

Attitude towards Marketing Practices and its Effect on Consumerism in Kenya: A Survey of Household Consumers in Nakuru County

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Abstract

Consumerism has been defined as a social movement seeking to augment the rights and powers of consumers in relation to sellers (Kotler, 2000). It has spread to developing countries including Kenya but majority of Kenyan consumers have been observed to be relatively passive in their participation in the consumer movement. This observation may be linked to their attitudes towards marketing practices. The theory of collective behaviour by Smelser, (1963) postulated that formation of generalized beliefs among consumers is crucial for the success of a consumer movement. The study examined consumer attitudes towards marketing practices and its effect on consumerism in Kenya through a survey of household consumers in Nakuru County. The study adopted a descriptive research design involving a mixed method approach. A sample size of 400 respondents was drawn from 10 administrative sub-locations in Nakuru East and Nakuru West sub counties of Nakuru County. Multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used for selecting households for interview. A pre-designed self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Analysis of data was done using descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS) version 19. Hypothesis test was done using p-values generated from linear regression analysis. Descriptive statistics indicated that the respondents had favourable attitudes towards marketing practice. Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a positive correlation between attitudes towards marketing practices and consumerism. Regression results indicated a positive relationship between attitudes towards marketing practices and consumerism. Hypothesis test confirmed that attitudes towards marketing practices had no significant effect on consumerism. The study concluded that most household consumers had favourable attitudes towards marketing practices. The study recommended for a policy on consumer education and activation in Kenya in order to influence consumer attitudes and enhance consumer activation.

Keywords: Attitude towards marketing practices, Consumerism

Introduction

Perner (2010) defines consumer attitudes as a composite of a consumer's beliefs, feelings, and behavioural intentions toward some object within the context of marketing. A consumer can hold negative or positive beliefs or feelings toward a product or service. A behavioural intention is defined by the consumer's belief or feeling with respect to the product or service. According to Solomon (2009), an attitude in marketing terms is defined as a general evaluation of a product or service formed over time. An attitude satisfies a personal motive and at the same time, affects the shopping and buying habits of consumers. Examples of research streams in the area include examination of the effect of attitudes towards marketing mix variables on consumer satisfaction (Chan & Cui, 2012); consumer attitudes towards foreign goods compared to locally manufactured goods (Opokul & Akorli, 2009; Bhuian, 1997) and cross-cultural comparison of consumer attitudes across demographic factors (Gao & Zhang, 2011). Consumer attitudes towards marketing activities are important from both a theoretical and a managerial standpoint since they affect behavioural responses to marketing activities (Gaski & Etzel 1986). Although existing studies have identified and reported on similarities and differences in attitudes towards marketing practices based on cross cultural comparisons, only a few studies have explored its effects on consumer satisfaction and consumerism in developing countries. The theory of collective behaviour by Smelser, (1963) postulated that formation of generalized beliefs among consumers is crucial for the success of a consumer

movement. Attitudes towards marketing practices are expected to influence formation of generalized beliefs among consumer regarding the problems they experience in the market place. This determines the likelihood of consumers responding to calls for collective actions against errant manufacturers. The paper therefore examines the extent to which attitudes towards marketing practices affect consumerism in Kenya through a survey of household consumers in Nakuru County.

Literature Review

Chaubey, Kala and Gupta (2012) examined attitudes towards consumerism, marketing practices and government regulations among Indian consumers of pharmaceutical products. The objectives of the study was to investigate whether such attitudes promoted consumerism in India and to determine the degree to which consumer protection, education and information are available to various consumer groups in Uttarakhand. They study found out that that the six main factors influencing consumerism in India included; Product information and self-disclosure, Attitude toward Advertising, Consumer consciousness factor, Information Utility and uses, Government role and Legal Issues. They results indicated that attitude towards elements of marketing practices (Advertising) play a significant role in promoting consumerism. The study also indicated that the most general behaviour of consumers towards purchasing a deceptive product is to change the outlet. The study further concluded that there were significant differences in the different factors promoting consumerism across the educational category and occupation of the respondents.

Cherian and Jacob (2012) investigated the relationship between the consumer attitudes and green marketing (consumerism). The study involved a review of literature in the area of green marketing. The review concluded that majority of consumers still lack 'green' knowledge and because of such low awareness towards green products organizations are still not pushing towards developing more green products nor are they working hard on green packaging. Lack of communication was considered to be a major reason for commercial failures of environmentally sustainable products mainly because communication is a major step in the development of a positive behaviour towards consumer's consumption patterns. A conceptual framework was developed to frame the gap between attitudes and behaviour as a social dilemma. The framework indicated that there was a positive relationship between consumer's attitudes and behaviour when it comes to the purchasing of green products. However, the framework has not been tested empirically but provides guidelines for further studies in the area.

Isin (2011) examined the marketing managers' perceptions of consumerism in Turkey as a developing country. The study concluded that marketing managers in Turkey have a positive attitude towards consumerism. This provides evidence that there is a link between consumer attitudes and consumerism. The study also revealed that the demographic features of the managers had no effect on the attitudes towards the regulatory role of the state, the activities of consumer organizations and consumerism.

Orel and Zeren (2011) established that Turkish people had a favourable attitude toward environmentally friendly products compared to consumers in Poland who were less aware. However, the results showed that both Polish and Turkish respondents are sceptical regarding the statement that the marketing system in their country operates more efficiently than those of other countries. The study showed that Turkish consumers who had favourable attitudes towards environmentally friendly products were taking actions against errant producers compared to the Polish consumers, providing evidence of a link between consumer attitudes and consumerism.

Darley and Johnson (1993) conducted a comparative study of attitudes towards consumerism differ across consumers in four developing countries of Singapore, India, Nigeria, and Kenya was conducted by the authors. The purpose was to examine and compared underlying dimensionality of consumerism responses in the four countries. The results of the study indicated that perception of the various aspects of consumerism differed significantly by country for government regulation, business greed, and help from firms. Kenyans reported the strongest feelings that businesses are greedy. These differences were considered as an indication of the levels of consumerism in the respective countries which may have been linked to the attitudinal disposition of consumers in each country.

Varadarajan and Thirunarayana (1990) investigated consumer attitudes towards marketing practices, consumerism and government regulations in India. The results revealed a high level of consumer discontent and support for the consumerism movement. The results of the study provided additional support for the validity of the consumerism life cycle concept.

Bloom (1982) sought to describe and explain consumerism (on both a macro and micro level), predict the movement's future (on both levels), and control aspects of the movement (on both levels). The approach used for predicting the future of consumerism involved two elements: Studying the trends in consumer attitudes and opinions (or discontent) and examining the potential resource mobilization skills of the individual organizations making up the movement. The study concluded that consumer continue to be discontented in areas of product safety and health care. The study concluded that Consumer organizations will continue to face problems if they do not overcome free rider problem and recommended that they should position themselves to take advantage of social trends in order to be effective.

Objective of the study

To examine the effect of attitudes towards marketing practices on consumerism

Hypothesis of the study

H₀: Attitude towards marketing practices has no significant effect on consumerism

H_A: Attitude towards marketing practices has a significant effect on consumerism

Methodology

The study was conducted among estates with a target population of 68,469 households in Nakuru West and Nakuru East sub-Counties of Nakuru County. A sample of 400 was drawn whereby heads of households or any other adult present were interviewed. A multi-stage cluster sampling method was used for selecting the sample for the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design involving a mixed method approach. According to Jackson (2009), descriptive design involves observation, case study or survey methods that are mainly used for describing situations. A mixed method approach involves both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The design was therefore suitable for establishing the relationship between attitudes towards marketing practices (independent variable) and consumerism (dependent variable) since it enables a multifaceted approach and allowed the use of surveys as per the research requirements. Secondary data was collected from government agencies and published academic journals while primary data was collected from respondents through a pre-designed self administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a 15 multi-item likert type scales constructed with reference to Webster (2011) and Barnes and Kelloway (1980) scales. It was divided into sections that measured attitudes towards various marketing practices such as product quality, price of products, advertising for products, retailing or selling and marketing in general. The instrument was modified to fit the requirements of the study and local conditions. The respondents were asked to score each of the 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Using total scores, attitudes towards marketing practices for each respondent were rated from 75 (extremely positive) to 15 (extremely negative). Instrument reliability was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha test whose value was 0.679. This satisfied the acceptable reliability co-efficient criterion by Shelby (2011) who proposed that alpha values of above 0.6 were acceptable. The face validity of the scales was assured through experts' reviews and literature survey. Data analysis was done through Pearson's correlation and linear regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 19.0.

Results and Discussion

Effect of attitudes towards marketing practices on consumerism

According to Pearson correlation analysis, there is a positive correlation between attitude towards marketing and consumerism ($r = 0.271$), indicating that there was a positive association between attitudes towards marketing practices and consumerism. The Correlation was categorized as weak according to Cohen's decision rules since it fell between 0.1 and 0.3 (see Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation between consumer rights awareness and consumerism Correlations

		ATTD	CONS
Attitude towards marketing practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.271**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Consumerism	Pearson Correlation	.271**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Linear regression analysis indicated that there was a positive relationship between attitudes towards marketing practices and consumerism since the coefficient of the beta value ($\beta = 0.090$) was positive (see Table 4). Hypothesis test were done using p values at 95% confidence level. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis if calculated p-value was less than the significant level (0.05) and fail to reject the null hypothesis if calculated p-value was greater than the significance level (0.05). Since the p-value for attitudes towards marketing practices ($p = 0.084$) was greater than significant level 0.05 (see Table 4), we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that attitude towards marketing practices has no significant effect on consumerism.

Table 4: Regression results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.724	2.515		3.866	.000
	Attitude towards marketing practices	.084	.049	.090	1.733	.084

Conclusion

Majority of the household consumers were found to have favourable attitudes towards marketing practices regarding product quality, pricing, advertising, retailing and marketing in general. There was evidence that generalized beliefs about problems in the market place there forming among the respondents. However, the level of consumerism was found to be relatively low among the respondents. This failed to support the suggestion by Orel and Zeren (2011) that consumers with favourable attitudes towards marketing practices are more likely to take actions against errant manufacturers.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the local media should provide consumers with information on the marketing practices in Kenya that contravene consumer rights to safety, quality fair price and truthful information among other rights. Media houses in Kenya should dedicate weekly programmes that discuss consumer issues and problems in the market place. This will lead to activation of consumers into collective actions against errant producers hence strengthening the consumer movement in Kenya. Eventually, consumer exploitation by manufacturers is expected to be extensively reduced in the marketplace. Sensitization through local media will also educate consumers on their role, the role of government and manufacturers in enhancing consumer protection as per the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 2012.

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