

## Relationship between Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage of Independent Petroleum Dealers in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

<sup>1\*</sup>Collins Kibet Boinett, <sup>2</sup>Yusuf Kibet, <sup>3</sup>Beatrice Jemaiyo

<sup>1,2,3</sup>School of Business, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa; P. O. Box 908-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

---

**Citation:** Collins Kibet Boinett, Yusuf Kibet, Beatrice Jemaiyo (2022) Relationship between Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage of Independent Petroleum Dealers in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 4, pp.27-39

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Consumers' value for a brand is known as "brand equity," and it is expressed in characteristics such as brand recognition, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other exclusive brand assets. The study's goal was to ascertain the connection between independent petroleum dealers' brand equity and competitive advantage in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. This paper examines the relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The brand equity theory grounded the study. The research design was correlational. A stratified and simple random sampling procedure was used to choose 26 independent petroleum dealers from the target population, consisting of 28 independent petroleum dealers, and a sample size of 338 employees. The questionnaire was chosen as the method for gathering data. The collected data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis and presentation of descriptive statistics took the form of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. With the use of multiple regression analysis, the hypotheses were tested. From the study findings, majority of workers concurred, according to the study's findings, that branding had improved the gas station's visibility and raised its competitive edge. Additionally, majority of workers believed that strong branding had affected customers' buying decisions. Similarly, most of the customers found the petroleum brands easy to memorize. They also agreed that branding petroleum dealers would increase brand recognition of the gas station. The study found a significant and positive correlation between independent petroleum dealers' competitive advantage and brand awareness ( $p = 0.000$ ). The study recommends that brand endorsement be given more weight in order to strengthen the competitive advantage of independent gasoline dealers in Uasin Gishu County.*

**KEYWORDS:** brand awareness, competitive advantage, independent petroleum dealers

---

### INTRODUCTION

In business, the ability to regularly generate returns on investment that are higher than the industry average is known as competitive advantage. Thus, if the business adopts a value-creating strategy, it can gain a competitive edge. Strategic assets that are under the company's control and allow it to develop and put into action plans that increase efficiency and effectiveness constitute the source

of sustainable competitive advantage (Kilasi, Juma & Mathooko, 2013). However, competitive advantage is not dependent on widely recognized elements like resources, technology, or economies of scale. This is explained by the fact that these bases are getting easier and easier to copy.

In present-day modern marketplace, a company's competitive edge is influenced by a variety of factors, including its ability to retain consumers and the quality of the goods and services it provides to customers. Indicators that help managers better understand the function of a brand and manage it to obtain competitive advantage include customer happiness and loyalty. Due to significant reforms enacted after 2005, the business environment in the oil marketing sector has become competitive (Arora, 2015). Additionally, the industry's levels of competition have changed because of the ongoing effects of globalization, information technology advancements, and regulatory framework.

The petroleum business must establish effective branding strategies in order to stay abreast of these developments, remain competitive, and help them achieve their corporate objectives. According to Cross (2015), one of the environmental factors that pressure businesses to be proactive and create effective strategies to enable proactive reactions to perceived and actual changes in the competitive environment is competition. The goal of strategic decisions is to differentiate a company from its competitors in a way that will be sustainable over time. A company seeks to develop a competitive edge through reaction techniques, which it can then work to maintain (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The capacity to generate returns regularly on investment that are higher than the industry average is a competitive advantage. A company can obtain a competitive edge if it adopts a value-creating strategy that is not being adopted simultaneously by any present or future competitors. This might be taken to suggest that strategic assets, those that are internally managed and enable the business to develop and put into action plans that increase its efficiency and effectiveness, produce a prolonged competitive advantage (Kilasi, Juma & Mathooko, 2013). As a result, competitive advantage is not based on elements like natural resources, technology, or economies of scale, which are becoming more and more replicable. Instead, the resource base approach contends that competitive advantage depends on the valuable, uncommon, and difficult-to-replicate resources that a firm has on hand (Benrqya, Estampe, Vallespir & Babai, 2014).

However, despite their rising acceptance by Kenyan oil businesses, there is no concrete data or research demonstrating the effects of branding on independent petroleum dealers' competitive advantage in Kenya (Mudambi, 2002). In Kenya, the petroleum sector has inadequate branding, with many brands missing meaningful customer-based brand equity and saliency. The difficulty for the petroleum business is how to maintain relevance to the unique demands of consumers while overcoming its reputation. However, in a sector that continues to face intense competitive pressures brought on by the integration and globalization of petroleum marketing, marketers must contend with the pressure of having to defend their marketing strategies and actions (O'Sullivan &

Abela, 2007). This necessitates the need for brand differentiation. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to ascertain how independent petroleum dealers in Kenya's Uasin Gishu County brand equity and competitive advantage. Based on the study, this paper examines the relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to MacDonald and Sharp (2003), the trade atmosphere has become very competitive in the 21st century owing to evolution in expertise, infrastructure, and access to data around the globe. This has made the atmosphere very multifaceted, and customer predilections keep fluctuating. This is attributed to the stumpy transferring charge in the marketplace. Because of this, there is a snowballing level of consumer cognizance, which has made consumers choose their well-known and favoured trademarks. As a result, businesses must make consumers adore their brands if they want to outperform their rivals. Brand equity is a crucial indicator of how well-known a trademark is among consumers. Key factors include how well a brand is remembered by customers and how well that information can be recalled from memory (O'Guinn, Allen & Semenik, 2014).

It is the possibility that customers will perceive a company's goods or services as being available and existing with ease. The markets of today are fundamentally different from those of the past. This is attributable to significant socioeconomic influences that have given rise to several new capabilities for consumers and businesses. As businesses search for new strategies to attain marketing excellence, these factors have generated new possibilities, difficulties, and substantial changes in marketing management (Kotler & Keller, 2022). Therefore, in order to succeed in the present market environment, businesses must develop smarter strategies for managing both their products and for cultivating a greater level of brand preference than their rivals cultivate in order to increase the lifetime value of devoted customers.

The study on brand creation strategies by Ahmadi and Mirabi (2015) focused on Iran's oil industry and related industries. By utilizing branding strategies, Iran's oil companies and related industries increase their visibility and build positive reputations for themselves both locally and abroad. Local and foreign investment both increased because of developing a global brand and gaining the confidence of customers and investors. The worldwide standing of the oil industry ensures Iran's long-term security, economic prosperity, and welfare assistance. The study's objective was to identify brand-building techniques utilized in the oil industry and related fields. A questionnaire was used to collect data for this descriptive exploratory study. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to determine reliability. Cronbach Alpha was chosen since it has been supported by specialists and academicians. Cronbach Alpha analysis indicated (0.877), and because it was more than 0.70, the questions in the questionnaire were trustworthy. The SPSS Software (version 19) was used to analyse the data using descriptive and inferential statistics. According to research findings and research literature findings, factors such as strategic brand management, legal protection, appropriate distribution channels, innovation, and skilled human resources play a significant role in building and strengthening a brand in the oil industry and related industries, and

---

lead to the industry's active participation in global markets by providing value-added and competitive advantages. Furthermore, according to the study's results, strategic brand management is the most important branding approach in the private oil industry. However, legal protection is the most important step in the public sector to support and improve the image of the oil industry and related industries (Ahmadi & Mirabi, 2015).

Sinclair and Seward (1988) undertook a study on the success of branding a commodity wood product in North America. This was ascribed to the lack of focus on branding as a strategy for drawing clients in the North American wood products business. The goal of the investigation was to examine the bearing of branding on buyer awareness of wood products. A causal-comparative approach was employed for the study. As information gathering tools, surveys and observational checklists were used. According to the study's findings, customers requested that wood items be available and priced at the channel ends. Absence of branding attempts to get the buyer to consider other immaterial qualities of the items was blamed for this. The results showed that clients rely heavily on pricing since there are ineffective branding methods. The bulk of the wood products business has placed minimal emphasis on branding as a means of acquiring a competitive edge, regardless of the fact that it is intended to differentiate products and brands against competitors by raising brand recognition. Branding has improved brand recognition, increased customer loyalty, and highlighted its unique selling points. Along the whole supply chain, Sinclair and Seward discovered a lack of coordination between manufacturers and intermediaries due to their failure to adequately train them in brand quality and brand relevance. According to the study, branding might be more successful in terms of uniqueness in order to encourage buyer choice. The study was, however, conducted in North America and focused on the branding of wood products, while the present investigation was done in Kenya and focused on the relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of petroleum dealers. The reviewed research was conducted in North America, a more industrialized country as compared to Kenya, which is an emerging market.

Shiple and Howard (1993), in their study, discovered that brand names were significant for manufacturers, particularly in terms of market placement. Furthermore, larger corporations gained more brand recognition than smaller corporations did. Shipley and Howard also noted that brand names are often used by UK businesses. Similarly, Michell, King and Reast (2001) investigated whether business-to-business enterprises in the 1990s were consistent with brand value theory. They discovered that brand names are perceived positively by business-to-business enterprises as a vital tool for marketing success. They also discovered that branding may greatly assist organizations by providing competitive advantages and enhancing brand equity. They recognized quality, performance and dependability as key differentiators of competitive advantage. Several studies demonstrate that focusing on brand equity in business-to-business branding from the manufacturer through the distribution chain gives meaning to the price premium purchasers are prepared to pay for a brand, promote it to others, and compare it to other comparable brands (Hutton, 1997).

In another study, Hutton (1997) interviewed local buying specialists and focus groups with members of the National Association for Purchasing Management to establish the impact of brand sensitivity on product characteristics like price, service necessities, obsolescence likelihood, and the

---

purchasing state. The investigation found that branding is a valuable tool in the business market because it provokes brand equity behaviour. Hutton further noted that a strong brand acts a key role in brand extensions and synergy across various product choices. He likewise found a high possibility of an unidentified brand having the same name as a known one. A successful brand may damage an effective brand once they are presented differently. He similarly added that in branding decisions, the fear of personal failure as opposed to organizational failure is a higher factor.

Attri, Urkude and Pahwa (2011) researched oil marketers' brand awareness in the petroleum public sector, which led to loyalty and consumer awareness. The study revealed that using integrated marketing communications raises brand recognition. This is surprising given the importance of the auto sector in the global economy; the massive number of automobiles on the road throughout the world, the tremendous interest in car sports events, and the fact that motor oil labelled artefacts are fast becoming collectors' items.

Chi, Yeh and Chio (2009) undertook a study in China to investigate the impact of brand awareness on customer purchase intention. The study's goal was to investigate the impacts of consumer brand loyalty on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and customer purchase intention. The samples were acquired from Chiyi cellular phone subscribers, and regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the hypotheses. According to the findings, there is a link between brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty; perceived quality has a favourable influence on brand loyalty; and perceived quality has an effect on brand awareness and purchase intention. The study indicated that positive brand awareness influenced brand loyalty, which in turn influenced consumer loyalty. The study also revealed that increasing brand loyalty and brand preference were connected with increased purchase intention. The research advised that mobile phone makers create a brand and boost brand recognition through sales promotion, advertising, and other marketing activities. Consumers evaluated their purchase intentions. The reviewed study was done in China in a different environment from the current study, which was undertaken in Uasin Gishu County. The previous study examined the link between brand awareness, perceived quality, and customer purchase intent on brand loyalty, whereas the present study investigated the relationship between brand equity and competitive advantage of independent gasoline dealers in Uasin Gishu County. The research's location in China, a more industrialized country than Kenya, validates the need for the current investigation. The reviewed study also concentrated on cellular phone users as opposed to gasoline consumers.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study adopted a correlational research design. It was conducted in Kenya's Uasin Gishu County. As stated by the Petroleum Institute of East Africa (2018), the study's sample frame consisted of 28 branded gasoline retailers that were situated in the Uasin Gishu County (PIEA). Using Yamane's (1968) equation for sampling, a sample of 26 petroleum retailers was selected at random from a list provided from PIEA. The researchers utilized stratified random sampling procedures to get select the respondents from the sample. To ensure representativeness, the dealers were stratified into two groups: big and small petroleum dealers based on the number of branches.

A random sample of participating petroleum dealers was then drawn from each stratum. All the managers of the selected petroleum dealers were allowed to participate in the study whereas 10 clients and 2 workers from the chosen fuel dealers were picked using simple random sampling. This ensured that there was no biasness in sampling given that the arrival of customers at a petroleum dealer is a statistically independent event. A sample of 1 manager, 2 employees and 10 customers was drawn from each petroleum dealer's stations. Hence, the overall sample size was 338.

The study's main instrument for gathering data was a questionnaire. An observation schedule was also constructed and used to help the researcher measure the brand equity and competitive advantage. After data collection, responses to all items were cross-checked after the data was gathered to make classification and processing for statistical method analysis easier. Data analysis included descriptive statistical analysis such as percentage, frequencies, averages, and standard deviation. Frequency and percentage tables were used to display the data. To validate the hypotheses, simple and multiple linear regression were used.

## RESULTS

### Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage

According to the results, the bulk of employees (58%) were between the ages of 30 and 39; 30.3% were between the ages of 40 and 49; 11.7% were between the ages of 20 and 29, and 2.3% were between the ages of 60 and 69. The results showed that most of the workers were young and enthusiastic about working for independent petroleum dealers and that they were also old enough to comprehend the connection between brand equity and competitive advantage of the independent petroleum dealers, as the bulk of them fell within the age range of 30-39 years.

Employees and customers were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that independent gasoline dealers had a competitive edge due to their strong brand recognition utilizing a collection of seven statements that were created and assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 5 being the strongest agreement and 1 being the strongest disagreement. Table 1 provides a summary of the findings.

**Table 1: Employees' Descriptive Results of Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage**

	Statement		SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	S. Dev.
1	Brand familiarity among the customers has created competitive advantage of the dealer in the area	F %	3 4.2	11 14.0	7 8.7	29 37.1	28 36.0	3.92	1.11
2	Branding has created brand awareness of our dealer which influence the choice of customer on our petrol station	F %	8 9.7	8 10.3	4 5.6	29 36.8	29 37.7	3.83	1.10
3	Our dealer has employed innovative branding	%	4 4.9	9 10.9	9 12.1	25 32.2	31 39.9	3.91	1.34

	strategies that are unique to it, which has increased our competitiveness in the area.								
4	Extensive of our dealer has influences customer purchase decisions of our petroleum products	F	11	7	7	28	25	3.64	1.38
		%	14.0	9.0	8.4	36.4	32.2		
5	Branding has increased our visibility to prospective customer, which has led to increased sales and competitiveness.	F	20	7	6	24	22	3.12	1.57
		%	25.2	8.7	7.5	30.5	28.1		
6	Brand awareness has increased competitiveness of our dealer due to referral of customers	F	24	11	5	23		3.04	1.66
		%	30.2	14.0	6.9	29.0	19.9		
7	Brand awareness influences customer choices and preferences of our products.	F	24	3	5	13	31	3.34	1.62
		%	30.2	4.0	6.9	19.0	39.9		
<b>Overall Mean = 21.93</b>									

*Source: Research Data (2022)*

The purpose of the study was to determine if the workers were familiar with the independent gasoline dealers' brand and how that influenced their ability to compete. According to the findings in Table 1, the majority of workers ( $M = 3.92$  and  $SD = 1.11$ ) agreed with the assertion that the dealer in the region had gained a competitive advantage due to the customers' familiarity with the brand. The vast majority of workers concurred, according to the study's findings, that branding had improved the gas station's visibility and raised its competitive edge. Additionally, the investigation looked at whether the retailer had developed any exclusive, cutting-edge branding techniques that would have boosted our position in the market. The vast majority of the workers, as revealed by the research's findings (average = 3.91 and standard deviation = 1.34), were the most of the employees. The study also aimed to determine if the dealers' comprehensive branding had an impact on customers' decisions to buy our petroleum goods. The survey discovered that the majority of workers believed that strong branding had affected customers' buying decisions (Mean = 3.64 and Standard Deviation = 1.38). An employee said that they were using sophisticated marketing techniques, such as rebranding their gas stations, to improve consumer visibility and influence their buying behaviour.

The research also aimed to find out if branding had improved the visibility of potential consumers, which in turn improved competition and sales. The results showed that most workers agreed that branding had boosted brand exposure, which had resulted in more sales and competition (Mean = 3.92; Standard Deviation = 1.57). The research also sought to ascertain whether brand awareness brought about by client referrals had increased the dealer's competitiveness. The outcomes showed

that the most of the workers strongly believed that brand awareness had boosted the dealer's competitiveness since customers were referring them to their stations (Mean = 3.04 and Std. Deviation = 1.66). The study was also intended to determine whether brand knowledge affected consumer preferences and selections for the petroleum products sold by the dealers. According to the research findings, most of workers were confident that in a cutthroat market, brand recognition had influenced customers to prefer and select their petroleum goods.

The customers or clients of the petroleum stations were also asked to show their level of agreement or disagreement with statements relating to brand awareness and competitive advantage of petroleum dealers. The findings were as summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Customers' Descriptive Results of Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage**

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
1	I have no difficulty in imagining this petroleum industry in my mind	3.86	1.245
2	I can recognize this petroleum industry in comparison with other competing petroleum industry	4.03	1.031
3	I only recall this petroleum industry whenever I need petroleum services for my Car	4.16	1.021
4	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this petroleum industry	4.17	1.107
5	This petroleum industry has created brand familiarity among the consumers	3.91	1.355
6	Branding has created brand awareness on this petrol station	4.08	1.176
7	This petroleum industry has employed innovative branding strategies that are unique thus more attractive	4.33	0.977
8	Extensive branding of this petroleum industry has influenced my purchasing decisions of their petroleum products	4.12	1.063
9	Branding has increased visibility of the petroleum industry	3.86	1.207
10	Brand awareness influenced my choices and preferences of this petroleum industry products	3.84	1.241
<b>Overall Mean = 4.036</b>			

*Source: Research Data (2022)*

The majority of the respondents agreed that they had no trouble visualizing this petroleum industry in their minds, as indicated by the mean of 3.86 and standard deviation of 1.245 in the descriptive analysis on the connection between brand awareness and competitive edge of petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County. The consumers also concurred that they could differentiate one petroleum dealer from other rival petroleum companies. This was represented by a mean of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 1.031. With a mean of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 1.021, the respondents agreed with the statement that they would only think about the petroleum sector when they required services for their automobile. Customers firmly agreed that they could recall the company's logo or emblem quickly, as shown by a mean score of 4.17 and a standard deviation score of 1.107. The respondents were in agreement about consumer brand familiarity with the petroleum business,



with a mean score of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 1.355. The majority of consumers felt that branding petroleum dealers would increase brand recognition of the gas station, as shown by the mean score of 4.08 and standard deviation score of 1.176. The vast majority of staff felt that the petroleum business should use creative branding tactics that were distinct and more appealing, as shown by the mean score of 4.33 and standard deviation score of 0.977. The vast majority of consumers agreed with the broad branding of this petroleum sector and the purchase decisions of the petroleum goods, as shown by the mean of 4.12 and standard deviation score of 1.063. The majority of respondents felt that branding had boosted the visibility of the petroleum business, as shown by the mean score of 3.86 and standard deviation score of 1.207. Finally, with a mean rating of 4.08 as well as a standard deviation value of 1.037, the respondents concurred that brand awareness affected the decisions and inclinations of these petroleum sector goods. Given that the responses fell between the mean scores of 3.5 and the standard deviation scores of 4.8 on the continuous Likert scale, it was deduced that the majority of participants agreed that brand awareness among consumers had a significant link with the competitive edge of petroleum distributors in Uasin Gishu County.

### Hypotheses Testing

The study proposed and tested the following null hypothesis: *there is no significant relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.* Table 3 presents the outcomes of the test.

**Table 3: Coefficients of Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error				
1	(Constant)	.871	.199		4.375	.000
	Brand awareness	.802	.048	.785	16.560	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 3 above demonstrates there was a positive linear association between brand awareness and competitive advantage; that is, an increase in brand awareness leads to a greater competitive advantage for independent gasoline dealers. Brand awareness was a significant ( $p = 0.000$ ) contributor to competitive advantage, accounting for 78.5%. This suggests that the competitive edge of independent gasoline retailers in Uasin Gishu County is positively and substantially associated with brand awareness.

The  $p = 0.000$  findings were less than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis – that there is no significant relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County – was rejected. This suggested that brand awareness and independent petroleum dealers' competitive advantages do in fact have a meaningful connection. According to the study's findings, independent gasoline dealers' competitive advantages and brand

recognition were positively correlated in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

## DISCUSSION

The study found a positive and significant relationship between brand awareness ( $p=0.00$ ) and the competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County. Based on the study's findings, brand awareness and the competitive advantage enjoyed by independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County were positively and significantly correlated ( $p = 0.00$ ). The hypothesis (there is no significant relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers in Uasin Gishu County) is implied to be rejected by the significant value of ( $p =0.000 0.05$ ), indicating the existence of a significant relationship between brand awareness and competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers. In line with the study findings, independent gasoline dealers' competitive advantage and brand recognition were positively correlated in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

The study of brand familiarity among the customers, increased brand visibility, brand innovative branding strategies, extensive branding, extensive marketing, extensive branding has influenced customer purchase decisions of our petroleum products and has increased the competitiveness of our dealer due to customer referrals in a competitive environment. Customers' decisions to purchase petroleum products have been influenced by research on brand familiarity with consumers, increased brand visibility, brand innovative branding strategies, extensive branding, extensive marketing, and extensive branding. Such research has also increased the competitiveness of dealers due to customer recommendations in a market that is highly competitive.

The findings were consistent with Kyei's (2016) assessment of how branding affects customer behaviour in Ghanaian telecoms firms, which discovered that branding is all about the logo, service quality, price, coverage image, signage, and slogan, all of which have a big influence on how customers act in the nation's telecommunications industry. The study also discovered a significant link between branding and customer shopping preferences. Additionally, there is a positive and significant association between customer purchasing behaviour and brand awareness.

The results were in line with Munyau's (2017) investigation into the impact of customer-based brand equity on the market performance of brands in Kenya's banking services. According to the findings, there was a positive and significant correlation between market-wide brand performance and overall brand awareness as a part of brand equity ( $r =.413$ ;  $p =.014$ ;  $N = 382$ ). The results also corroborated O'Guinn *et al.*'s (2014) assertion that the key to influencing customers' purchasing decisions is the power of a brand's existence in their thoughts and how quickly that information can be recalled from memory.

The results were in line with Munyau's (2017) research on how customer-based brand equity affects brand market performance in Kenya's banking service industry. This was further in line with Ahmadi and Mirabi's (2015) analysis of brand creation tactics used in Iran's oil and associated industries. Brand awareness is important for establishing and enhancing a brand in the oil sector

---

and associated industries, and it promotes the industry's active engagement in overseas markets by adding value and providing a competitive edge. In a similar manner, a survey conducted by Sinclair and Seward (1988) on the efficacy of branding a commodity wood product in North America revealed that branding was intended to set a company apart from its rivals by raising brand recognition. However, this strategy has not received much attention from most of the wood-based businesses as a means of acquiring a competitive edge. The results of the study showed that branding increased brand awareness, increased loyalty, and underscored the brand's specialization.

The conclusions of Shipley and Howard (1993), who discovered that brand names were crucial for manufacturers, particularly in the area of market placement, confirm this as well. Additionally, the bigger businesses profited from the brand name more than the smaller ones. Additionally, Shipley and Howard discovered that UK businesses frequently employ brand names. This was also in line with Attri *et al.*'s (2011) research on oil marketers' brand awareness in the energy public sector, which promotes consumer awareness and loyalty. They discovered that employing integrated marketing communications raises consumer awareness of brands. Likewise, Chi *et al.* (2013) reported that there was a connection between brand awareness and purchase intention in China. As per the results of a study, strong brand awareness influenced brand loyalty, which in turn influenced consumer loyalty and was linked to higher buy intent.

### **Contribution to Knowledge and Practice**

The review of previous literature provided helpful insight and identified gaps for this paper. For instance, Ramli (2019) investigated how Malaysian customers' perspectives affected Petronas Petroleum Products' brand equity. Although the study was conducted in relation to the petroleum sector, the growing discrepancy relates to the research area's background, which is Malaysia, a developed nation, as contrast to the current study, which was carried out in Kenya, a developing nation. In contrast, a local study in Kenya by Munyau (2017) looked at the impact of brand equity on brand performance in the financial sector. Despite having a brand equity focus, the study employed a variety of predictor variables, among them being brand performance. Besides, the study was done in the banking and not the petroleum industry. The specific gap that this paper fills is to provide empirical literature on the connection between brand equity and competitive edge in the petroleum business in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. No such study has been undertaken before in this particular region.

This paper is of critical interest and useful to policymakers involved in regulating the petroleum industry in the country. They will be informed on how brand equity involving brand awareness affects the competitive advantage of petroleum dealers. The managers of independent petroleum dealers will also use this paper to understand how brand equity strategies can affect their competitive advantage in a very competitive market with numerous multinational petroleum companies, and thus they may improve on existing brands or they may come up with new brands.

---

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As per the investigation results, brand recognition and the competitive edge of independent gasoline dealers in Kenya's Uasin Gishu County are related. The study concludes that brand familiarity, ease of brand recognition, quickly recognizable petroleum industry symbols and logos, creative branding strategies and extensive branding positively influenced consumers' decisions to buy their petroleum products, which enhance the competitive advantage of independent petroleum dealers. Therefore, to increase their competitive advantage, the research advises independent gasoline dealers to enhance brand awareness. Moreover, their marketing divisions should focus more on developing a distinctive brand among customers as a means of boosting their competitive advantage.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmadi, Z., & Mirabi, V. (2015). The Study of the Brand Building Strategies in the Oil Industry and Related Industry in Iran. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: Economics and Commerce*, 15(3), 13-24.
- Arora, S. (2015). Investment Decision Making in the Upstream Oil Industry: An Analysis. *IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, 12(1), 40-52.
- Attri, R., Urkude, A. M., & Pahwa, M. S. (2011). Measuring public sector oil marketing companies' brand awareness. *IUP Journal of Brand Management*, 8(4), 7-24.
- Benrqa, Y., Estampe, D., Vallespir, B., & Babai, M. Z. (2014). Impact of Product Characteristics on Distribution Strategy Selection. Supply Chain Forum: *International Journal*, 15(3), 38-50.
- Chi, H. K., Yeh, H. R., & Chio, C. Y. (2009). The effect of Brand Effect on Female Cosmetic User Brand Loyalty in Taiwan. *The Journal of American Academy of Business*, 14, 230-236.
- Cross, R. (2015). Nigeria oil industry goes into survival mode. *African Journal of Business Management*, 49(417), 58-65.
- De Chernatony, L., & McDonald, M. (2003) *Creating Powerful Brands in Consumer, Service and Industrial Markets* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Hutton, J. G. (1997). A study of brand equity in an organizational-buying context. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 6(6), 428-439.
- Kilasi, L. B., Juma, D., & Mathooko, P. M. (2013). The impact of Outsourcing of Logistics on the Competitive Advantage strategy of East African Breweries Limited. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Entrepreneurship*, 1(3), 521-529.
- Keller, K. L., & Kotler, P. (2022). Branding in B2B firms. In *Handbook of business-to-business marketing* (pp. 205-224). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Kyei, B. E. (2016). *Assessing the Effect of Branding on Consumer Behaviour in Telecommunication Companies in Ghana* (Unpublished Thesis). Kwame Nkrumah University.

- Macdonald, E., & Sharp, B. (2003). Management perceptions of the importance of brand awareness as an indication of advertising effectiveness. *Marketing Bulletin*, 14(2), 1-11.
- Michell, P., King, J., & Reast, J. (2001). Brand values related to industrial products. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(5), 415-425.
- Mudambi, S. (2002). Branding importance in business-to-business markets: Three buyer clusters. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 31(6), 525-533.
- Munyau, K. P. (2017). *Role of Customer Based Brand Equity On brand Market Performance in the Banking Service Sector in Kenya* (Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration). Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
- O'guinn, T., Allen, C., Semenik, R. J., & Scheinbaum, A. C. (2014). *Advertising and Integrated Brand Promotion*. Cengage Learning.
- O'sullivan, D., & Abela, A. V. (2007). Marketing performance measurement ability and firm performance. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(2), 79-93.
- Ramli, N. S. (2019). *The Brand Equity of Petronas Petroleum Products: The Perspective of Malaysian Consumer* (Master of Business Administration Thesis). Open University Malaysia.
- Shipley, D., & Howard, P. (1993). Brand-naming industrial products. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 22(1), 59-66.
- Sinclair, S. A., & Seward, K. E. (1988). Effectiveness of branding a commodity product. *Ind. Mark. Manag.* 17(1), 23-33.