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# Determinants of Consumers' Choice of Brand of Bottled Water in Enugu Nigeria James O. Abugu<sup>1</sup>\*, Nwafor Michael Ezaka<sup>2</sup>

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Abstract: The emergence of various brands of bottled water, with the common core benefit of quenching of thirst but arrays of features with marketing implications, have exposed consumers to making choice. This longitudinal study covered 2013-2018 and used questionnaire to obtain information from 343 consumers and 210 sellers of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis, Nigeria which were exposed to hypothetical tests. Findings showed among other things that choice of brand of bottled water is significantly determined by company of make in Enugu, Metropolis, consumers purchasing power and social status significantly determine the choice of brand of bottled water and that NAFDAC seal of quality significantly accounts for the choice of bottled water. It was concluded that consumers choice of bottled water in the area under review include company of make, social group and regulatory authority (NAFDAC) confirmation of quality of the brand of bottled water through seal of quality on the bottle of the water. The study recommended that; bottled water company should produce bottled water that conform with the expectation of consumers to obtain loyalty, varieties of brand should be produced to take care of different income and social groups devoid of compromising to quality standard and that regulatory agencies should supervise every production process, ensuring that brand of bottled water meets up with both local and international standard.

**Keywords:** choice, product marketing, quality, consumer status, company of make, bottled water.

### INTRODUCTION

Water is one of the essential food substances. It is a very important substance for human existence and even plants. In addition to the use of water for domestic activities such as drinking, cooking washing and bathing, it is required for physical health and human existence. Medical reports show that human being cannot live beyond twenty days without drinking water [1]. Water, one of the most consumed commodities in the world does not have a substitute. World wide the consumption of bottled water has grown tremendously with an estimated rate of consumption of 200 billion bottles of water per annum and approximately 50 billions bottles in United States of America [2].

Provision of potable water has become an important agenda among the needs of the citizens. The millennium Development Goals (MDGs) considers access to potable water along side food security because food alone without water cannot sustain human beings. For water to perform its required functions in human, it is expected to be potable or pure. Water is said to be potable when it is free from impurities, including pathogenic organisms, also when it is aesthetically appealing and safe, and acceptable for drinking. The

attainment of health for all depends largely on the successful execution of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD) [3].

The water borne diseases such as river blindness, typhoid, dysentery, diarrhea, "guinea worm, gastroenteritis, cholera, etc can easily affect people through the impure water they drink. Nwosu and Uffoh [4] stated that in Nigeria, water pollution is usually caused by water pollutants that include coloured matters, heated liquids, organic matters, mineral salt, detergents, toxic chemicals, industrial wastes, domestic wastes and oil spillages. Guarding against pollution in water designated for human consumption therefore becomes obvious.

The need to ensure purity of water for drinking to a reasonable extent contributed to the emergence of the various forms of packaged water referred to as bottled and sachet water. In recent years, availability of potable brand of water has improved through provision of these packaged forms of drinking water. Packaging of bottled water has given it the status of the most dynamic and competitive commodity among the packaged goods categories. This study focuses on bottled water and the most common brands in Enugu

Metropolis, which include Eva, Ivy, Tama, Ragolis, Swan, Aqua Rapha, Rancco, Aquafina, Parwasser and Lion Water.

Oni [5] is of the view that to establish a standard bottle and pure water packaging factory, the source of water has to be a natural spring, municipal water or water from borehole. In Enugu State and Nigeria at large, product packaging and branding is not without regulation. The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is charged with the responsibilities of regulating and facilitating the production, packaging, branding, distribution, sale and consumption of bottled water, and other related products in Nigeria. This has led to increase in demand and preferences for brands of packaged water with NAFDAC seal of quality and registration number.

The core benefit sought from bottled water is the liquid contents which all brands posses. However, as pointed out by Solomon [6], consumers want to buy things that will give them hedonic value in addition to functional value. Previous studies have investigated the behaviour of bottled water consumers and the factors that shape their behaviour. Such factors were focused on organlopolics and risk/health concerns. Edward [7] investigated only brand equity as determinant of choice of bottled water in Nairobi. All these did not cover the premise of this study. It is this gap in literature that this study is set to fill. The additional factors that establish choice for consumers of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis attracted the study. We therefore, assumed the following testable hypotheses:

- The choice of branded bottled water is significantly determined by the company of make of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis.
- The consumer purchasing power and social status significantly determine choice of brand of bottled water.
- The NAFDAC seal of quality significantly determines the choice of bottled water.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In Nigeria, Spring Water Nigeria (SWAN) Ltd. Jos is the pioneer brand of bottled water produced in December, 1983. Other brands from different companies followed [8], Kolter, Bowen and Makens [9] defined brand as a name, term, sign, symbol design or a combination of these elements intended to identify the goods or services of a seller and differentiate from competitors. Kapfereer [10] describes a brand as a name that influences buyers, thus becoming a purchase criterion. Further, he maintained that a strong brand awareness acts as a quality cue. Keller [11] is of the view that a brand is a set of mental association held by the consumer which adds to the perceived value of a product or service. He further explained that these associations should be unique (exhaustively) strong

(saliency) and positive (desirable). Doyle [12] stated that "a successful brand is that which is composed of a name, symbol, design or some combination which identifies the product of a particular organization as possessing a sustainable differential advantage. Branding makes an organizations production name or an iamge to be synonymous with a set of values, aspirations or state and it exercises an overwhelming influence on consumers [13], The Marshallian Economic Model emphasizes among other things, that consumer purchasing decisions are made based on rational and conscious economics motives. This view is shared by Achumba [14] Abugu [15]. The theory is similar to opportunity cost theory where the most preferred item is chosen or purchased after due consideration on disposable income, source of the product, taste, preference, among others [16].

In line with this theory, Udeagha [17] stated that since man is a rational being, he always allocates his resources in such away as to maximize his satisfaction or utility. That given his income, product source, his tastes and preferences, he will always choose the quantities of goods and services that will give him maximum utility or satisfaction.

The personality as propounded by the psychoanalytic model which states that human psyche or personality is divided into three parts, namely, the id, ego and the superego. Martin, Carlson and Buskist [18] stated that the ego serves as the general manager of personality, making decisions regarding the pleasures that will be persuaded at the Id's request and the moral dictates of the superego that will be followed. The superego on the other hand constitute the conscious part of the human psyche concerned with moral, ethical and socially acceptable codes of conduct. It refines the animalistic or primitive biological desires as demanded by the Id, into appropriate social manners to avoid guilt and shame. The model reveals the complex nature of consumer behavior which by implication, can be solved by constantly presenting the realistic or ideal situation to the buyer. This include but not limited, to product conformity with regulatory body and ability to be consumer driven. Nwaizugbo [19], Edoga and Ani [20] submit that social class is a major behavioural determinant of consumer buying behavior. The marketer should therefore determine the social classes viz, reference groups and face to face groups that influence the demand for consumer products, to help make the right decisions.

Achumba [14] reviewing social psychology theory, which claimed that human being is a social animal whose behaviours are much influenced by the elements of his environment as peer groups, subcultures and other reference groups stated that the needs of individual at a given time are determined by social activities.

Reoutilized problem solving behavior as contained in Okoye and Chidozie [21] habitual problems solving [22] hold that the buyer after several repeat purchases becomes very familiar with the product class, feature and sources, and thus simply goes on to buy the product without seeking additional information. In the view of McNair [23] positive post purchase experience result to limited information search for repeat purchase. The firm or marketer's duty here is to keep constant stock of the product (s) and also maintain or improve the quality and other product features to retain old customers and attract new ones. This will account to rational economic behavior which, according to Sloman and Wride [16], means doing more of the activities with marginal benefit exceeding their marginal cost and doing less of those activities with marginal cost exceeding their marginal benefit.

Product features are driving forces for product brand preference. A product brand preference attributes constitute a number of features which greatly determine its attractive mechanism whenever buyers make choice among existing brands. Product feature include the label, quality, style of packaging, among others. The label as a product feature is very important both to the marketer and buyer [24]. Label provides customers with product information such as company of make, certification by regulatory body, to aid purchase decision. Also to assist the customer improves his experience when using the product. Many firms try to extend their product life cycles by introducing physical changes in their offerings. Boone and Kurtz [25] this can come inform change in product label. In a study carried out by Edward [7] regarding choice of bottled water, quality stood paramount suggesting consumers attach much interest on product quality when making choice.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey method was adopted for the longitudinal study covering 2013-2018. The research was conducted in Enugu Metropolis Nigeria and specifically within Enugu Metropolis and as cited by Eneh and Ogbuefi-Chima [26] Eneh, Abugu and

Anichebe [27] the said metropolis include: Garriki, Obiagu, Akwuke, Emene, Abakpa, Ogbete, Ogui, Iva-Valley, Nike, New Haven, Awkunanaw, Uwani, Achara-Layout, Maryland, Trans-Ekulu, Government Reserved Areas (GRA) and Independence Layout. The choice for these areas were informed by the researchers observation that the areas constituted greater number of Bottled water sellers and consumers. Questionnaire was used to generate data from the respondents made up of 343 consumers and 210 sellers of bottled water who were purposively selected from various homes, shopping centres, Hotels, Restaurants and other event centres within Enugu Metropolis. The major questions in the research instrument which are directly connected with the objectives of the study posed to the respondents are: Does Company of make significantly determine the consumer's brand choice of bottled water? Do purchasing power and social class of the consumers exert significant influence on choice of brand of bottled water and whether NAFDAC seal of quality significantly determine the consumer's choice of brand of bottled water?

Reliability of the study instrument was establish with the use of Cronbach Alpha measure which resulted to a value of 0.91 showing that the instrument was reliable. The respondents who aged 20 years and above with first school leaving certificate as minimum qualification were conveniently selected as follows; 20 and 12 each of the consumers and sellers of brand of bottled water respectively from 16 of 17 cities that made up the said metropolis and 23 and 18 of consumers and sellers of brand of bottled water from Government Reserved Areas (GRA) being the remaining city out of 17 cities involved. The greater number selected from GRA was based on the fact that it houses higher number of consumers and sellers of brand of bottled water in the area under investigation.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

In pursuit of the outcome of the study, concern was on the major variables that significantly determine the consumer's choice of brand of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis.

Table-1: Factors Determining Consumer Choice of Bottled Water in Enugu Metropolis

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Questions	Reasons	VH.%	H.%	M.%	I.%	VL.%	Mean	Std.
								Dev
	Company of make	156	57	55	54	21	3.80	1.32
Ranking of reasons for choice of		(45.5)	(16.6)	(16.0)	(15.7)	(6.1)		
brand of bottled water	Social group influence	121	51	100	39	32	3.55	1.32
	(peer group)	(35.3)	(14.9)	(29.2)	(11.4)	(9.3)		
	Style of packaging	53	75	111	52	52	3.41	1.45
		(15.5)	(21.9)	(32.4)	(15.2)	(15.2)		

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table-1 above shows the factors that influence consumer choice for a brand of bottled water in Enugu

Metropolis. In ranking, the reasons for choice of bottled water, 156(45.5%0, 57(16.6%) and 55(16.0%)

respondents ranked company of make very high, high and moderate respectively, 54(15.7%) and the remaining 21(6.1%) respondents ranked it low and very low respectively. On peer group factor, 121(35.3%), 51(14.9%) and 100(29.2%) respondents ranked it very high, high and moderate respectively, 39(11.4%) and the rest of 32(9.3%) respondents ranked it low and very low respectively. Also, 53(15.5%), 75(21.9%) and 111(32.4%), respondents ranked style of packaging very high, high and moderate respectively, 52(15.2%)

and 52(15.2%) respondents ranked it low and very low respectively. From the frequency and percentage distributions and the means, the respondents ranked company of make highest (mean = 3.80) as the reason for choice of bottled water, followed by social group influence (mean = 3.55) and style of packaging (mean = 3.41). The outcome clearly showed that company of make is the most propelling factor for consumer choice of bottled water.

Table-2: Influence of Product Features of Consumer Choice of Bottled Water

Questions	Reasons	VH.%	H.%	M.%	I.%	VL.%	Mean	Std.
								Dev
	NAFDAC seal of quality	90	178	75	0	0	4.04	0.69
		(26.2)	(51.9)	(21.9)	(0.0)	(0.0)		
	Colour of label	37	42	133	124	7	2.94	1.00
		(10.8)	(12.2)	(38.8)	(36.2)	(2.0)		
	Easy to dispose off	74	165	85	19	0	3.86	0.82
		(21.6)	(48.1)	(24.8)	(5.5)	(0.0)		
	Style of packaging	89	86	75	66	27	3.42	1.27
		(25.9)	(25.1)	(21.9)	(19.2)	(7.9)		
	Label	79	64	133	55	12	3.42	1.11
		(23.0)	(18.8)	(38.8)	(16.0)	(3.5)		
Extent to which increase in price alters choice of bottled		66	157	101	11	8	3.76	0.88
water a day		(19.2)	(45.8)	(29.4)	(3.2)	(2.3)		

Source: Survey Field, 2018

Table-2 above shows the influence of product features on consumer preference of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis. About 90(26.2%) respondents rated NADAC seal of quality very high, 178(51.9%) rated it high and 75(21.9%) rated it moderate in influencing consumer choice. For colour of label, 37(19.8%) respondents rated it very high, 42(12.2%) rated it high, 133(38.8%) rated it moderate, whereas 124(36.2%) respondents rated it low and 7(2%) rated it very low. Also, 74(21.6%) respondents rated easy to dispose off very high, 165(48.1%) rate it high, 85(24.8%) rated it moderate, whereas 19(5.5%) rated it low. Packaging as influencing factor was rated very high, high and moderate viz 89(25.9%), 86(25.1%) and 75(21.9%) respondents respectively, whereas 66(19.2%) rated it low and 27(7.9%) rated it very low. Again, 79(23%) respondents rated label as influencing factor of consumer preference very high, 64(18.7%) rated it high,

133(38.8%) rated it moderate, 55(16%) rated it low, and 12(3.5%) rated it very low. From the mean response scores, NAFDAC seal of quality (mean = 4.04) was rated to have the highest influence on choice, followed by easy to dispose off (mean 3.8), information on label (mean = 3.42), style of packaging (mean = 3.42).

About 66(19.2%) respondents noted that the extent to which increase in price alters choice of bottled water is very high, 157(45.8%), noted that it is high, 101(29.4%) noted that it is moderate, whereas 11(3.2%) noted that it is low and 8(2.3%) noted that it is very low. With a mean response score of 3.76, it is the opinion of the sampled consumers that the extent to which price increase alters choice of bottled water, though not to be substituted with the NAFDAC seal of quality.

Table-3: Influence of the Product features in aiding sellers in edging out their competitors

Questions	Reasons	VH.%	H.%	M.%	I.%	VL.%	Mean	Std.
								Dev
Extent to which certain features of	NAFDAC seal of	70	124	16	0	0	4.26	0.59
product influence choice	quality	(33.3)	(59.0)	(7.6)	(0.0)	(0.0)		
	Label	31	95	63	18	3	3.63	0.89
		(140.8)	(45.2)	(30.0)	(8.6)	(1.4)		
	Easy to dispose	9	98	83	16	4	3.44	0.78
	off	(4.3)	(46.7)	(39.5)	(7.6)	(1.9)		
Rating of business location as a competitive edge against		35	139	36	0	0	4.00	0.58
competitors		(16.7)	(66.2)	(17.1)	(0.0)	(0.0)		

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table-3 shows the influence of the product features and business location on aiding sellers in edging out their competitors. In ranking the variables that assists sellers in edging out their competitors, 70(33.3%) rated quality very high, 124(59%) rated it high, and 16(7.6%) rated it moderate. Also, 31(14.8%) rated label very high, 95(45.2%) rated it high, 63(30%) rated it moderate, 18(8.6%) rated it low and 3(1.4%) rated it very low. Also, 9(4.3%) rated easy to dispose off very high, 98(46.7%) rated it high, 83(39.5%) rated it moderate, 16(7.6%) rated it low and 4(1.9%) rated it very low. Based on the mean response scores, NAFDAC seal of quality (mean = 4.26) ranked highest, followed by label (mean = 3.63), and easy to dispose off (mean = 3.44). On the influence of business location as an aid in edging out competitors, 35(16.7%) respondents rated it very high, 139(66.2%) rated it high, and 36(17.1%) rated it moderate. With a mean response score of 4.00, the sampled sellers rated business location as a competitive edge against competitors high. From the setters new point NAFDAC seal of quality has the highest mean score of 4.26 thereby affirming or conforming the views of the consumers and justified that NAFDAC seal of quality significantly determine the choice of bottled water in the area under review.

#### **Test of Hypotheses**

The earlier formulated hypotheses for the study are tested as below:

#### **Hypothesis One**

The company of make of bottled water significantly influence the choice of brand of bottled water.

In testing this hypothesis, the mean obtained that is connected with the hypothesis were tested using the sample T-test. The results are:

 $t_{calculated}$  = 6.347  $t_{critical}$  = 2.132 Sig.(p) value = 0.003

Based on the decision rule, since  $t_{calculated}$  (6.347) >  $t_{critical}$  (2.132). The null hypothesis is rejected. This result is significant as sig. (p) value = 0.003 < 0.05. therefore, the company of make of bottled water significantly influence the choice of brand of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis.

#### Hypothesis Two

The purchasing power and social status of consumers significantly determine their choice for brands of bottled water.

In testing this hypothesis, the linear regression was used in testing the data that has to do with the subject matter. The results are:

(t = 4.763) (t = 2.735) (t = 17.790) (t = 7.529)

Where.

**PBW** Purchase of bottled water = SC Social class **RGS** = Reference Group/Status **EFF** Economic and Financial **Factors** Р Personality 0.942 R =  $\mathbb{R}^2$ 0.888 F 668.356 (sig. = 0,000)

The regression sum of squares (225.253) is greater than the residual sum of squares (28.479) which indicates that more of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance.

R, the correlation coefficient, which has a value of 0.942 indicates that there is a strong relationship between the purchase of Bottled Water and the independent variables (social class, reference group/status, economic and financial factors, personality). R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 88.8% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model. With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about 0.29027.

The SC coefficient of 0.074 indicates a positive relationship between SC and PBW, which is statistically significant (with t=4.763), the RGS coefficient of 0.049 indicates a positive relationship between RGS and PBW, which is statistically significant (with t=2.735);. The EFF coefficient of 0.624 indicates a positive relationship between EFF and PBW, which is statistically significant (with t=17.790); and the P coefficient of 0.201 indicates a positive relationship between P and PBW, which is statistically significant (with t=7.529). Hence, purchasing power and social status of consumers significantly determines choice of brands of bottled water.

#### **Hypothesis Three**

The NAFDAC seal of quality significantly determines the choice of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis.

In testing this hypothesis, the mean scores in tables 2 and 3 were tested using he one samples T-test. The results are:

 $\begin{array}{lll} t_{calculated} & = & 20.885 \\ t_{critical} & = & 1.771 \\ Sig.(p) \ value & = & 0.000 \end{array}$ 

This result is significant as sig. (p) value = 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, the NAFDAC seal of quality, significant determine the choice of bottled water in comparison with the other factors in Enugu Metropolis Nigeria.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on table 1, factor determining consumers choice of bottled water in Enugu Metropolis, it was discovered that company of make was ranked highest. The sample T-test supported this, stating that since  $t_{calculated}$  (6.347) >  $t_{critical}$  (2.132) that the result is significant as sig. (p) value = 0.003 < 0.05. By company of make, corporate brand name and company's product brand come into play. Notwithstanding, in the views of Campbell and Kirmarie [28] Fein [29] blantant brand related behavior is likely to increase the accessibility of uterior motives as the consumer may be using the brand to impress others and gain social approval rather than dispositional reasons. Etzel [30] maintained that research and purchasing people jointly evaluate both the alternative product and sources of supply. As way of attracting consumers, Nwosu [31] contended that organization must be customer oriented and customer driven in all that it does, so as to give maximum satisfaction to customer's needs and wants, create new customers easily and keep old customers or publics.

In respect of purchasing power and social status exerting significant influence on choice of bottled water in the area under review, it was further established from the hypothesis test carried out. This result agrees with Jiaqin *et al.*, [32] which held that in order to make purchase decisions consumers acquire knowledge skills and dispositions through exposure to social models. Endorsing this, Triandis & Gelfard [33] stated that even group interaction has a strong influence in promoting attitudes and behavior in various situations even among members of groups who were initially strangers.

When it comes to NAFDAC seal of quality the study affirms that it significantly induces choice as the tested hypothesis showed sig. (p) value = 0.000 < 0.05. Regulation of packaged water in Nigeria by NAFDAC is a government intervention in the private sector for public good as it assures quality [34]. Consumers of bottled water are more interested to patronage NAFDAC approved believing strongly on its safety and quality. Quality in the views of Kotler and Armstrong [35] is that characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy stated or implied customer needs.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Although, all the bottled water offer same core benefit, consumers while noting this, establish in

addition their choice based on the company that produced the bottled water, social group and NAFDAC seal of quality. The consideration of company-of-make suggests that certain company (ies) have been recognized as having competitive advantage for being customer focused, the purchasing power and social influence suggest that financial strength and the social group the consumer belong to direct their purchase and consumption behavior. In respect of NAFDAC as a regulatory body, their seal of quality signifies safety for use or consumption which greatly is a propelling factor for consumers' choice. The production firms should therefore ensure that products are designed and marketed according to the desires and needs of the consumers for purposes of attracting patronage.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Bottled water companies should produce water that meets with the expectations and satisfaction of consumers, as this enhances the product brand loyalty especially ensuring that production and storage facilities should be safe and healthy.
- Bottled water should be produced in different varieties to accommodate different income groups and social classes devoid of compromising to quality standard anchored on potable water.
- Regulatory agencies such as NAFDAC should strictly enhance, control and be in charge of the supervision of every production process, and bottled water companies should ensure that their products meet up with local and international health safety standards

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