

CONSUMERISM AND BRAND PERFORMANCE IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Consumer complaints are part of business because they have positive effects for the organization and their products, through which business and organizations are made aware of the wrongs spotted out by the consumers. Consumerism aims to safeguard the right of consumers from the negative practices of producers such as unsafe product, ordeal, deceptive packaging, and incorrect weight. It is believed that as organization plan a coordinated sets of product to serve their target customer need and want they will derive profit through creating customer satisfaction hence, the key to achieving a brand objective is centered on an organization been more effective in valid creation and delivery to its chosen target market, as well as, ensuring that customer complaint is swiftly and responsibly handled. Hence, this paper aims to show the relationship that exists between consumerism and brand performance, and to proffer solutions that will promote this correlation and enhance customer service delivery in the hospitality industry. To this end the general objective of this paper is to examine the effect of consumerism and brand performance in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa state. To achieve this, structured questionnaires were developed and distributed to selected customers in one of the most promising hotels in Bayelsa state. The data collected was analyzed and conclusion was adequately drawn. Among others it was suggested that Organizations should establish a division of consumer affairs to participate and represent consumers in all corporate decisions; respond to consumer inquiries and complaints; inform and educate the consumers. The department shall also be concerned with monitoring consumer satisfaction with company products, predicting and detecting areas of consumer discontent and representing consumers and other social interest in corporate policy-making.

Keywords: Consumerism, Brand Performance, Consumer Complaint, Consumer Protection, Product Quality

INTRODUCTION

Consumer spending has been responsible for more than two third of the domestic demand across global market. This phenomenon did not happen without a cause as organization continue to invest huge resources on marketing campaigns to influence consumer spending (Novotney, 2008 in Ayoze, 2018). In a bid to protect consumers from the growing philosophy that consumers can only buy what is made available regardless of their welfare and satisfaction, the marketing concepts of consumerism is increasingly emphasized on.

Consumerism aims to safeguard the right of consumers from the negative practices of producers such as unsafe product, ordeal, deceptive packaging, incorrect weight e.t.c It is believed that as organization plan a coordinated sets of product to serve their target customer need and want they will derive profit through creating customer satisfaction hence, the key to achieving a brand objective is centered on an organization been more effective in valid creation and delivery to its chosen target market .

Consumerism refers to the excessive over consumption of consumer goods without regards to be negative impact to people and the planet. Firms with lower financial and innovative

resources must learn to influence consumer's perceived needs just as other competitors have done in enhancing brand performance (Ayoze, 2018)

The protection of existing customers is very important, since it was calculated that the attraction of new customers is much more expensive than the retention of existing ones (Wong & Sohail, 2019). Jackson (2006) in his study on sustainable consumers, noted that there is no agreement about a clear explanation of this concept, but a variety of views about the extension in which the sustainable consumption discuss the questions of consumer behavior, lifestyle, consumerism and how it affect firm's brand. Therefore taking the above argument into consideration this study sought to examine the effect of consumerism on brand performance. Consumerism is the social/movement seeking to amend the right of buyer and sellers in relation to sellers.

Statement of Research Problem

In recent times, the Nigeria markets are filled with varieties of clone products and services, adulterated and inferior goods. Many firms have been conducting unacceptable marketing activities (sharp practices) on unaware consumers, all in the name of making fast cash in which directly and indirectly affecting their brand identity and performance. The above challenge must give concern to every responsive industry, regulatory bodies, concerned managers who believe that any unsafe products and consumer's interest must not be passed to the unsuspecting public in the name of profit making. Even so, this study has the intention of finding out the implications and effect of Consumerism on brand performance. Additionally, there are few studies on the subject matter, and limited study has attempted to address these problems in the hotel or hospitality industry; therefore, the researcher aim to fill the literature gap on the effect of consumerism on brand performance.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the study is to investigate the effect of consumerism on brand performance; the specific objectives were as follows:

- i. determine the influence of consumer protection on brand performance
- ii. ascertain the impact of product quality on brand performance
- iii. evaluate the effect of compliant handling on brand performance

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research problems the following questions were developed to guide the study:

- i. To what extent does consumer protection influence brand performance?
- ii. What is the effect of product quality on brand performance?
- iii. Does compliant handling affect brand performance?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the research objectives the following hypotheses were developed to guide the study:

H01: Consumer protection does not have a positive effect on brand performance

H02: Product quality does not have a positive effect on brand performance

H03: Compliant handling does not have a positive effect on brand performance

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Consumerism

Consumerism is defined as a social movement which seeks to improve the rights and power which consumers have (Perreault & McCarthy, 2012). Consumerism according to Kotler (2009), is a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers in relation to seller. Also, Smriti (2015) opined that consumerism is a social force designed to protect consumer interests in the market place by organizing consumer pressures on business. Ayoze (2018) added that Consumerism is the activities of government, business and independent organizations that are designed to protect individuals from practices that infringe upon their rights and consumption. This view of consumerism emphasizes direct relationship between the individual consumer and the business firm.

Consumerism is the organized form of efforts from different individuals, groups, governments and various related organizations which helps to protect the consumer from unfair practices and to safeguard their rights (Obasan, 2011). Consumer awareness or consumerism has recently been described as the voicing of consumer discontent and the furtherance of corrective action. It is also viewed as a social movement, seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers versus those of sellers (Maynes, 2010). Consumer rights include the right to be informed, the right to choose from alternatives, the right to be heard, the right to safety and health in the consumption of products and the right to a clean environment.

Complaints Handling

Lovelock and Wirtz (2014) revealed that, effective complaint handling efforts should be regarded as investments which help to retain customers and protect long-term brand performance. Policies of complaint handling management may imply apologizing, refund or material compensation as well as redoing core service right by trying to correct what went wrong. Miller (2012) divided complaint handling strategies into two types: psychological and tangible strategy. The psychological approach is focused on actions like explaining the problem to the customer and apologizing and in this case, emphasis is applied on communication. Meanwhile, the tangible approach is concentrated on refunding and material compensation.

Boshoff (2013) postulated that fulfillment of the fundamental elements of complaint handling process will lead to cumulative satisfaction that will consequently result into customer loyalty and brand performance in the long run. This is in line with the findings of Akhtar, Ahmad and Abbas (2016) while investigating favorable and unfavorable incidents of complaint handling. The findings revealed that appropriately managed customer complains can turn distressed customer into a satisfied one. Similarly, Tahmeem (2018) while examining complaint handling as a relationship tool also proved that effective complaint handling should be considered as a means to enhance customer satisfaction. An effective and prompt execution of complaint handling process is unparalleled for the company's commercial success, owing to the fact that the customers rank this as a key factor in making purchase decisions, second only to product quality.

Brand Performance

Brand performance is the measure of a brand results against the business and marketing goals. While brand delivery focuses on how branding is executed during a marketing campaign, brand performance measures the campaign results to see how effective the branding was for the business. Extant marketing literature suggests that a universal brand performance measure does not exist, probably because no single brand performance metric is likely to be perfect (Farris et al, 2010). A wide range of measurements have been adopted to operationalize brand performance. Generally, brand performance is often taken into account as the outcome of brand equity model

and defined as the economic results that the producers with strong brands wishes to achieve (Tran, 2006).

Baldaufet (2013) considered brand profitability performance as an index of the financial share of a brand in relation to the retailing profits, evaluated using the profit and margin of profit while the brand market performance considers the market demands and evaluates indices such as sale levels and market share. Aaker (2006) proposed some brand performance indices related to the evaluation of market behaviour: market share, price and distribution coverage and argued that brand performance measurement using the market share often provides a widespread and sensible reflection of the condition of a brand or its customers. Aaker (2006) stated that when a brand has a relative advantage in consumer's mind, its market share should increase or at least not decrease. Keller and Lehman (2013) operationalized brand performance in terms of profitability, price premium, price elasticity, market share, cost structure and success in category extension. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2011) considered relative price and market share as the outcomes of brand performance.

Consumerism and Brand Performance

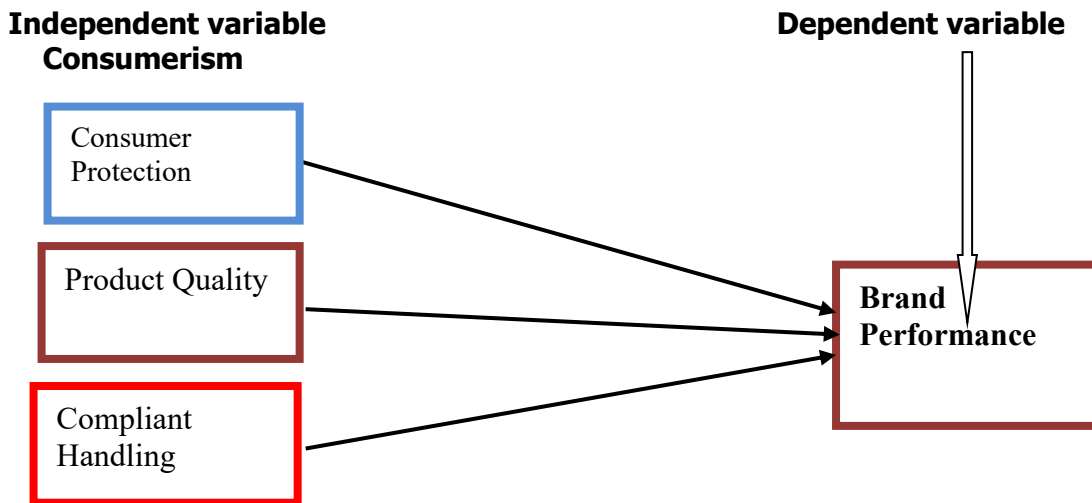
The satisfaction and protection of customers have both direct and indirect impacts on brand performance (Kandampully & Hu, 2018). The protection of existing customers is very important, since it was calculated that the attraction of new customers is much more expensive than the retention of existing ones (Wong & Sohal, 2019). Thus, in the market place, effective complaint management must be a priority for every business, as the complaining behaviour provides companies with a chance to remedy the dissatisfaction and, ultimately, to retain loyal customers (Obasan, 2011). Atalik (2018) suggests that consumer protection may comprise policies and actions involving government intervention to ensure that all consumers obtain what they really want.

The increasing demand for consumer protection is a modern phenomenon, and efforts are being made by governments to obtain greater enforcement from laws. To examine the complaint intention, Bennett and Rundle (2004) found that if consumers perceive that a business is willing to remedy the complaint, they are more likely to make a complaint, and they feel that complaining is worth the effort; regarding predicting complaint action from business practices and responsiveness to complaints. Richins (2007) found that if complainers believe that business responsiveness is low, they are more likely to take complaint action. If consumers experience dissatisfaction with products or services and are unable to obtain satisfaction from sellers or manufacturers, they may turn for help to a variety of consumer complaint agencies. Therefore, a third party can be the next step for consumers to improve their satisfaction if they still dissatisfied with the company's response.

The quest to build a strong brand performance motivates firms to be truthful about their products/services and to deliver on claims made about them. Brand credibility is a key element in customer satisfaction which influences consumer's response to the brand. A brand has a great deal of importance in the market as they build a relationship between the company and the consumers and consumers show loyalty and trust towards a brand if they become satisfy with it. Experience about a brand is very important for a customer in taking decision about a particular brand. When customers recognize a brand and perceive it as good, it makes brand to be trustworthy in the eyes of customers. This makes a strong positive relationship to be developed between them and value of the brand is also increased in the viewpoint of customers. This will create customers repurchase behavior and thus build positive brand performance (Douglas, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

The independent variables in the study are consumer protection, product quality and compliant handling, while the dependent variable is brand performance



Source: Researcher's Model, 2024

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action is one of the most prominent theories used in scholarly literature to assess how people behave. Reasoned-action theory (TRA) was introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1967). The theory has two main constructs that are used to determine the likelihood of an individual exhibiting a particular behaviour. In the case of consumer behaviour, the target behaviour is any action that manifests the consumer's engagement. In the case of consumer-protection activities, the character to be manifested might be complaining when one's rights have been violated. TRA posits a very simple model, as it has two main constructs: attitudes and subjective norms. An attitude refers to individuals' preferences or opinions about behaviour in question.

On the other hand, subjective norms refer to the social pressures one is subjected to. These can be favourable or unfavourable with respect to the targeted behaviour. For example, in certain cultures, it is considered normal for consumers to express their views whenever they feel discontented with the service offered by a supplier. Such social norms are in line with consumer protection. In other cultures, the practice is just the opposite. In the latter, it is more difficult for individuals to depict the consumer behaviour which may lead to consumerism or consumer protection.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) was conceived by Ajzen (1980) as an improvement of the theory of reason action. TPB's major improvement on TRA concerns the identification of various constructs which could be clogged in the TRA model. Under TRA, behaviour is assumed to be voluntary; the realization of the contrary introduces the idea of behavioural control, which could persuade an individual to attain a desired behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, the TPB has three main constructs: behavioural beliefs, which describe one's belief about the possible ramifications of the behaviour; normative beliefs, which depict one's normative expectations of one's fellows; and control beliefs, which are beliefs about factors that may encourage or discourage behaviour. The aggregated effect of these factors predicts the behavioural intention, which is the degree to which

it is likely that a person will exhibit behaviour. The higher the behavioural intention, the more confidently the targeted behaviour can be exhibited.

METHODOLOGY

The research design selected for the paper is the cross-sectional design. The population of this study consists of all the staff currently working in Ayalla Hotels and Suites Yenagoa. The staffs of this hotel were chosen because they have knowledge about customer and organizational activities of the chosen organization. The population was made up of 86 (eighty-six) employees. The entire list of the population was obtained from the administrative department where all staff records are kept.

For the purpose of this study and based on the small population size the researcher decides to adopt the population size as the sample size for the study. Since the population is not too large, the study used the whole population for the study. A sample size of eighty-five (85) respondents was therefore chosen for the study

In this research, data were collected from primary sources and secondary sources. The secondary data collected were from internet, journals and other published material used to provide additional information to make the study fruitful. The primary data collected was through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is in two sections A and B. Section A is the personal data of the respondents while section B was used to get information on the variables selected for the study. The questionnaire is in four responses of the modified Likert scaling of five (5) point closed ended questions which are; 5= Strongly Agree, 4 =Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

In this study, the descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data. It involves the computation of frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation etc. which are useful to identify differences among groups. In order to meet the objectives of this study, all valid responses from the formulated hypotheses were assessed using the linear regression analysis through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22.

DATA PRESENTATION

Regression Analysis and Interpretation of Findings.

Test of Hypotheses

The regression analysis was employed as the statistical tool for testing of the hypotheses formulated for the study

Decision: The null hypotheses will be accepted if the p-value (calculated value) is greater than the set level of significance (critical value) of 0.05(5%) and reject the null hypotheses (i.e. accept the alternate) if it is less than the critical value.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between consumer protection and brand performance

Table 1: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.888 ^a	.776	.775	.90616

a. Predictors: (Constant), consumer protection

The results from the table above shows that changes in consumer protection is brought about by 77% (.776) as exhibited by the adjusted R² value. This implies that the independent variables explained 77.6% of the variability of the dependent variable

Table 2: Fitness of the Model ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2248.749	1	2248.749	2738.610	.000 ^b
Residual	55.837	68	.821		
Total	2304.586	69			

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), consumer protection

The results from the table above shows the *F*-ratio test whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table indicated that consumer protection statistically significantly predicts brand performance (1, 69) = 2738.610, $p < .0005$ (this indicates that the regression model is a good fit for the model).

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Consumer Protection on Brand Performance. Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.091	.231		-.394	.695
	consumer protection	1.009	.019	.988	52.332	.000

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance

Decision:

The table above shows that the critical value of .000 is lesser than the p -value of .05 as the R adjusted ($Adj. r^2$) value is bearing a positive value of .776 showing the strength of the relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between consumer protection and brand performance is thereby accepted.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between product quality and brand performance

Table 4: Model Summary**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.985 ^a	.970	.970	1.00619

a. Predictors: (Constant), product quality

The results from the table above shows that changes product quality is brought about by 97% (.970) as exhibited by the adjusted R^2 value. This implies that the independent variables explained 97% of the variability of the dependent variable

Table 5: Fitness of the Model ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2235.742	1	2235.742	2208.329	.000 ^b
	Residual	68.844	68	1.012		
	Total	2304.586	69			

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), product quality

The results from the table above shows the *F*-ratio test whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table indicated that sales process statistically significantly predicts brand performance (1, 69) = 2208.329, $p < .0005$ (this indicates that the regression model is a good fit for the model).

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Product Quality on Brand Performance Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.007	.275		-3.660	.000
	product quality	1.011	.022	.985	46.993	.000

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance

Decision:

The results from the table above shows that the critical value of .000 is lesser than the p-value of .05 as the R adjusted (Adj. r^2) value is bearing a positive value of .970 showing the strength of the relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between product quality and brand performance is thereby accepted.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Effective Complaints Handling and brand performance

Table 7: Model Summary**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.988 ^a	.876	.876	.89602

a. Predictors: (Constant), Complaints Handling

The results from the table above shows that changes in Complaints Handling is brought about by 87% (.876) as exhibited by the adjusted R^2 value. This implies that the independent variables explained 87% of the variability of the dependent variable

Table 8: Fitness of the Model ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2249.992	1	2249.992	2802.521	.000 ^b
Residual	54.594	68	.803		
Total	2304.586	69			

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Complaints Handling

The results from the table above shows the *F*-ratio test whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table indicated that Complaints Handling statistically significantly brand performance (1, 69) = 2802.521, $p < .0005$ (this indicates that the regression model is a good fit for the model).

Table 9: Regression analysis of Complaints handling on brand performance Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.294	.232		-1.264	.210
	Complaints Handling	1.047	.020	.988	52.939	.000

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance

Decision:

The results from the table above shows that the critical value of .000 is lesser than the p-value of .05 as the R adjusted (Adj. r^2) value is bearing a positive value of .876 showing the strength of the relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between Complaints Handling and brand performance is thereby accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In accordance with the data analysis conducted, the discussions and findings are as followed:

Consumer Protection and Brand Performance

From the result of the analysis of the test of hypothesis in tables 1, 2 and 3, revealed that the p-value significant level of relationship characteristics is .000 is lesser than the p-value of .05 and the R adjusted (Adj. r^2) value is bearing a positive value of .776 showing the strength of the relationship. This finding aligns with the findings of Chand (2015) who reported positive relationship between consumer protection and brand performance. He argued that consumer protection is a means of safeguarding the interest and rights of consumers from unscrupulous and unethical malpractices by the business and to provide them speedy redress of their grievances. Also, it can serve as a social force designed to protect consumer interests in the market place by organizing consumer pressures on business.

Product Quality and Brand Performance

From the result of the analysis of the test of hypothesis in tables 4, 5, and 6, revealed that the p-value significant level of relationship characteristics is .000 is lesser than the p-value of .05 and the

R adjusted (Adj. r^2) value is bearing a positive value of .970 showing the strength of the relationship. This finding aligns with the findings of Razak (2016) who reported positive relationship between product quality and brand performance. He argued that if the perceived product quality is in line with the expectation, then the customer will perceive the product quality as a good quality and also feel satisfied. Conversely, if the perceived product quality is not as expected, then the quality of the product as the customer perceived is qualified as a bad product quality and this will affect brand performance of the company.

Complaints Handling and Brand Performance

From the result of the analysis of the test of hypothesis in tables 7, 8, and 9, revealed that the p-value significant level of relationship characteristics is .000 is lesser than the p-value of .05 and the R adjusted (Adj. r^2) value is bearing a positive value of .776 showing the strength of the relationship. This finding aligns with the findings of Akhtar, Ahmad and Abbas (2016) while investigating favorable and unfavorable incidents of complaint handling, revealed that appropriately managed customer complains can turn distressed customer into a satisfied one. Similarly, Tahmeem and Siddiqi (2018) while examining complaint handling as a relationship tool also proved that effective complaint handling should be considered as a means to enhance customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Critical observations have been made from the study analysis. First, most consumers do not take time to study the label on products before buying. As a result, they rarely know when the product was manufactured, the batch number, and the expiry date. In some cases, consumers indicated that the languages or terms used to describe the product, especially pharmaceutical products, are always technical. They found it difficult to understand the terms.

Secondly, consumers' awareness of the laws that protect them in exchange relationship is low with its concomitant law and in some cases absence of litigations against sellers even in cases of obvious infringement. It is therefore not surprising that a good number of the respondents claimed not to be familiar with the objectives of most of the consumer protection laws and institutions. These conclusions are further collaborated by the total absence of vibrant consumer association in the area surveyed.

Also, most consumers do not obtain receipt/invoice after purchase. The non-availability of receipt makes it difficult for consumers to take legal action when they discover that they have been cheated, exploited or bought fake products. Issuance of receipt(s) to a consumer after purchase is his right and not a privilege. This is a clear indicator that most of these consumers are ignorant of their rights in buyer-seller relationship. The few ones that are conscious of their rights find it difficult to seek redress in court because of fear of Nigerian "factor" which perverts the course of justice

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of findings, the following are recommendations for future implementation:

1. The enforcement of consumers' right should not be considered sole responsibility of the government, as such; it makes sense for civil societies to participate in the enforcement of consumers' right as part of the campaign against social ills.
2. Organizations should establish a division of consumer affairs to participate and represent consumers in all corporate decisions; respond to consumer inquiries and complaints; inform and educate the consumers. The department shall also be concerned with

monitoring consumer satisfaction with company products, predicting and detecting areas of consumer discontent and representing consumers and other social interest in corporate policy-making.

3. Manufacturers should safeguard their interests by watching out for fake brands of their products. Manufacturers of these fake products should be traced through the sellers of the products and appropriate action taken. Tamper proof devices should also be adopted. The manufacturer should take care of any noticed lapses in the mode of corking or sealing his product. Failure to do so should be seen as a breach of duty on the part of the manufacturers
4. There is need for Nigerian government to back-up the regulatory agencies with needed law enforcement units when demands call for it i.e., when these regulatory agencies such as NAFDAC, and SEVICOM of Nigeria are inspecting manufacturers' products, factories and other sellers' goods, which might be found harmful or injurious to peoples' health.
5. With regards to government's role in protecting consumer interests, respondents agree that government can establish minimum standard for most product quality as well as perform independent test of competing brands and publish the results.

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