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# Nigerian Consumers and their Purchase Intentions for Global Brands

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the research findings of a global brand study conducted in Nigeria. This empirical research sought to evaluate the relative contribution of the following five constructs on global brand purchase intent: country of origin, brand familiarity, brand linking, brand trust, and weak-strong perceptions of the brand's masculinity-femininity associations. Step-wise regression models were used for the study's ten brands. The regression models indicated that brand liking and brand trust were the most important predictors of global brand purchase intent in the studied sample of Nigerian consumers.

## INTRODUCTION

A vibrant and expanding middle class is often given as a compelling reason for global brands to target consumers in emerging markets. Countries associated with the BRIC designation (Brazil, Russia, India, China) are often used to illustrate market entry strategy for global brands in these four countries. The global financial crisis highlights further emerging market importance, since, according to the World Bank, growth rates in emerging markets will outpace those in full developed markets. The global branding literature is well served with studies related to China and India, and to a lesser extent, Russia. However, the world branding literature has conspicuous gaps related to Africa. The empirical research reported here begins to close that gap. Nigeria is the country of interest.

Nigeria is the third largest African economy (after South Africa and Egypt) and has the largest population of any sub-Saharan country, accounting for 18% of the entire continent's population (World Bank, 2011). Nigeria is an export driven economy, deriving significant revenue through oil and petroleum exports. Per capita GDP is \$USD 1,452, and Nigeria has a growing middle class (World Bank, 2011). A recent report estimates that the Nigerian middle class represents 23% of the entire population (Robertson, Ndebele, & Mhango, 2011). As incomes rise, shopping habits change. Mall shopping is increasingly prevalent. Led by The Palms, the first western-

style shopping mall in Lagos which opened in 2006, other malls, such as The Lagos City Mall and Silverbird Galleria, have opened in Lagos and in other large Nigerian cities. Aggressive expansion plans by Spar International, the Netherlands-based supermarket chain, and SABMiller, the diversified beer conglomerate headquartered in South Africa, are two examples of global firms targeting the expanding retail sector in Nigeria (Flores-Araoz, 2012).

To date, the limited global branding literature related to Nigeria has focused on nation branding and rebranding (Agba et al. 2009; Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Nworah, 2006;). Shell Oil's involvement in Nigeria created partial and skewed county perceptions. While nation branding attempts to change consumer attitudes at a global level (pun intended), this research was more narrowly focused: It sought to gain insight into the likelihood of purchase intent for 10 global brands in a sample of Nigerian consumers. Regression models were built for each brand. Constructs used in this research were country of origin, global brand familiarity, global brand liking and global brand trust – all of which are well-known and well documented in the global branding literature. This research also included an evaluation of each brand's perceived masculinity or femininity. This is another unique contribution, since gender is not a topic typically discussed in relation to global brands.

The paper is divided into three sections. First the paper briefly reviews the literature related to brand trust, brand familiarity, brand liking, country of origin and brand gender associations. Second, the research findings are presented. Finally, the research's implications are discussed.

## **BRANDS**

Brands are one of the cornerstones of marketing. Brands differentiate one product from another, and the act of branding transforms generic products into value-added products that, in the best situations, create brand loyal consumers. Loyal consumers, in turn, directly create brand equity. Strong brands help firms succeed.

There is ongoing academic debate, though, about what constitutes a “global brand” (Whitelock & Fastoso, 2007). Roberts and Cayla (2009) note that traditionally the brand's “globalness” is defined in terms of number of markets served, size of markets served and the extent to which the brand shares consistent technical specifications across these markets. This mirrors the standard, textbook definition of a global brand (Ghauri & Cateora, 2010). Roberts and Cayla (2009) also note that while a consumer-centric view of global brands (that is, the process by which consumers categorize brands as “global”) is desirable, such a view is still underdeveloped in the marketing literature. In an extended literature review of global brand definitions, Rosenbloom and Haefner (2009) found only one global brand definition that integrated both consumer and producer orientations. In this definition, a global brand was defined as “the multi-market reach of products that are perceived as the same by both consumers and internal constituents” (Johansson and Ronkainen, 2005, p. 340). Steenkamp, Batra and Alden (2003) were very clear that “a brand benefits from consumer perceptions that it is 'global'...only if consumers believe the brand is marketed in multiple countries and is generally recognized as global in these countries” (p. 54).

## Country of origin

Country of origin is the consumer's association of a particular country with where a product is designed, assembled or manufactured. Country of origin influences consumer purchase because of the positive and/or negative meanings individuals associate with a specific country. Because every country has its own, unique economic development pathway and because country-level politics create multiple impressions of countries in consumer segments, country of origin is a dynamic and heavily researched topic.

Saimee (2011), who critiqued recent research about consumer accuracy in identifying COO, concluded that COO is not as relevant in the consumer choice process as some research suggests. Magnusson, Westjohn and Zdravkovic (2011) counter this claim by suggesting that the recent focus on consumer accuracy in identifying COO is misleading. They argue that COO is still relevant to consumers even if consumers make inaccurate COO attributions. The ongoing relevance of COO is demonstrated by the empirical research of Diamantoopoulos, Schlegelmich, Palihawadana (2011). They researched consumers in China and the United States and found that COO influences brand perceptions and, thus, in turn, influences buying intentions – at least in the refrigerator product category. These three new articles continue to contribute to the voluminous literature on all aspects of COO (Pharr, 2005).

In addition to issue of the accurate identification of COO, marketing scholars have variously tried to understand how COO effects perceived product value (Cervino, Sanchez & Cubillo, 2005; Hui & Zhou, 2002); brand image and brand equity (Lin & Kao, 2004; Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2007). Okechuku (1994) used conjoint analysis to study the effect of COO on product choice in consumers living in Holland, Germany, Canada and the United States and found that COO was one of the two most important attributes in purchase evaluation. Okechuku (1994) found that consumers had a distinct preference for domestic products over foreign ones, especially when the COO was from countries with developing or emerging economies. This finding seems consistent across much of the COO literature: That there is a strong domestic preference for many product categories when consumers in developing countries evaluate COO (Watson & Wright, 2000).

*H1: The greater (the weaker) the importance of knowing a brand's COO, the greater (the weaker) will be its effect on brand purchase likelihood.*

## Brand Familiarity

Brand familiarity reflects “the extent of the consumer's direct and indirect experiences with the brand” (Campbell & Keller, 2003) and directly affects consumer knowledge structures. Brand familiarity creates a feeling in consumers that the brand is “known.” This feeling of knowing something about the product begins the transformation process of turning undifferentiated products into brands (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Thus, consumers who are familiar with a brand have more elaborate, sophisticated brand schemas stored in memory than consumers who are unfamiliar with the brand (Heckler & Childers, 1992; Kent & Allen, 1994; Low & Lamb, 2000). Research has demonstrated that brand familiarity yields more favorable brand evaluation

(Janiszewski, 1993; Holden & Vanhuele, 1999). Increased brand familiarity means that consumers will process advertising messages quicker and with less effort because they already “know things” about the brand (Chattopadhyay, 1998).

Consumer familiarity with product categories and brands also influences COO evaluations. So far, though, this research is inconclusive. Lambert and Jaffe (1998) suggested that consumers already familiar with products from a country used COO marginally in forming brand judgments. Johansson (1989), in contrast, found consumers already familiar with a brand in a product category used COO more fully in their decision making. Phau and Suntornnond (2006) found that while COO does have an effect: “There are only weak associations between product dimensions and country of origin cues particularly for evaluations of unfamiliar brands” (p. 39). Most recently, Ahmed and d’Astous (2008) studied the effect that COO familiarity had on a wide variety of products whose COOs were from 14 different nations. Ahmed and d’Astous (2008) concluded that for their sample of male consumers living in Canada, Morocco and Taiwan “familiarity has a significant and substantial impact on COO evaluations” (p. 96).

*H2: Greater (less) familiarity with a global brand increases (decreases) the likelihood of global brand purchase.*

### **Brand Liking**

Anselmsson, Johansson & Persson (2008) defined brand liking as the “evaluative and global measurement capturing how positive and strong the perceived brand assets are from a consumer perspective” (p. 66), and de Houwer (2008) has stated, “A core assumption in marketing research is that consumers tend to buy brands and products that they like” (p. 151). Therefore, unlike brand familiarity, which is predominantly a cognitive process, brand liking is an affective response within consumers. Boutie (1994) extended the concept by noting that brand liking “seeks to build consumers’ positive attitude toward a brand based on the belief that it cares about them (or addresses them) as individuals” (p. 4). While intuitively attractive, global brand liking is an underdeveloped area of market research. Few studies of both the general the construct of brand trust and/or its relationship to global brands exist. The research reported here contributes to the extant literature on brand liking.

*H3: Stronger (weaker) global brand liking increases (decreases) the likelihood of global brand purchase intent.*

### **Brand Trust**

Rotter (1971) defined trust as “a generalized expectancy held by an individual or group that a word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on” (p.1). Delgado-Ballester, Munera-Alemain and Yague-Gullien (2003) defined brand trust as “The confident expectations of the brand’s reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer” (p. 37). Brand trust has also been defined as “the confidence a consumer develops in the brand’s reliability and integrity” (Chatterjee & Chaudhuri, 2005, p.2). Finally, Barney and Hansen (1994) added the idea of hurt and harm when they defined trust as “The mutual

confidence that no party to an exchange will exploit another's vulnerabilities" (p. 176). Trust is therefore a dynamic concept that is always contingent. "The amount of knowledge necessary for trust is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance. Given total knowledge there is no need for trust and given total ignorance there is no basis upon which to rationally trust" (McAllister, 1995, p.26). Brand trust has been linked with brand loyalty as well as increased market share and advertising efficiency (Chatterjee & Chaudhuri, 2005).

Of recent interest has been the question of whether brands vary in terms of trust. Romaniuk and Bogomolova (2005) studied this question by controlling for brand size effects when they assessed trust scores of 110 local brands in 13 markets in subjects living in the United Kingdom and Australia. They found little variation in brand trust scores when controlling for market share. They concluded that "trust is more like a 'hygiene' factor in that all brands have to have a certain level of trust to be competitive in the market" (Romaniuk & Bogomolova, 2005, p. 371). If brands do not vary greatly in terms of trust, would the same hold true when consumers were asked to evaluate specifically their trust in a global brand?

*H4: Increases (decreases) in global brand trust increases (decreases) the likelihood to purchase a global brand.*

## **Gender**

Gender is a frequently explored topic in marketing, especially in terms of advertising and communication strategy (Wolin, 2003; Meyers-Levy, & Sternthal, 1991). Research suggests that women process information messages differently from men (Laroche et al., 2000). Consumer behavior studies suggest that women enjoy shopping more than men (Rook and Hoch, 1985), have higher levels of hedonic consumption (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012), have better spatial perceptions (Silverman et al., 2007), and scrutinize products more carefully than men (Kruger and Byker, 2009).

Symbolic consumption suggests that consumers purchase products for both the product's functional benefits as well as the product's ability to express aspects of the consumer's self-concept. A logical extension of symbolic consumption is that brands, too, are purchased for their ability to express the consumer's self-concept. Brands may be masculine or feminine (Iyer & Debevec, 1986) – or, as been more recently found, brands may be androgynous (Fugate & Philips, 2010). In order to explore brand gender identity issues indirectly, a dichotomous scale using weak-strong can be used.

*H5: Global brands are perceived as more masculine (feminine) the more the brand is perceived as being "strong" ("weak").*

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this empirical study was to evaluate the relative contribution of each construct presented in Figure 1 (country of origin, global brand familiarity, global brand liking, global brand trust, gender associations) as an independent predictor of global brand purchase.

The following ten global brands were chosen for this research: Avon, BMW, Chanel, Colgate, Haier, HSBC, Levi's, Prada, Samsung, and Zara. These global brands were chosen to cover a wide variety of product categories (consumer electronics, fashion, banking, personal care products and automobiles). In addition, the global brands chosen included low involvement (Colgate) and high involvement (BMW, Prada) products. Four brands were specifically chose for their clear COO associations: BMW (Germany), Chanel (France), Haier (China) and Levi's (United States). Nine of the global brands were available in Nigeria when the research was conducted (March-May 2010). Only Zara was not available in country at the time of the research (March 2011). However, given the propensity of middle class Nigerians to shop in Europe, knowledge of the Zara brand is hypothesized.

Five point Likert-scales measured each construct. Importance of knowing a brand's COO ranged from "not at all important" to "very important." Global brand familiarity ranged from "not at all familiar" to "very familiar" on a 5-point scale. Global brand trust was scaled "no trust at all" to "total trust." Similarly, liking the brand ranged from "like nothing about the brand" to "like everything about the brand" on a 5-point scale. Finally, likelihood to purchase was a 5- point scale that ranged from "never purchase" to "always purchase." It should be noted that these questions about the brands were phrased with a caveat, "if you were able" to purchase the brand.

## Results

Total sample size was 164 (See Table 1). A little more than half of the sample (54.9%) was male while almost the entire sample (99.2%) had a bachelor's degree or better. Almost 40% of the sample was unemployed while the majority (57.9%) had never married. The mean age was almost 32 years.

**Table 1**  
**Sample Profile**

Demographic	Percentage (Mean)	Frequency
Gender:		
Male	54.9	78
Female	45.1	64
Education:		
Some college/university work	.7	1
Bachelor's degree	22.5	31
Some graduate work	9.4	13
Master's degree	65.9	91
Ph.D.	1.4	2
Current Employment Situation:		
Unemployed	39.4	56
Employed part time	13.4	19
	47.2	67

Fully employed		
Marital status:		
Never married	57.9	81
Married	42.1	59
Age (mean)	31.9	

ANOVAs were utilized for testing for mean differences across the brands within familiarity, trust, liking, weak strong, COO and purchase intent. All ANOVAs were significant at  $p \leq .01$ . Tukey-Kramer multiple comparisons were used to detect mean differences (See Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Means for Brand Items**

Brands	Means					
	Familiarity	Trust	Liking	Weak-Strong	COO	Purchase Intent
Avon	3.52	3.65	3.57	3.49	2.58	3.42
BMW	4.75	4.65	4.55	4.82	3.30	4.30
Chanel	4.12	4.29	4.23	4.39	2.81	4.18
Colgate	4.60	4.34	4.22	4.43	2.91	4.11
Haier	3.58	3.51	3.48	3.41	2.91	3.43
HSBC	3.88	4.06	3.84	4.14	3.19	3.71
Levi's	4.46	4.38	4.26	4.33	2.81	4.22
Prada	4.05	4.35	4.29	4.46	2.93	4.39
Samsung	4.77	4.27	4.29	4.61	3.35	4.17
Zara	3.47	4.00	4.17	3.69	2.81	4.08

Note: All items were on a five point scale. For familiarity mean differences greater than .48 are significant at  $p \leq .05$ . For trust means, differences greater than .62 are significant at  $p \leq .05$ . For liking, mean differences greater than .64 are significant at  $p \leq .05$ . For weak strong, mean differences greater than .48 are significant at  $p \leq .05$ . For COO, mean differences greater than .66 are  $p \leq .05$ . For purchase intent, mean differences greater than .63 are  $p \leq .05$ .

The most familiar brands were Samsung (4.77), BMW (4.75), and Colgate (4.60). The least familiar brands were Zara (3.47), Avon (3.52), and Haier (3.58). The most trusted brands were: BMW (4.65), Levi's (4.38), Prada (4.35), and Samsung (4.27). The best liked brands were BMW (4.55), Prada (4.29), Samsung (4.29), Chanel (4.23), and Colgate (4.22). Brands considered to be strong were BMW (4.82), Samsung (4.61), Colgate (4.43), and Chanel (4.39). Avon (3.49) and Zara (3.69) were considered to be weaker brands. COO was not considered to be very important for most brands. Samsung (3.35) and BMW (3.30) had the highest ratings. Lastly for purchase intent, several brands were rated in the more likely range: Prada (4.39), BMW (4.30),



Levi's (4.22), Chanel (4.18), and Samsung (4.17). The lowest purchase intent scores were for Avon (3.420 and Haier (3.43), and HSBC (3.71).

Separate stepwise multiple regressions were run for the ten brands (See Table 3). The dependent variable was likelihood of purchase of the brand while the independent variables included: familiarity with the brand, degree of trust in the brand, degree of liking the brand, importance of knowing the county-of-origin of the brand, gender, education, marital status, and current employment situation. All of the models were significant at  $p \leq .01$ . Most of the models were robust in their predictive ability with the expectations being BMW with an adjusted  $R^2$  of .277 and Levi's with an adjusted  $R^2$  of .369. The VIF was below 2 for most of the models with Haier and Zara being in the 3 range thus .indicating little problem with multicollinearity.

**Table 3**  
**Regression Results Across Brands**

Model/Brand	Model Summary				Coefficients (Standardized Betas)			
	F	Significance	R	Adjusted $R^2$	Variable(s)	t	Significance	Weight
Avon	42.4	.00	.758	.602	Liking	5.3	.00	.523
					Weak-Strong	3.1	.00	.310
					Employed Part Time	-2.3	.02	-.164
BMW	25.9	.00	.537	.277	Liking	4.7	.00	.397
					Trust	2.6	.01	.221
Chanel	51.8	.00	.703	.458	Weak-Strong	4.9	.00	.437
					Trust	3.8	.00	.342
Colgate	54.4	.00	.687	.463	Liking	7.1	.00	.555
					Weak-Strong	2.6	.01	.205
Haier	69.1	.00	.767	.579	Liking	3.4	.00	.417
					Trust	3.2	.00	.383
HSBC	24.2	.00	.658	.416	Trust	3.1	.00	.288
					Weak-Strong	2.9	.00	.274
					Liking	2.6	.01	.251
Levi's	35.2	.00	.616	.369	Trust	3.7	.00	.366
					Liking	3.2	.00	.311
Prada	36.3	.00	.645	.404	Trust	8.3	.00	.631
					Employed	2.0	.03	.158
Samsung	207.1	.00	.792	.624	Liking	14.3	.00	.792

Zara	45.1	.00	.777	.590	Liking	3.2	.00	.429
					Trust	2.9	.00	.386
					Employed			
					Part Time	-2.2	.02	-.155

Note: Employment, gender, education level, and marital status were entered into the models as dummy variables. WS = weak strong scale.

The most frequently occurring significant predictor across the ten models was global brand liking (8 times / See Table 4). The only brands where brand liking did not occur were Chanel and Prada. Trust was the next most frequently occurring predictor (6 times). The weak-strong variable occurred with Avon, Chanel, Colgate, and HSBC. Global brand familiarity and COO were not predictors for any of the brands.

The only demographic variable to appear in any of the models was employment. Those employed part time were less likely to purchase than those who were unemployed. Those who were employed were more likely to purchase Prada than those who were unemployed. Finally those employed part time were more likely to purchase Zara than those unemployed.

**Table 4**  
**Significant Brand Items in Regression Models**

Brand	Familiarity	Trust	Liking	COO	Weak-Strong
Avon			√		√
BMW		√	√		
Chanel		√			√
Colgate			√		√
Haier		√	√		
HSBC		√	√		√
Levi's		√	√		
Prada					
Samsung			√		
Zara		√	√		

## DISCUSSION

In striking contrast to the most recent discussions (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmich, Paliawadana, 2011; Magnusson, Westjohn and Zdravkovic, 2011), this research found no support for the relevance of COO in consumer decision making – at least in this sample of Nigerian consumers. Country of origin might well have been, at one point in time, an important construct in global branding, but presently, these consumers suggest COO has lost its importance in terms of purchase decision influence. *H1: Not supported*

The absence of brand familiarity as an independent predictor was somewhat surprising, since Table 3 suggests a moderately high level of brand familiarity with eight of the ten tested global brands. Mean scores ranged from 4.75 for BMW to 3.52 for Avon and 3.47 for Zara. *H2: Not supported.*

Perhaps a more likely explanation for the limited influence of global brand familiarity is that brand familiarity operates as a hygiene factor. All global brands must attain a certain level of familiarity for active consideration; otherwise they fall out of consumers' evoked sets (Romaniuk and Bogomolova, 2005). Familiarity may function more simply. Rather than being a truly continuous variable, familiarity may operate dichotomously. Either a consumer is or is not familiar with the global brand.

On the one hand, Table 2 aligns with the generally cosmopolitan perspectives of middle class Nigerian consumers. They are mature adults and well educated – two demographic characteristics confirmed in Table 1. Extensive internet shopping may also contribute to high brand familiarity across all ten brands. This sample of Nigerian consumers could well reflect Skrbis, Kendall and Woodward's (2004) understanding that cosmopolitan consumers have "a conscious openness to the world and to cultural differences" (p. 117). Further research, though, is needed to confirm this assertion.

Table 4 suggests the much stronger influence of global brand liking and global brand trust in purchase decisions. Global brand liking appears in eight of the ten models, while global brand trust appears in six models. In this research, "liking" is a surrogate for "attitude." When viewed from this vantage point, the presence of global brand liking for Avon, BMW, Colgate, Haier, HSBC, Levi's, Samsung, and Zara suggest strong attitude formation or a strong affective dimension within these Nigerian consumers that influences purchase decisions. *H3 and H4: Supported.*

Table 4 provides some support for the gender identities of some of the brands. Table 4 indicates that weak-strong/feminine-masculine identity were associated with Avon, Chanel, Colgate and HSBC. Of the four brands, Avon, Chanel and Colgate can be considered hedonic. Cosmetics and toothpaste have "multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) – all of which are hallmarks of hedonic products/brands. Unexpectedly, neither Zara nor Prada, which can also be considered hedonic brands, did not appear in the regression models relative to gender identity. *H5: Partially supported.*

Overall, this research begins an exploration of middle class Nigerian consumers. More research needs to be conducted.

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