Description of Data Analysis Procedures
The data collected was analysed quantitatively. Before processing, data preparation was done on the filled questionnaires where editing, coding, entering and cleaning the data was performed which helped to assess the accuracy and completion of the responses. Using SPSS (Version 27), descriptive statistics method was performed and involved the use of mean, percentages, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis. Inferential statistics were also performed where multiple regression analysis were run to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

The following regression model was adopted for the purpose of analysis:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$……………………………………………………...................Equation 3.1

Where:

Y represents the Consumer Behaviour of Outlets.
X_1 represents Brand loyalty.
X_2 represents the Brand association.
X_3 represents Brand awareness.
X_4 represents Perceived quality.
ε represents the error term.
β_0 represents the constant in the equation.
β represents the Coefficient of X.
While $\beta 1$, $\beta 2$, $\beta 3$ and $\beta 4$ are coefficients of determination, and ε the random error term.

DATA PRESENTATION

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed where 383 questionnaires were duly filled and returned. This return rate represented 95% of the target sample population for the study. The researcher agrees that a response rate of 50% and above is rendered an acceptable benchmark for analysis an publication. At 60%, it is considered as good, and at 70% and above as the best for any analysis and publication. With a response rate higher than 70%, the non-response error for this study was therefore considered very small.

Demographic Information

233 (60.8%) of the respondnets were male, while the remaining 39.2% (150) were female indicating that male respondents were slightly more than female respondents. A relatively recent study had also reported 50.5% male respondents and 49.5% female respondents (Magnesian, 2018). This response rate was rendered highly comparable to other similar studies on brand equity and consumer behaviour across communication companies and hence can be well attributed to the rest of the population.143 (37.3%) of the respodents were aged between 31-40 years. Those aged 21-30 years were 33.2% (127), those between 41-50 years were 24.5% (94) and only 5.0% (19) respondents were over 51 years. From this population sample, the highest portion of the respondents 38.4% (147) were college graduates, 27.2% (104) had university a degree, and an equal population of 17.2% (66) had primary certification as their highest educational level. Regarding the amount of time the respondents had used the communication service provider, results obtained indicated that the highest population, 36.0% (138) had used their service company between 4-6 years, 33.2% (127) respondents had used the service company in less than 3 years, 23.0% (88) had used the service company for more than 10 years and only 7.8% had used their service company between 7-9 years. It was therefore concluded that most of the respondents had experience with the companies; Airtel, Telkom, Equitel and Jamii for periods between 3 to 10 years, were conversant with the brand and could relate the information needs that the study sought to research on regarding the respective communication companies.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Respondents Characteristics	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative. Percentage (%)
Gender:				
Male	233	233	60.8	60.8
Female	150	383	39.2	100.0
Age:				
21-30 years	127	127	33.2	33.2
31-40 years	143	270	37.3	70.5
41-50 years	94	364	24.5	95.0
Over 51 years	19	383	5.0	100.0
Level of Education:				
Primary	66	66	17.2	17.2
Secondary	66	132	17.2	34.5
College	147	279	38.4	72.8
University	104	383	27.2	100.0
Years of Using Service:				
Below 3 years	127	127	33.2	33.2
4-6 years	138	265	36.0	69.2
7-9 years	30	295	7.8	77.0
Over 10 years	88	383	23.0	100.0

Majority of the respondents were undecided if they will change to any other telecommunication provider in the future as indicated by the mean value of 3.20 which denotes undecided on the likert scale (3) and a standard deviation of 1.192 (see table 4). Additionally, majority of the respondents were undecided if they are satisfied by their current telecommunication company as indicated by a mean value of 3.19 which is nearly 3 on the likert scale, denoting undecided and with a standard deviation of 1.401. The results also indicated that if the prices increased, majority of the respondents would change to another telecommunication provider as indicated by a mean value of 2.48 which is close to 2, disagree on the likert scale. However, majority of the respondents agree that they are willing to try new products from the telecommunication company as reflected by the mean value of 3.78 which is close to 4, agree on the likert scale. Additionally, majority of the respondents agreed that products of the telecommunication company were part of their lives and that they would likely recommend the services to their friends and relatives. However, majority were indicated that they could switch to another network if their mobile cellular was unavailable as shown by a mean value of 3.15, close to 3 (undecided) on the likert scale. The findings are in line with other findings that brand loyalty has a significant effect on consumer behaviour given the low market share of the communication companies; Airtel, 27.2%, Telkom 3.6%, Equitel 2.3%, and Jamii Telecom 0.6%.

Table 4: Respondents Responses on Brand Loyalty

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Stat.	Stat	Stat	Stat	Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
I will not change to any other telecommunication company provider in future	1	5	3.20	1.192	-.156	.125	-.664	.249
I am fully satisfied by the services of the telecommunication company provider	1	5	3.19	1.401	-.290	.125	-1.307	.249
Even if prices increase, I will not change to any other company provider	1	5	2.68	1.259	.254	.125	-.797	.249
I am willing to try new products and services from my telecommunication company provider	1	5	3.78	1.170	-1.025	.125	.457	.249
I feel products and services from telecommunication company provider are a part of my life	1	5	3.80	1.141	-1.034	.125	.410	.249
I will recommend the services and products offered by the telecommunication company provider to my friends and relatives	1	5	3.89	1.048	-1.083	.125	.855	.249
If my current Mobile cellular service provider was unavailable, it would be difficult for me to use another Network provider	1	5	3.15	1.302	-.174	.125	-1.132	.249
BRAND LOYALTY MEAN	1.29	4.86	3.3846	.7257	.374	.125	-.607	.249
Valid N (listwise)								

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Note: Min = Minimum Statistic, Max= Maximum Statistic, Std. Dev.= Standard Deviation, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Test of Hypothesis

Before testing the study hypothesis using the simple and multiple linear regression, the assumptions of multiple regression were done before. According to Kumar (20110, multiple regression analysis can be used in determining the relationship between two variables. The analysis, usually, a mode has assumptions where the multiple regression model assumptions entail a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables in which the residuals are said to be normally distributed. When the error term is normally distributed with a mean zero and a constant variance, the variables are said to be normally distributed.

Upon testing the assumption of multiple linear regressions, the normality test results for the variables under consideration indicated that all the four variables followed a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were employed to assess normality, where all variables yielded a significance level above 0.05 adopted for this study as indicated in the table below:

Table 5 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	R, R2, P value, β	Decision Rule
There is no significant relationship between brand loyalty and consumer behavior among outlets of telecommunication companies in the North Rift region of Kenya.	R=0.494, R^2=0.244, p<0.05, β=0.279	Reject Null Hypothesis

Source: Field Work, 2024).

The results shown in Table 6 reveal that brand loyalty has a weak positive relationship with customer behaviour across selected outlets of telecommunication companies (R=. 494, R^2=. 238, P<0.05). This is indicated by the significance level of 0.045, which is below 0.05, adopted for this study. The R square change for the model was 0.238, which connotes that 23.8% variation in consumer behavior is as a result of Brand Loyalty. The adjusted R-square of the model is 0.238, which is about 24% as seen in table 6. This suggests that variations in customer behaviour of sampled population can be attributed to 24% changes in brand loyalty.

At 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (4, 33), the F-statistics is 40.810 and with a p-value of 0.045 which is less than 0.05 level of significance adopted for this study. Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis that brand loyalty has no significant effect on customer behaviour among outlets of telecommunication companies in the North Rift region of Kenya and accepted the alternative hypothesis that brand loyalty has a significant relationship with consumer behaviour among outlets of telecommunication companies in the North Rift region of Kenya.

Table 5: Model 1 Summary of Brand Loyalty and Consumer Behaviour

Model Summary

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.494[a]	.244	.238	.58385	.244	40.810	3	379	.000	1.643
Adj R^2						0.238				

a. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND LOYALTY
b. Dependent Variable: CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Source: Field Work, 2024).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study reveaed that brand loyalty has a weak positive relationship with consumer behaviour. The p-value obtained across all regression analyses for this variable was less than 0.05 (0.045 for simple linear regression and 0.000 for the multiple linear regression) adopted for this study. This conflicting analysis is common in comparing simple and multiple regression analyses. According to Moller et al., (2006), consumer behaviour is influenced by multiple factors, often in complex ways. This denotes that, a single-variable model may oversimplify the relationship, leading to non-significant results. Additionally, the simple linear regression analyses ignore the effect of other factors such as brand association, brand awareness and perceived quality while a multiple linear regression analyses accounts for the complexity, revealing relationships that better reflect the data's underlying structure.

Given this argument, Brand loyalty has a significant positive relationship with consumer behaviour. As indicated by Pedeliento et al., (2015), majority of consumers will likely come back to purchase the products and services of a company from a brand that has remained loyal over time even when there is an increase in prices in a specific time. This is possible because brand loyalty favors a positive word to mouth and greater resistance among loyal customers to competitors' strategies. This implies that, increase in brand loyalty is likely to arouse enormous interest among customers to purchase company products and services. Therefore, it was concluded that brand loyalty has a significant positive effect on consumer behaviour and that for every unit increase in brand loyalty, there is a corresponding increase in consumer behaviour. This is possible because brand loyalty favors a positive word to mouth and greater resistance among loyal customers to competitors' strategies. This implies that, increase in brand loyalty is likely to arouse enormous interest among customers to purchase company products and services.

According to Moller et al., (2006), brand loyalty is a consumer's commitment to repurchase or continue using a certain brand. It plays a crucial role in determining a consumer's decision-making. Pedeliento et al., (2015) opines that, loyalty of consumers is often driven by a positive experience with the brand, satisfaction, and trust constructed over time. As indicated in this study's findings, and across other secondary researches, customers who are loyal to a particular brand in the telecommunication industry are likely to continue using that brand despite the availability of competing alternatives or brands. This loyalty translates into a lower chance of switching to a company's competitor regardless of whether the competitor offers lower prices or has attractive deals. The study, therefore suggests that telecommunication companies should focus on strategies that enhance customer satisfaction and trust to foster a brand loyalty, since brand loyalty is a fundamental element of brand equity that directly impacts the company's ability to retain customers and secure a steady revenue stream.

In assessing the findings of the current study in relation to the previous empirical studies, there has been significant related evidence that suggest similar findings of the current study to the body of existing literature. For instance, Moller et al., (2006) contend that relative attitude, which is a significant factor determining brand loyalty, is a composite of purchase involvement and perceived brand differences. Pedeliento et al., (2015) also opine that brand loyalty creates a sense of attachment between the customer and brand manufacturers. Even though, the author noted tat consumers' brand recognition, brand awareness and image are critical factors that determine brand loyalty. This is why in each brand, the role of organizations has been to attract and retain loyal customers to ensure success of their brand and the product and services offered. Notably, brand loyalty, encompasses emotional loyalty and practical loyalty. Whereas emotional loyalty represents consumers' preferences and willingness to a particular brand where the actual purchase behaviour has not occurred yet, practical brand loyalty entails the actual behaviour of consumers' repurchasing of a particular brand.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the variable for this study's objective was brand loyalty. A regression analysis on the model, which assessed the effect of brand loyalty on consumer behaviour, revealed that brand loyalty has a positive effect on consumer behaviour. The adjusted R-square for the model was 24.4% that suggested variations in customer behaviour of sampled population could be attributed to 24.4% changes in brand loyalty, while other factors including brand awareness, brand association and percieved quality could contribute to the 76 per cent variations in consumer behaviour. Running regression analyses across the model, it was revealed that the model was consistent showing a positive effect of brand loyalty on consumer behaviour.

Recommendations

Given the findings and discussions in this study, it is recommended that companies should focus on strategies that enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty. This can entail improvement of consumer-based services, ensuring that the company has consistent products and service quality, and offering diverse customer loyalty programs. Given the potential of consumers to switch to other service providers as revealed under this component of rand equity, companies must be ready to foster a strong emotional connection with the brand to reduce the impact of competition on their performance.

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