

# The Contribution of Brand Awareness on Customer Retention in The Mini-Markets in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Zuva Petroleum Ltd.'S Presto Mini-Markets

Case Study

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## Abstract:

The study was centred on the contribution of brand awareness on customer retention in the mini-markets in Zimbabwe and thus, focusing on Zuva Petroleum Ltd.'s mini-markets also known as Presto. Thus, the study was prompted by the challenges being faced by the mini-markets in Zimbabwe and in the process creating a considerable strain on the business performance of these mini-markets. Accordingly, this study was achieved by adopting the phenomenological research philosophy which is a valuable means of finding out what is happening, seeking new insights, asking questions and assessing phenomena through the use of literature search, engaging experts and conducting focus group interviews. In addition, the data was analysed using qualitative data analysis. Consequently, the results show that mini-markets in Zimbabwe especially mini-markets in service stations (gas stations) have an array of challenges but the good thing to come out of this study is that brand awareness exist in the mini-markets in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the results show that brand awareness also influences customer retention as it builds customer loyalty which is turned into sales as the brand attracts more customers. In addition, brand awareness can be used in building the image of the organization such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd. Thus, it is clear from the study that creating a brand is important because it allows retailers to build relationships with their audience, which can eventually turn them into loyal customers by so doing improving their business performance. For that reason, study recommends that social media be promoted in the retailing sector in Zimbabwe as it was found to be very effective in brand awareness campaigns.

**Keywords:** Brand Awareness, Zuva Petroleum, Mini-Markets, Service Stations, Presto.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Retailers' world over appreciates that change and disturbance are part of the business in this sector. However, business leaders in the retail sector across the world have now realised that issues such as consumerism, food and clothing production, artificial intelligence and technology, workforce and new marketplace have caused serious disruptions in the way business is done in this sector (Thumas, 2019). As a result, this has affected retailers' organisational performance due to contemptible sales performance (Markenson, 2017; Steinbach, 2018). In short, consumers are now calling for extra envelopment in the food and clothing choices due to

consumerism phenomena performance (Thumas, 2019). Thus, demanding transparency along with specialised product options to meet individual needs as well as need to invest in new technologies such as gene editing among others is now order of the industry (Markenson, 2017). Furthermore, global changes have also had an upshot on the way employees are hired, trained, managed and thus the overall corporate culture in the retail sector has absolutely changed (Thumas, 2019), resulting in the antagonism for labour which has in truth intensified (Steinbach, 2018). Thus, it is now a grim to entice and retain employees as well as customers

(Steinbach, 2018; Thumas, 2019). As noted by Markenson (2017), thus an evolution in job responsibilities and skills in the retail sector has also changed due to rising education levels and improved technology as well as an increase in minimum wage and healthcare costs coupled with the desire for other benefits especially in developed economies (Thumas, 2019). Additionally, competition from non-traditional food retailers and online sales are now universal concerns impacting sales and profits (Markenson, 2017; Steinbach, 2018). For example, supermarkets and mini-markets in United Kingdom in particular and Europe at large are also facing challenges with discount supermarkets such as Aldi and Lidl who have now expanded and are dominating the whole of Europe (Thumas, 2019). In a nutshell, these discount supermarkets have expanded in the past few years from 10 percent to 15 percent market share and this is translated to mean losses to traditional supermarkets such as ASDA and Tesco, with the market share falling from 17 percent to 16 percent and 29 percent 28 percent respectively resulting in thinner profit margins for traditional supermarkets and mini-markets (Adams, 2020; Jones, 2021). In addition, traditional supermarkets and mini-markets in the United Kingdom are also facing issues to do with speciality grocery stores who are now eating into their market share on the higher end while discount supermarkets are digging in the lower end (Thumas, 2019).

In Zimbabwe, there has been some suggestions that supermarkets and mini-markets are struggling as a result of rising unemployment, rapid urban population growth, low disposable incomes, street vending and an ailing economy as some of the drivers that scholars have attributed to poor supermarkets' performance in recent years in Zimbabwe (Ncube, 2010; Munyoro and Gwisai, 2020). Likewise, diverse government policies have had different effects and impact on the economy of Zimbabwe as more vendors caused by informal settlements has started to surface in recent years as a consequence of few job opportunities which came as a result of the floundering economy (Tibaijuka, 2005; Munyoro et al, 2018). In the same way, the supermarkets and mini-markets in Zimbabwe have also been affected by foreign currency shortages, rising running costs, price instability and artificial shortages of commodities (Munyoro et al, 2018; Mutingwende, 2021). Thus, this acute foreign currency deficit has led to manufacturers and retailers turning to an unstable parallel market and consequently, shrinking the availability of foreign currency coupled with fuel shortages among other issues (Mpofu, 2019). For example, OK Zimbabwe, the retailing giant was

not spared of the economic crisis as they were also affected by the deterioration of the exchange rate which caused a steep price increase in the food and clothing industries (Munyoro et al, 2018; Mutingwende, 2021). This situation has also made it difficult to retain the customers and Zuva Petroleum Ltd.'s retail shops also known as 'Presto' are also among the retailers that are still feeling the arctic as retaining customers has become a big issue (Munyoro et al, 2018; Mpofu, 2019). For that reason, this study's major aim was to establish the contribution of brand awareness on customer retention in the retail sector in Zimbabwe. Thus, focusing on Zuva Petroleum Ltd.'s mini-markets, which, like any other retailer in Zimbabwe, have struggled to retain customers, resulting in poor sales performance. With profitability of petroleum products rapidly declining, businesses now need to maximise the return on all activities on a single service station. This includes adding services such as Diesel, Petrol, Aviation fuel, Liquefied Petroleum Gas and lubricants and extras such as tyre repairs. In fact, the mini-markets also known as Presto have long been ignored yet, they offer convenient shopping for motorists and other shoppers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Concept of Retailing**

According to Reardon et al (2003) and Munyoro et al (2017), the term "retail" is derived from a French word that means "to cut again". Whilst, in the trade world, this refers to one who cuts off big portions of merchandise into smaller portions of goods (Reardon et al., 2003; Munyoro et al, 2017). At the same time, retailing is defined as the final delivery of the product to the final consumer personally even though the process is completed by several intermediaries that enables the transfer of goods produced from the producer to the retailer (Berman & Evans, 2001; Nedbard, 2011). Thus, the common misconception here is that retailing only refers to the sells goods in stores, but retailing also refers to the sale of services such as those offered in a restaurant, parlour or by car rental agencies (Munyoro et al, 2017). Thus, in this study, retailing refers to a process through which goods are procured from producers, transported, warehoused and finally sold to the final consumers. It is worth noting that retailing industry must always be evolving and should quickly adjust and modify retailing models, approaches and processes to satisfy the needs of its ultimate customers profitably (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2007; Munyoro et al, 2018).

### **What is a Retailer?**

A retailer is an agent, agency, company or organisation which is instrumental in reaching the goods, merchandise or services to the ultimate consumer or are involved in facilitating the passage of goods, merchandise or services to the ultimate consumer and that the selling should not necessarily take place through a store but can be done through email, internet, door-to-door visits or any channel that can be used to connect with the consumer (Berman and Evans, 2001; Munyoro et al, 2017). Likewise, retailers perform specific activities such as anticipating customer wants, developing assortments of products, acquiring market information and financing (Berman and Evans, 2001).

### **The Theories/ Models of retailing**

As noted by Munyoro et al (2017), there are several retailing theories, and these philosophies are responsible for explaining how different retail setups arise, and these philosophies give rise to modelling of preferred retailing behaviour. Therefore, a business model is a well specified system of interdependent structures, activities, and processes that serves as a firm's organising logic for value creation (for its customers) and value appropriation (for itself and its partners). In a nutshell, retail business model articulates how a retailer creates value for its customers and appropriate value from its market (Idachaba et al, 1985; Sorescu et al, 2011) and these theories are the environment theory which suggests that for any given retailer to survive, it should evolve according to environmental needs or else might be pushed out of business (Basi, 2014; Munyoro et al, 2018). Accordingly, the factors that affect the survival of retailers consist of technology, consumers, financial system, expertise, society, culture, legal framework and competitors (Blizzard, 1976; Brown, 1978; Munyoro et al, 2028). The next theory of retailing is the retail wheel hypothesis (McNair, 1957) which suggests that the retail wheel hypothesis stand out as a theory that best describes the evolution of retailing. Thus, this theory is based on two strategic characteristics of the retailing industry and the first strategic characteristic in this case is that there are no barriers to entry in this market apart from set of laws on the establishment of outlets and therefore a profitable originality can be quickly imitated by competitors (McNair, 1957; Das-Nair & Dube, 2015). In addition, the second strategic characteristic of the retail wheel hypothesis is that the potential for differentiation of a retail format is very limited as it lies in the management of the product variety, the relative price level, site and

the outlet design (McNair, 1957; Wu et al, 2007). In a nutshell, it is stated that the hypothesis holds that new-fangled types of retailers usually enter the market as low-status, low margin and low-price operators but gradually the retailers acquire more elaborate establishments and facilities with both increased investments and higher operating costs, and finally they mature as high cost and vulnerable establishments (McNair, 1957; Hollander, 1960; Wu et al, 2007). Thus, it is worth noting that a wheel of retailing is one of the most recognised theories in the world regarding institutional changes in retailing (Munyoro et al, 2018). Consequently, the concept states that in retailing industry, changes take place in a cyclical manner and those retailing institutions undergo evolutionary life cycles that also transform them (Hollander, 1960; Wu et al, 2007; Munyoro et al, 2017). Consequently, it also suggested that retailers attempt to capture market share and brand value as they enter with rock bottom prices and profits, then gradually work their way up to increase prices, profits and image (Hollander, 1960; Wu et al, 2007) and even though the stages may not be applicable to many business contexts, the hypothesis holds water in many retailing countries (Pingjun et al, 2006; Wu et al, 2007). The third retailing theory is the sustainability retailing theory which is the embracing of business approaches and activities that meet the present needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders while protecting, sustaining and enhancing future human and natural resources needs (Yang et al, 2017). Thus, the essence of this theory is that sustainable development at the societal level is not very likely without the utilization of a sustainable business model as a key initiating component of corporate sustainability (Schaltegger et al, 2015; Yang et al, 2017). Thus, this theory precisely emphasises on sustainability impacts associated with a retailer's processes as social, community, and inclusion impacts.

### **The Brand Awareness Concept**

Kotler and Keller (2016) defined brand awareness as fostering people's ability to recall or recognize the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase. Thus, in support of this, Maven (2018) established that in this current era consumers have many product options available to them, having a differentiated message and an audience that can easily pick out a company's brand from that of rivals is detrimental for success. In addition, when shoppers are aware of the product that a company offers, they are more likely to go straight to that company if they need that product, instead of researching other places that are offering that particular product (Maven, 2018; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). In a nutshell, brand

awareness is detrimental for company success so companies should generally direct their marketing efforts towards creating brand awareness. For example, as noted by Byberg (2015), celebrity endorsement is a powerful tool towards awareness creation and the building of brand equity. In addition, brand awareness is labelled as the ability of a consumer to recognise and recall a certain brand given different situations (Keller, 1993; Rizwan, 2008). Furthermore, brand awareness aids consumers in understanding the service category of the brand and recognising which services and products are sold under that particular brand (Lombard, 2007; Dhurup, 2014). Thus, it is essential to bear in mind that brand awareness is a very sensitive discipline as at times consumers tend to purchase brands which they have information about and are aware of that brand for example banks such as Standard chartered have created awareness as quality associated banks something Zuva Petroleum could also do (Kapferer, 2008; Njeri, 2011). For that reason, Hunter (2013) and Huang and Sarigollu (2012) are of the opinion that brand awareness can be built through some of the marketing mix elements, such as distribution, which allows the accessibility and link between a brand and the product category; advertising, which also affects brand awareness positively by frequently exposing brands to customers and also increasing chances of the brand /product being included in a consumers consideration set; price, which can be an awareness tool in terms of affordability and match ability to quality. Likewise, Munyoro and Nhevere (2019) suggest that in this current era, consumers have many choices available to them, and have a discerned message and customers who can easily pick out a company's brand from that of competitors is detrimental for success. Consequently, when consumers are aware of the end product that a firm offers, they are most likely to go directly to purchase that brand when need arises (Keller, 2013; Munyoro & Nhevere, 2019). As Aaker (2001) suggests brand awareness helps brand awareness levels such as brand recognition, brand awareness and top of the mind awareness to appreciate the importance of ensuring brand awareness at all costs.

### **Customer Retention**

The whole idea of using brand awareness is to embolden customer retention in order to improve organisational performance (Anderson & Narus, 1998; Keller, 2001; Hakala et al, 2012; Munyoro & Gorejena, 2020). Thus, customer retention is a measure of customer loyalty based on an organization's success in retaining the business of its existing customers, which is the dream of Zuva

Petroleum's retail shops (Matanga, 2008; Hakala et al, 2012; Munyoro & Gorejena, 2020). Hence, Ramakrishnan (2006) describes customer retention as the marketing goal of stopping customers from going to the competitor. Thus, the success of companies in today's competitive setting according to Dawes (2009), is mostly grounded on customer retention. Accordingly, this statement is supported by Fluss (2010), who suggests that competitors are continuously looking for means to capture customers by offering them better deals than their competitors. In addition, several studies report that it is more expensive for the business such as Zuva Petroleum to attract new clients than to espouse a new strategy such as brand awareness in order to retain existing customers (Lee-Kelley et al, 2003; Hakala et al, 2012; Munyoro & Gorejena, 2020). Likewise, this is also supported by Reichheld and Schefter (2000) who state that, it is more cost-effective to preserve relationships with existing customers because they are fewer price responsive than new customers. At the same time, Gee et al (2008) also suggest that customer retention openly impacts on extended lifetime values and benefits which is a more beneficial opportunity for organizations that are looking to enhance and prolong their business activities than the other way round. Furthermore, Hoffman and Bateson (2010) state that customer retention is one of the benefits of relationship marketing, and thus, customer retention refers to concentrating the organisation's marketing efforts toward the existing customer base. In short, customer retention concentrates only on coming up with marketing strategies that cause repeat-purchasing behaviour such as brand awareness (Anderson & Narus, 1998; Keller, 2001; Hakala et al, 2012; Munyoro & Gorejena, 2020). Hence, Hoffman and Bateson (2010) further state that in contrast to seeking new customers, organisations engage in efforts directed towards customer retention in order to satisfy existing customers. Thus, the needs of the customers are increasing especially in the retailing sector and the competitiveness among the different institutions within this sector has been similarly increasing (Markenson, 2017; Steinbach, 2018; Thumas, 2019). As a result, winning in the highly competitive retailing sector means convincing customers to come through the door and also convincing them to stay (Anderson and Narus, 1998; Keller, 2001; Hakala et al, 2012; Munyoro and Gorejena, 2020). Accordingly, improved efficiency and simplification of the on-boarding process makes it easier for a customer to buy from a retailer such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd's retail shops (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013; Munyoro & Gorejena, 2020). Consequently, developing long-



term relationships with customers should be the ultimate goal of organisations, that is if they want to grow their business and in this case customer retention is an effective instrument that retailers should make use of in order to increase their leads and hold up to it in today's ever-increasing retail sector's hostile environment (Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018; Steinbach, 2018; Thumas, 2019).

In a nutshell, the more an organisation retains a client the more profit the organisation yields (Griffin & Lowenstein, 2002; Munyoro & Gorejena, 2020). Therefore, there is a need for customer management to identify and improve on factors that can limit consumer defection and these factors include worker performance and expertise, willingness to resolve problems, friendliness, and the level of knowledge, communication skills, and selling skills and many more (Griffin & Lowenstein, 2002; Boulding et al, 2009). In fact, the retailing sector is very competitive, with retailers not only competing amongst themselves; but also with non-retailers and other retailing institutions (Boulding et al, 2009; Markenson, 2017; Steinbach, 2018; Thumas, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for retailing shops such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd.'s retailing shops to understand the importance of customer retention as organisations tend to get revenue and more profit when they retain their customers (Griffin & Lowenstein, 2002; Boulding et al, 2009). Thus, the longer a company such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd retains a customer; the more profit the company generates and thus there is a positive significant relationship between the retailing shop and the customer since this is capable of influencing retention as the consumer will experience feelings of trust and satisfaction towards that particular retailing shop such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd.'s retailing shops (Munyoro and Gorejena, 2020). Thus, it is worth noting that it is very costly to secure customers to replace those lost because the expense of getting customers is incurred only in the first phase of the commercial relationship (Ouma et al, 2013; Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018). In a nutshell, longer-term customers tend to buy more and, if satisfied may bring forth positive word-of-mouth publicity for the company and they also take less of the company's time and are less sensitive to price changes (Cvent, 2013; Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018). Similarly, customer retention has also a benefit on costs and profitability over time (Kotler, 2000; Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018). Likewise, the other benefit of customer retention is that the cost of acquiring a new customer is far more than the cost of keeping a relationship with an existing customer (James, 2012; Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018). In addition, Lombard (2011) states that companies are

pushed by the market to retain customers when the customer's options are high, and when loyalty of customer is diminishing, and sales are declining. Therefore, in such scenarios, if a key customer is lost to a competitor, profitability and growth would be considerably affected (Kotler, 2000; Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018).

It is important to note that loyalty is significant to any business including retailing sector as it is used as a measurement of customer retention when a customer wishes to continue using the product in the long run and gives recommendations to other people (Kotler, 2000; Lovelock et al, 2009; Haripersad & Sookdeo, 2018). In fact, there are several indicators of customer loyalty which include repeat purchases (loyalty in product purchases), retention (rejection of negative effects on companies), and referrals (referring the product or service to other people (Kotler, 2000; Lovelock et al, 2009). Thus, it is essential for retailers to handle customer complaints efficiently to achieve customer satisfaction and increase customer retention (Kotler, 2000; Lovelock et al, 2009; Salim et al, 2017). Hence, customers who remain with a firm such as Zuva Petroleum for a long period are regarded as retained customers (Ang & Buttle, 2006; Larivie're & Poel, 2005; Terblanche & Hofmeyr, 2005). The three methods thereby used to gauge the customer's retention rate are behavioural, attitudinal and composite. Consequently, behaviour element explains the customer's continued product repeat purchase (Ang & Buttle, 2006). For that reason, theorists suggest that there is strong correlation between repetitive purchases and customer delightfulness (Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006; Ang & Buttle, 2006). Thus, the moment a firm such as Zuva Petroleum serves a customer, repetitive purchases are initiated (Lopez et al, 2007; Trasorras et al, 2009) because as soon as a customer decides to purchase at a certain preferred retailer such as Zuva Petroleum's retailing shop than it results in repeat purchases (Trasorras et al, 2009). Customer retention can also be measured through the attitudinal data which copies the customer's emotional and psychological attachment (Lopez et al, 2007; Trasorras et al, 2009). That said, the final stage of customer retention measurement is when the above two are merged together to create a composite measurement (Larivie're & Poel, 2005; Lopez et al, 2007; Trasorras et al, 2009) and this is whereby a person can stand in the roads advertising as a sales ambassador selling the good name of the company such as Zuva Petroleum (Larivie're & Poel, 2005; Lopez et al, 2007; Ang & Buttle, 2006; Trasorras et al, 2009). Thus, this is because Non-Financial Performance (NFP) metrics concentrates on the continued survival of the firm and this

includes satisfying customer, internal business process efficiency, innovation and satisfying employees (Avci et al, 2011; Gengeshwari et al, 2013). NFP, in essence, serves as a barometer for gauging intangible services that are based on each individual customer (Stengel, 2003; Avci et al, 2010). In a nutshell, customer satisfaction is the key to measuring non-financial performance in service organizations such as Zuva Petroleum (Trasorras et al, 2009; Avci et al, 2010).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, phenomenological research philosophy was used because a valuable means of finding out what is happening, seeking new insights, asking questions and assessing phenomena through the use of literature search, engaging experts and conducting focus group interviews (Njaya and Choga, 2011; Munyoro, 2014). Therefore, it is worth noting that phenomenological research philosophy was a preferred research philosophy for this study because it provided rich data for this study from experiences of individuals such as customers and experts in the sector as well as an in-depth understanding of a phenomena as it allowed a wider engagement of a larger audience in assessing the effect of brand awareness on customer retention in the mini-markets (Saunders et al, 2009; Njaya & Choga, 2011). Consequently, the research approach which was adopted in this study was the qualitative method and this approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to look at the existence of brand awareness in the retail sector and the challenges that are being faced by the mini-markets in Zimbabwe and how this can be solved through the use of brand awareness (Creswell, 2003; Munyoro, 2014). In view of this, this also permitted the researcher to reconnoitre the acumens and repercussions of those involved with these facts, in this case primarily the retail owners such as Zuva Petroleum's mini-markets (Dawson, 2002; Munyoro, 2014). Thus, a case study research design of Zuva Petroleum's mini-markets was embraced in this study (Munyoro, 2014; Chigunhah et al, 2020). The data for this study was collected from management and employees from Zuva Petroleum's mini-markets, government officials and other important stakeholders such as Confederation of Retailers Association (Jegade, 2015; Creswell, 2017; Alasuutari et al, 2017). Hence, an interview questionnaire with structured questions was then used to collect data to warranty uniformity and reliability of the questions asked by the researcher to the respondents (Saunders et al., 2016). Similarly, face to face interviews also indorsed the researcher to expound the purpose of the study to assure better cooperation and in the

process facilitating the researcher to shed light on questions, correct misunderstandings, review answers as well as making follow ups on new accepted wisdom, which is argued to be mostly difficult with the majority of other data collection methods (Mathers et al, 1998; Saunders et al, 2016).

Nevertheless, the possible problem of handling too much qualitative data was also addressed by using a qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12 Plus (Munyoro, 2014; Creswell, 2017). Thus, a sample size of 400 was also used. Accordingly, a non-probability sampling technique was used to select the individual participants (Saunders et al, 2009). Therefore, convenience and purposive sampling were used, allowing the researcher to select employees who were both available and willing to participate in the research (Fridah, 2002; Saunders et al, 2009). In order, to try and ensure that the sample was representative, a two-stage cluster sampling plan was devised whereby the first stage involved clustering of the branches and the second stage involved drawing a convenient sample from equidistant sampling points for each of the service stations from which the samples were drawn (Fridah, 2002; Tailor, 2005; Saunders et al, 2009). Thus, the collected data was coded into some form of explanation of the respondents' views on the effects of brand awareness on customer retention which has knock on effect on corporate performance in the mini-markets in Zimbabwe and beyond (Seidel & Kelle, 1995; Seidel, 1998). In this case, qualitative data analysis (QDA) was used to analyse data and transform it into facts as well as labelling or coding it into themes. Thus, enabling the researcher to quickly reclaim all the text that were being associated with a particular thematic idea, were then examined and compared (Davidson et al, 2011; Plachkova & Boychev, 2012). In the same manner, the researcher divided the model into three parts, namely Noticing, Collecting and Thinking about interesting things and in the process the researcher noticed fascinating effects in the data and consequently, assigned 'codes' to them, based on the topic or theme, and these codes were in turn used to break the data into fragments and as a result, the codes were then used to act as sorting and collection devices (Seidel & Kelle, 1995; Davidson et al, 2011). Thus, the researcher started writing about the data and his findings and this then involved writing a summary of the data as well as requiring some logical ideas (Seidel & Kelle, 1995; Gibbs, 2002; Plachkova & Boychev, 2012).

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **• Problems facing retail sector in Zimbabwe**

According to the study's findings, the major issues confronting Zimbabwe's retail sector are customer service issues, competition, brand visibility, erratic supplies of products and unstable pricing, street vending, rising unemployment, low disposable incomes, diverse government policies and an ailing economy. Thus, these are some of the drivers that have attributed to poor retail performance in recent years in Zimbabwe (Ncube, 2010; Munyoro & Gwisai, 2020). For example, some economic commentators still blame the Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1990s that led to massive unemployment as among the reasons why retailers are critically underperforming as statistics from Central Statistics Office estimated that close to 20,000 jobs were lost in the city over a twelve-year period between 1990 and 2002 (Mbiba, 2002; Munyoro et al, 2018). Whilst others blame the adoption of the Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLR) in year 2000, which literally broke the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy (Mutondi, 2012) because the immediate consequence of land reform was the loss of jobs and livelihoods for thousands of farm workers with an estimated 50 per cent of farm workers having lost their jobs by the beginning of 2002, and 65 per cent by February 2003 (Sachikonye, 2003; Munyoro et al, 2018). Furthermore, an acute foreign currency deficit has led to manufacturers and retailers turning to an unstable parallel market and consequently, shrinking the availability of foreign currency coupled with fuel shortages among other issues which has led to production costs going up leading to high-priced products (Mpofu, 2019; Mutingwende, 2021). As a result, affecting organisational sales in the mini-markets. Yet, mini-markets in the service stations are important because they generate additional revenue and will increase margins of Zuva Petroleum Ltd if they promote brand awareness as service stations do not make much money from selling fuel alone.

### **• Street vending has had a negative impact on mini-markets in Zimbabwe**

In this study, results show that cost of living which has been caused by high costs of production among other factors has led to street vending which has negatively affected retail organizations by decreasing their market share resulting in poor performance by the sector (Munyoro & Gwisai, 2020) because street vendors are now smuggling their goods from outside

the country and also buying their local goods by illegal means making them very cheap compared to mini-markets (Truong, 2017; Nsakanya & Phiri, 2018). In addition, street vending is thriving due to high unemployment which has been caused again by the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas (Munyoro et al., 2017). Furthermore, street vending is also affecting local industries by bringing cheap and inferior goods from foreign countries especially China and India resulting in poor performance by mini-markets (Munyoro & Gwisai, 2020) because street vendors also do not pay any revenue taxes, and sadly the majority of them do operate without paying any licenses taking an unfair advantage over mini-markets. Thus, leading to vendors selling their goods at comparatively lower prices than mini-markets (Gomez, 2008; Ndhlovu, 2011). Consequently, this has resulted in consumers preferring to buy cheap goods from vendors than minimarkets (Munyoro & Gwisai, 2020). As a result, this has led to low sales volumes and profits of mini-markets as they are not able to match these prices resulting in the need to make use of the best efforts promoting their products by building, creating and establish brand awareness strategy (Gomez, 2008; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). Likewise, mini-markets have tax obligations, rental and labour costs among other operating overheads which are making it difficult for them to compete with near zero cost base of street vendors (Ndhlovu, 2011; Nsakanya & Phiri, 2018; Munyoro & Gwisai, 2020) who even allow customers to negotiate at the low prices (Ndhlovu, 2011; Truong, 2017). As a result, this has led to in some famous retail chains such as Lucky Seven and Save more among others closing down their shops resulting in thousands of people losing their jobs and government losing revenue (Munyoro & Gwisai, 2020).

### **• Knowledge of brand awareness**

As discussed above, an array of challenges facing the retailing organizations in Zimbabwe such as Zuva Petroleum are numerous and have led to increased arduous competition whilst, the market is also shrinking forcing mini-markets to ruminate about building, creating and establish brand awareness strategy as the last option (Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). Hence, in this study most of the respondents agreed to the notion that brand awareness is effective if applied to retailing sector in Zimbabwe in order to extricate counterfeit and mediocre goods and chattels mainly from China, which are brought illegally in Zimbabwe by the informal traders from the genuine goods and chattels. Consequently, the positive thing to come from this study is that most mini-markets such as Presto from Zuva Petroleum



have knowledge of brand awareness and are aware of its existence. In short, they are aware that “the more visible the brand is the more traffic will come through”. In short, the interesting thing is that most of the respondents especially the Zuva Petroleum management are aware of the existence of brand awareness strategy and its capacity to nurture people’s ability to recall or recognize the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase (Kotler and Keller, 2016; Maven, 2018; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). In addition, it was also established in this study that shoppers are aware of the product that a company offers and are more likely to go straight to that company if they need that product instead of researching other places that are offering that particular product (Maven, 2018; Munyoro & Nhevere, 2019; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). In a nutshell, respondents were all of the opinion that brand awareness is essential for company success so companies should generally direct their marketing efforts towards creating brand awareness. For example, as noted by Byberg (2015) and, Munyoro and Nhevere, 2019, celebrity endorsement is a powerful tool towards awareness creation and the building of brand equity. Hence, most of the respondents from this study stated that they know the existence of brand awareness because it aids them to appreciate the service category of a particular brand something that they suggested is needed by Zuva Petroleum’s mini-markets (Lombard, 2007; Kapferer, 2008; Njeri, 2011; Huang & Sarigollu, 2012; Hunter, 2013; Dhurup, 2014).

- **Influence of brand awareness on customer retention in the retailing sector**

On this theme, respondents were of the view that brand awareness has an influence on customer retention in the retail sector as it builds customer loyalty which is turned into sales as brand charms more customers. In addition, management of Zuva Petroleum Ltd are aware that brand awareness has a positive effect on consumer decision making even though nothing much is done to use brand awareness strategy as reflected by current low sales (Alimen, 2009; Moisescu, 2009) and has a direct influence on which brands are picked out by buyers from the consideration set (Fennell, 1978; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). Furthermore, some respondents stated that if brand awareness strategy was used effectively, then it can affect the consideration of a product as well as its heuristic for choice as most consumers choose the brand that they know (Nelson, 1970; Yoo, 2010). Thus, this is good for retail shops such as Zuva Petroleum as brand awareness means

shaping the way customers understand a product category in which a brand competes (McGuire, 1969; Nelson, 1970; Cakmak, 2016). Hence, the need for Zuva Petroleum’s mini-markets to realize the importance of brand awareness strategy that it can establish a strong and clear link to products sold under the brand name of Zuva Petroleum (Pappu et al., 2005; Balaji, 2011; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020).

- **The Need for Top of the Mind Awareness**

In this study, it was determined that one of method of attaining top of the mind awareness for Zuva Petroleum’s mini-markets is to adopt the brand awareness strategy because brand awareness strategy benefits Zuva Petroleum Ltd by allowing it to achieve a higher and desired level of brand awareness. Thus, something that Zuva Petroleum Ltd.’s mini-markets need to do (Sjoberg, 2017) as top of the mind awareness allows customers to consider or think of a particular brand first before registering other brands (Johansson, 2015). There was consensus from respondents that it is Zuva Petroleum Ltd’s dream to have customers that can recall a brand and afterwards go on to complete purchase of that same product, especially in their mini-markets (Ghodeswar, 2008 Marmbrandt, 2012; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). For that reason, Kuhn (2008), indicates that when consumers are faced with a purchase decision, they refer to the first three brands from their memory lane and if a brand such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd are able to effectively stand amongst those three brands, it means then that success in terms of choice and preference over rivals is assured. Hence, Lehmann et al. (2008), suggests that a brand provides multiple sensory stimuli which can aid in enhancing client recognition. Thus, Zuva Petroleum Ltd’s mini-markets brand should be visually recognizable from its unique logo, packaging and shape and something that the respondents suggested that Zuva Petroleum should strive to achieve (Farhana, 2015; Moornan, 2018). As noted by Baloglu (2009) and Munyoro and Gorajena (2020), brand awareness is a process that begins with the brand being only known and ends with the brand being at the top of the consumers’ minds, which is referred to as top of mind awareness.

- **Brand awareness is a marketing tool used in building the image of the organization to enhance customer retention**

Most respondents noted that brand awareness is used in building the image of the organization such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd’s mini-markets as building brand awareness can also increase market share as well as customer retention (Rhodes, 2017). Hence,



most of the respondents admitted that if you are the first to the punch in getting your brand fused into customers' minds and thus, you will raise the barrier to other companies that are trying to enter the market (Rhodes, 2017; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). In this case, brand recognition is significant in brand awareness because it is the extent to which a customer can correctly classify a product or service just by viewing the product or services logo, tagline, packaging or advertising campaign (Bornmark, 2005; Schwager & Meyer, 2007). Additionally, brand recognition usually relies on other visuals such as packaging; category reminders, trash bags, salad dressing and not brand names (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). Thus, upon going to the store the consumer will not yet have realised the brand he or she wishes to purchase, all that he or she has to help identify the brand is the category need like in this case, the customer will need to recognise Zuva Petroleum Ltd's mini-markets (Heath et al, 2006). Thus, this is why Aaker (1991) and Munyoro and Gorajena (2020) suggested that brand recognition is often aided through auditory or usual signifiers like slogans, logos, as presented or seen by the advertising. Hence, brand recognition requires the customer to recall prior knowledge and in order to build brand recognition. Thus, Zuva Petroleum Ltd must frequently provide consumers with unswerving visual or auditory learning experience (Wheeler, 2009). In addition, brand recall which is the extent to which a brand name is recalled as a member of a brand, product or service class and as distinct from brand recognition is also important for Zuva Petroleum Ltd's mini-markets (Lerman & Garbarino, 2002; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020). Thus, this research results show that pure brand recall requires unaided recall and, in this case, consumers were asked to name the names of retail shops that they may know and Zuva Petroleum Ltd's retail shops were not mentioned yet people buy from these shops everyday especially motorists (Dietrich, 2016).

## **5.6. Policy recommendations**

### **• Retailers should promote its brands**

It is clear from the study that building, creating and establish brand awareness strategy is significant because it allows mini-markets to build relationships with their audience, something that can eventually turn them into loyal customers. Thus, Zuva Petroleum Ltd can create a brand such as Presto that people actually care about and put themselves ahead of other mini-markets in the service stations that are not using this to their advantage (Forbes, 2021). In addition, promoting brand awareness such as Presto

is very helpful as it promotes brand loyalty and repeat purchase which results in increased market share and business performance (Farquhar, 1989; Bailey, 1992; Keller, 2001; Munyoro & Gorajena, 2020).

### **• Customer retention in the retailing sector should also be promoted**

The study suggested that in order to improve the performance of Zuva Petroleum Ltd's mini-markets, customer retention should be promoted in mini-markets because it is often far more effective and profitable than customer acquisition (Taylor, 2021; Johnson, 2021). Thus, it is important to note that returning customers is more than just profitable, but it also helps to gauge the health of customer relationships (Myers, 2021; Johnson, 2021). In addition, loyal customers can turn into brand advocates as word of mouth is more influential in purchase decision as noted by Taylor (2021), Myers (2021) and Johnson (2021). For example, in the Ghanaian jewellery industry, branding is now a crucial component of marketing as it determines the success of an organization operating in the jewellery industry in Ghana (Keller, 2001; Kotler, 2010; Naatu, 2016). Thus, results from various studies indicate that research and development, internal branding, brand positioning or promotion and customer orientation are the critical branding factors for competitive advantage which are being adopted by various firms in order to retain their customers such as Ghanaian Jewellery industry (Keller, 2001; Kotler, 2010; Naatu, 2016).

### **• The need to promote the use social media in promoting brand awareness**

The study recommends that social media be promoted in the mini-markets in Zimbabwe as it was found to be very effective in brand awareness campaigns. In fact, in a study carried out in Iraq, the researchers argue that the people in Iraq are more used to social media and hence, firms should promote brand awareness through social media in order to enhance customer retention (Keller, 2001; Safian, 2018). In a nutshell, they discovered that social media is a fantastic way to boost brand awareness for most companies in Iraq as well as enhancing customer retention (Safian, 2018). Thus, the use of inbound marketing such as search engine optimization allow the embracing of social media and content innovation online (Keller, 2001). Furthermore, it was also shown that in Pakistan, brand characteristics have more influence on customer loyalty as well as customer retention (Kuhn, 2008; Kahn, 2012). Thus, brand characteristics quality of the product and brand

image were found to be the key factors which contribute more towards customer loyalty in addition to advertising online which in this case contributes more in comparison to other techniques (Keller, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; Kahn, 2012).

- **Mini-markets should promote brand awareness in order to increase firm performance**

The study suggests that firms should promote brand awareness in order to increase firm performance as there is a relationship between brand awareness and firm performance (Homburg et al, 2010). Thus, from the study carried out in Germany, it was established that in Business-to-Business (B2B) environments, many firms focus their branding activities on the dissemination of their brand name and logo without developing a more comprehensive brand identity and in cases such as these, brand awareness therefore, comes in as a significant goal for many B2B when formulating branding strategies (Keller, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; Homburg et al., 2010; Lassar, 2013). Therefore, drawing on information economics theory, the results from a cross-industry study of more than 300 B2B, firms show that brand awareness significantly drives market performance, and this link is moderated by market characteristics (product homogeneity and technological turbulence) and typical characteristics of organizational buyers (buying centre heterogeneity and time pressure in the buying process) (Homburg et al., 2010). In this case, customers are uncertain about product quality and therefore perceive their decisions as risky because the consequences of a purchase cannot be entirely anticipated and thus, based on this theory, the key rationale when making decisions on purchasing is that brand awareness drives market performance through two mechanisms that is, it reduces buyer information costs and buyer-perceived risk (Erdem and Swait, 1998; Keller, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; Homburg et al, 2010; Lassar, 2013). Whilst, in China, the study which was carried out to explore the roles of brand equity and corporate reputation in customer relationship management in the large transitional market thus, the study shows that there are direct relationships between brand equity, and its antecedents such as (brand knowledge, brand awareness, brand recall), corporate reputation and CRM performance (Wang et al, 2018).

- **The establishment of mini-markets will generate additional revenue and improve margins for petroleum companies**

The establishments of mini-markets in service stations by petroleum companies will generate

additional revenue and improve margins of Zuva Petroleum if they promote brand awareness as service stations do not make much money from selling fuel alone. Hence, Zuva Petroleum Ltd should use mini-markets to supplement incomes from service stations as they have ample space to accommodate mini-markets, ATM, Fast food shop or restaurant to generate additional revenue.

- **Need for repeat purchasing**

Likewise, this study once more shows that there is need to promote the Zuva Petroleum Ltd brand in order to encourage repeat purchasing in their mini-markets so that the revenue can be raised to justify their presence and contribute to the corporate performance of Zuva Petroleum (Launders, 2011; Gumbart, 2018). Similarly, Zuva Petroleum Ltd's mini-markets will definitely attract customers who want to quickly buy a product or products without wasting their time in queues. Another advantage to the customers is that customers will reduce trips of going to buy fuel and essentials as this is done in one place. In the same way, Zuva Petroleum Ltd's mini-markets will also provide freebies (giving something for free) as well as low prices to speed up the movements of products (Launders, 2011). Thus, having an attached mini-market such as Presto will be a good idea as Zuva Petroleum Ltd will make use of space available to them to generate additional revenue and this can ultimately be of beneficial in improving the margins of Zuva Petroleum Ltd (Launders, 2011; Gumbart, 2018). Thus, Zuva Petroleum Ltd should have a guest blogger on different social media sites, make use of the organic social media and in the process developing a voice for their brand. In addition, Zuva Petroleum Ltd should involve itself in brand partnerships in order to enhance its brand and in the process leading to repeat purchasing. Thus, the longer a company such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd retains a customer; the more profit the company generates. Consequently, there is a positive significant relationship between the retailing shop and the customer since this is capable of influencing retention as the consumer will experience feelings of trust and satisfaction towards that particular retailing shop such as Zuva Petroleum Ltd's retailing shops (Munyoro 7 Gorejena, 2020).

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