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The Reliability of the Product based on Customer Perception in Network Marketing: A Case Study of Oriflame, Forever Living and Avon Companies among SAUT Students in Mwanza-Tanzania

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*Product Reliability,
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The study intended to determine the reliability of the product on customer perception in network marketing products: a case of Oriflame, Forever Living and Avon Companies among SAUT Students in Mwanza-Tanzania. Moreover, the theory of planned behaviour was adopted by the study. Furthermore, the study was a quantitative study which employed descriptive design. The study used 375 respondents which responded to questionnaires and regression analysis was employed to analyze and present data. Also, the reliability coefficient of the instruments was 0.9. The study revealed that while customers generally perceive Oriflame, Forever Living, and Avon products positively, there are significant areas for improvement include product performance, packaging, and detailed usage instructions. Customer feedback indicated that prolonged use is linked to brand loyalty, yet many participants rated the products neutrally in terms of value for money and brand trust. Content engagement was rated highly, suggesting that enhancing interactive and engaging content could benefit these companies. The study concludes that although customers are generally satisfied with the network market products, there is a need to improve product distinctiveness, packaging quality, and clarity of information to build stronger brand loyalty. Addressing these areas can enhance customer trust and satisfaction, thereby increasing competitive advantage in the network marketing landscape. It is therefore recommended that network market products should enhance their product and packaging distinctiveness and partner with well-connected influencers to improve marketing effectiveness. Additionally, companies should focus on creating highly engaging content and addressing any product quality and packaging issues promptly to meet customer expectations and foster loyalty.

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INTRODUCTION

Along with the rapid development of social economy and technology, product life cycles are getting smaller and the significance of research and growth of new products are becoming progressively significant in enterprise's business activities (Zhang et al, 2015). Moreover, in Indonesia, meeting or surpassing consumer expectations is the goal of product quality. A product is considered to be of high quality if it satisfies established criteria of quality, which are subject to constant change due to shifting consumer preferences and expectations. The goal of the higher quality modification and enhancement is to maintain the product's creation to the standard established so that customers won't lose faith in it. A product's quality determines whether it is worth the intended use and what it can produce (Sitanggang et al, 2019). In addition, Komariah (2023) added that consumer desires are increasing and they want products that have good functions, consumers also want products that look attractive.

Suharyono and Elfahmi (2021) have highlighted that a multitude of factors, such as perceived pricing, product quality, and advertising, impact consumer purchasing decisions in Indonesia. In addition, consumers' primary concerns prior to making a purchase are perceived price and product quality; they would rather have high-quality products, particularly those with a well-known brand, at a reasonably low cost.

Additionally, Synechko (2023) proposed the indicators of the quality of a product which is product-producing materials from product brands that have superior quality ingredients. In addition to that, there are product brand colors that appeal to consumers and brand style that is always attractive: display products that attract the attention of consumers and have their own characteristics that are justified by consumers. This implies that the perceived quality of the product looks on the customer reviews on the product, brand reputation, product features, price compared to the competitors and perceived value for money.

However, Suharyono and Elfahmi, (2021); Sulaksono and Hidayah, (2022) asserted the number of factors that influence purchase decision. Such factors include brand image, price, and product quality. The purchase transaction is not the end of the decision-making process; the post-buy behaviour stage comes next. Customers experience their degree of contentment or discontent at this point. Also, consumers may only consider the perceived product quality when making decisions related to switching behaviour intention. As a result, consumers may be less likely to move to another brand if the quality matches their expectations (Hanifati & Salehudin 2021).

For more than 50 years, network marketing has existed. The multi-level marketing concept was developed in 1934 by the California Vitamin

Company. At first, this business used direct sales representatives who would consume the product for personal benefit before passing it along to friends and family (Bhagyalakshmi & Priyanka, 2021). However, Sulaksono and Hidayah (2022) added that product quality influences consumers to consider whether to buy certain products and this implies that quality can influence the buyer's decision. In Ukraine, it was asserted that product quality is becoming one of the main indicators that users pay attention to when choosing a product. This is driven by the necessity for businesses to be able to swiftly adjust to the rapid advancements in technology as well as the growing consumer demand for higher-quality goods and services. Globalization has also been a significant factor, as companies attempt to compete in the global market by entering it, which demands even more work. As a result, businesses must implement a variety of tactics to strengthen their own competitive positions (Synechko 2023).

Furthermore, as Akindeji (2022) noted in Nigeria, the networking market has made notable progress in recent years, largely due to motivational considerations. These elements include the pay schedule, the capacity of the product, and the manner in which business opportunities are disseminated. Perceived recruiting procedures, training program quality, and up-line involvement are other motivating variables that impact the networking market. A company's product quality significantly impacts customer behaviour. The phrase "perceived quality" describes how consumers view a product in terms of its quality. A number of factors can influence this perception, and it often varies from customer to customer and geographically (Abubakar et al, 2023).

In Tanzania, it is challenging for customers to evaluate the quality objectively. When it comes to the item's tone, flavour, structure, appearance, and ease of creation, they are reasonable (Julius & Batonda, 2022). Furthermore, as quality was shown to be a key issue for regional products, it was necessary to adjust the marketing mix to improve customers' perception in regional industries. Advertisers should create commercials

that highlight the benefits of utilizing household items to influence consumers' perceptions of locally produced goods. Additionally, branding strategies need to be improved (Sakaya, 2020). Therefore, marketing influences customers' product perception. These marketing strategies for instance direct marketing, are seen less effective because the youth generation are more demanding for advertising contents that attract them and persuade (Ermis et al, 2022). Further, high perceived quality enhances credibility and trust, making it easier for network marketers to attract new customers and recruit new members. Hence, perceived quality of the product serves as a keystone for building a strong and sustainable networking business by facilitating positive word of mouth referrals and driving growth through satisfied customers and dedicated team members. Thus, product quality plays the important role in shaping customer perceptions on the quality of the products. Therefore, this paper intended to examine the reliability of the product on customer perception in network marketing of oriflame, forever living and avon companies among SAUT students in Mwanza, Tanzania.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

This study specifically intended to;

- To determine the reliability of the product on customer perception in network marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The Theory of Planned Behaviour was used in the study. In the 1980s, Ajzen created the theory of planned conduct. Humans often behave in a conscious way, according to the notion of planned behaviour (Bisquolm, 2010). Furthermore, according to Bisquolm (2010)'s theory of planned behaviour deals with control concerns; the first two are personal in character, while the third is reflecting social pressure and influence. Social pressure reflected the perceived social expectations, opinions, and pressures that individuals perceive from important people such as family, friends, or colleagues.

The theory has demonstrated the challenges associated with attempting to forecast and explain human behaviour. It has also demonstrated the importance of concepts related to behavioural dispositions, such as social attitude and personality trait. Moreover, this study benefits from the theory of planned behaviour, which offers a framework for analysing how individual attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control affect people's intentions and actual behaviours. Considering the attitude of the customer, it is useful since it shows customer belief and feeling about the product quality basing on their satisfaction, while basing on subjective norms, it is useful as it examines the influences of social influence on customer perception towards the product quality and basing on perceived behavioural control. It also helps in investigating the extent to which customers feel in control of their decisions regarding product quality (ibid).

Empirical Literature Review

Hult *et al.*, (2017) investigated whether managers are aware of what their clients believe in in USA. According to the study, the perceived quality latent variable includes three survey items that make up the quality experience: the degree to which the good or service meets each individual's subjective requirements (referred to as "customization quality"), the consistency and reliability with which the good or service performs (referred to as "reliability quality"), and the overall quality perceptions. Chege (2021) however, pointed out that product reliability is a significant and strong dimension on product quality which also is used to determine customer satisfaction. Reliability and product quality have a strong relationship in fulfilling the client happiness towards any product or service given, according to a study on the impact of service reliability on customer satisfaction in the insurance business in Kenya.

According to Quadree and Pahari (2022) in India, the following factors are thought to have an impact on consumer satisfaction: price stability, product quality, reliability, efficiency, and user-friendliness. The study employed the

Confirmatory factor analysis method and a structured questionnaire to test the hypothesis that the reliability of direct selling businesses would positively affect consumer satisfaction. This indicated that factors such as price stability, product quality, reliability, efficiency, and user-friendliness significantly and favourably affect consumers' perceptions of direct selling.

Furthermore, Oduor (2023) studied the relationship of marketing strategies on customer retention in the postal corporation of Kenya. A descriptive research design was employed in the study, which targeted three hundred managers: one hundred from the department of sales and marketing, seventy from the department of customer care, and one hundred and thirty from the department of operations. The study sample size was thirty percent of the total population, or ninety managers, and one tenth of the target population for the pilot study, or thirty respondents. Data analysis was done using the multiple regression method using the statistical package for social sciences software. According to the study, customer awards, relationship commitment, customer orientation, and preferential treatment all had a beneficial impact on Kenya's postal corporation's ability to retain customers. As a result, in order to value its consumers, the company must give them preferred treatment and create additional customer reward programs to increase customer retention. Regarding relationship commitment and customer orientation, it was decided that in order to improve relationships and increase customer retention, the company needed to find ways to strengthen its commitment to service delivery while giving customers a voice and a space to be served.

Moreover, in Tanzania, Mwela *et al.* (2022) assessed the customer's perception of service quality in Iringa. This study included both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a sample size of 5 respondents for interviews and 65 respondents for quantitative methods. The case study method was employed in the study to gather thorough, organized, and detailed data.

Unstructured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data. The research findings indicate that customers' perceptions of service quality play a crucial role in the performance of today's business competition. The correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between various aspects of service quality, including tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. To encourage and offer superior customer service, the organisation must, nevertheless, establish policies that are thought to be reasonable and workable by staff members. This demonstrates that a company needs to have well-maintained physical premises, staff, written materials, and equipment in order to attract and retain more consumers. It also needs to be able to consistently and precisely provide the promised service. To improve team spirit within the company, there should also be a willingness to assist customers and provide prompt service, as well as knowledge, courtesy, and the ability to inspire trust and confidence in employees. Other qualities that should be present include caring, easy access, good communication, and customer understanding. Monthly training on service provision should also be prepared, proper service market visits should be made, more service desks should be added, and customers should receive individual attention.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) in Mwanza focusing on the students who are using Oriflame, forever living and avon products. Moreover, the researcher employed the positivism view of the research philosophy which is more on quantitative research than qualitative. Furthermore, the study was a quantitative study which employed descriptive design. The study used 375 respondents and simple random sampling was used to select sample size of the study. Questionnaires were used for data collection and regression analysis was employed to analyse and present data. Also, the reliability coefficient of the instruments was 0.9. Furthermore, the study ensured all the ethical issues were adhered

including permission, privacy informed consent and confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Response Rate

In this paper 375 questionnaires were distributed to SAUT students. Of all the questionnaires distributed 300 questionnaires were returned and completed for data analysis. This is equivalent to 80% which is above recommended minimum response rate of 60% or more as suggested by Richardson (2005) as cited in Luo (2020) who termed as a desirable response rate. Hence, the researcher collected enough data that is representative of target population.

The Reliability of the Product on Customer Perception in Network Marketing

The reliability condition was measured basing on the performance consistency of the product over time. The researcher considered the feedback from the customers towards a product in evaluating reliability. Moreover, from the respondents' results, a majority of them showed that they have been using the products more than three years. This shows that they are very much aware of the products and their effects to them. In relation to Pratistha (2020), it was revealed that youth are much aware about the concept as well as the products offered by the network marketing companies. Friends and relatives are the major source of information for the youth to acquaint them by the concept of network marketing. This implies that the prolonged usage of cosmetic products by the majority of respondents suggests that they are highly satisfied with the products and aware of their effects on their skin, which can lead to brand loyalty and advocacy. Furthermore, the reliance on friends and relatives as sources of information about network marketing companies highlights the importance of social networks in shaping consumer behavior and decision-making.

Furthermore, the study was interested to find if the oriflame, forever living and avon products is more relied by the customers due to their quality as shown in table below.

Table 1: Reliability of Cosmetics Product Quality

Items	Poor F (%)	Low Rated F (%)	Neutral F (%)	Good F (%)	Highly Rated F (%)
How do you rate the performance level of the Oriflame forever living or Avon products	1(0.3%)	2(0.7%)	192(64.0%)	80(26.7%)	25(8.3%)
Are the products from Oriflame Forever living Avon second to none	3(1.0%)	206(68.7%)	70(23.3%)	21(7.0%)	21(7.0%)
Have you noticed any variation in the quality of products from different purchases	0	5(1.7%)	194(64.7%)	78(26.0%)	23(7.7%)
Have you encountered an issue with the package of the products such as leak	10(3.3%)	45(15.0%)	205(68.3%)	31(10.3%)	9(3.0%)

Source: Research (2024)

The table 1 revealed participants' ratings on various aspects of Oriflame, Forever Living, and Avon products. The majority of participants rated the performance level of these products as Neutral, with 64% giving this rating. A significant number also rated them as Good at 26.7% and Highly Rated at 8.3%. Very few participants rated the products as Poor (0.3%) and Low Rated (0.7%), indicating overall satisfaction with the product performance. When asked if the products are second to none, the majority of respondents rated them as Low Rated at 68.7% suggesting that while the products are generally well-regarded, there may be room for improvement. Neutral ratings were given by 23.3%, Good by 7% and Highly Rated also by 7%. Only 1% rated them as Poor. Regarding variations in product quality from different purchases, most participants gave a Neutral rating at 64.7%. Good ratings were given by 26%, and Highly Rated by 7.7%. Only a small percentage rated the quality as Low Rated at 1.7%, with no Poor ratings. In terms of packaging issues such as leaks, the majority of participants rated their experience as Neutral at 68.3%. Good ratings were given by 10.3%, and Highly Rated by 3%. Some participants experienced issues, as reflected by 15% rating as Low Rated and 3.3%

rating it as Poor. This indicates that while packaging is generally acceptable, there are some concerns that need to be addressed.

The findings imply that the majority of participants rated the performance level of Oriflame, Forever Living, and Avon products as neutral, with a significant number also rating them as good or highly rated. However, when asked if the products are second to none, the majority gave a low rating, indicating that there may be room for improvement. When it comes to variations in product quality from different purchases, most participants gave a neutral rating, with some rating the quality as good or highly rated. Overall, the participants' experiences with packaging issues were generally neutral, but some participants did experience issues such as leaks, which may need to be addressed.

Regression Analysis

The Effect of product reliability on customer perception in network marketing was analyzed using regression analysis. The model used to fulfill the analysis is shown below;

$$CPP = a + X_1PR_1 + E$$

Table 2: Corrélations

		CPP	RP
Pearson Correlation	CPP	1.000	.676
	RP	.676	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CPP	.	.000
	RP	.000	.
N	CPP	300	300
	RP	300	300

Source: Field Data (2024)

The correlation analysis between Customer Perception of Product (CPP) and Reliability of Product (RP) reveals a strong positive relationship, demonstrated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.676. This indicates that as customers' perceptions of the product improve specifically regarding how they view its value and quality; their assessment of the product's reliability also tends to increase. The significance value (Sig. = 0.000) illustrates that this correlation is statistically significant at the

0.01 level, suggesting a very low probability that this relationship is due to random chance. With a sample size of 300 respondents, these findings highlight an important link between positive product perceptions and perceptions of reliability. This suggests that enhancing how customers perceive a product can lead to greater confidence in its reliability, emphasizing the need for organizations to focus on shaping and maintaining positive customer perceptions to boost overall product satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 3: Model Summary of the Variables

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.676 ^a	.457	.455	1.422	.457	250.581	1	298	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), RP

Source: Field Data (2024)

The regression analysis output highlights the predictive relationship between Product Reliability (RP) and Customer Perception of Product (CPP). The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.676 indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables, while the R Square value of 0.457 reveals that approximately 45.7% of the variance in customer perception can be explained by the reliability of the product. The adjusted R Square of 0.455 adjusts for the number of predictors in the model and provides an estimate of the proportion of variance that is likely to be explained in the population; it further confirms the robustness of the model. The

standard error of the estimate, reported as 1.422, represents the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line, indicating the model's predictive accuracy. The change statistics show that adding RP to the model leads to a significant improvement in explaining CPP, as evidenced by the F Change value of 250.581 and a p-value (Sig. F Change) of 0.000, which indicates that this improvement is statistically significant. Overall, the results suggest that enhancing the reliability of products is likely to have a substantial positive effect on how customers perceive them.

Table 4: ANOVA Test

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	506.637	1	506.637	250.581	.000 ^b
Residual	602.510	298	2.022		
Total	1109.147	299			

a. Dependent Variable: CPP

b. Predictors: (Constant), RP

Source: Field Data (2024)

The regression analysis output provides insights into the relationship between the Reliability of Product (RP) and its impact on Customer Perception of Product (CPP). The coefficient of determination, R Square (0.457), indicates that approximately 45.7% of the variability in the

customer perception of the product can be explained by its reliability. This suggests that reliability is a significant predictor of customer perception, although there is still a substantial portion (54.3%) of the variance that may be influenced by other factors not included in the

model. The adjusted R Square value of 0.455 confirms that this model accounts for a substantial portion of the variance while adjusting for the number of predictors in the model. The standard error of the estimate is 1.422, which gives an indication of the average distance between the predicted and actual values of customer perception. Additionally, the change statistics indicate that adding the reliability variable resulted in a significant improvement in the

model, with an F Change value of 250.581 and an associated significance level (Sig. F Change) of 0.000. This statistically significant F value indicates that the model as a whole is a good fit for the data and that reliability has a meaningful impact on customer perception. Overall, these results imply that organizations should prioritize enhancing product reliability, as it substantially influences how customers perceive the product.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Coefficients ^a							
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance VIF
1 (Constant)	1.342	.577		2.325	.021	.206	2.478	
RP	.689	.044	.676	15.830	.000	.603	.775	1.000 1.000

a. Dependent Variable: CPP

Source: Field Data (2024)

The coefficients table reveals the relationship between the Reliability of Product and Customer Perception of Product. In this case, the unstandardized coefficient for RP comes out to be 0.689. This means that a one-unit increase in the reliability score should result in an increase in the customer perception score by 0.689 units, all other things held constant. This is further confirmed by a Beta standardized coefficient of 0.676, indicating that reliability is a strong predictor in customer perception. With this, the t-value was 15.830, with an associated significance (Sig.) of 0.000, hence very highly statistically significant, and thus proving that the impact of reliability on perception is not due to random chance. Using the given t-statistic with $\alpha = 0.05$, look up the critical values in the appropriate t-distribution for a two-tailed test. Because we want to know if this effect size is significant, the sample data is used to calculate the observed level of significance. The 95% confidence interval for the coefficient of RP Lower Bound: 0.603; Upper Bound: 0.775 lets us know that we can be 95% confident that the true effect size falls in this range. There are no multicollinearity problems with this model as represented by the collinearity statistics the tolerance is 1.000, and the VIF is 1.000. The

findings, therefore, are advanced to support the general assertion that product reliability is important in enhancing customers' perception.

These findings make a strong case that the reliability of the products has a great effect on customer perception, especially in network marketing for brands like Oriflame, Forever Living, and Avon. An organization should strive toward improving this reliability, with the substantial proportion of variance of customer perceptions explained by the reliability of these cosmetic products, in order to increase satisfaction and loyalty. The positive relationship is so strong that it involves meaning customers derive from a product for its overall quality and worth. There are, however, glaring areas of concern for improvement in this data concerning perception regarding the products as "second to none," which implies that marketing efforts have to reinforce not just reliability but address quality variations and defects in packaging being experienced by customers. This will aid corporations in building up a better image, enhancing competitive advantage in the marketplace, and maximizing sales, including consumer loyalty. In lining with Chege (2021),

product reliability is an important aspect of product quality that plays a significant role in determining customer satisfaction. Research has shown that a strong relationship exists between product reliability and quality, and that reliable products are essential in fulfilling customer expectations and leading to overall client satisfaction. Likewise, Goel and Sharma (2020) added that customer perception for a brand plays an important role in affecting the customer purchase intention. This holds equally true for the branded Cosmetic products. This sector is becoming more and more competitive with more and more new cosmetic companies entering the market. The results highlighted a strong relationship exists between product reliability and quality, and reliable products are essential in fulfilling customer expectations and leading to overall client satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The perception of customers with respect to the reliability of the products for network marketing cosmetics identifies that there exists a strong relation between the two variables. To that end, since the Pearson correlation in the fourth model turns out to be 0.676, accompanied by a high R Square value of 0.457, product reliability certainly is a crucial factor when talking about customer perception. Although the tone in the ratings was generally very positive, especially on performance and quality, there is still room for development in the areas of how such products are perceived against the competitors. Moreover, with the existence of more neutral ratings and certain reservations about packaging, customers, though having a generally positive sentiment towards products, do require these leftovers to be put in order so that brand loyalty and satisfaction are strongly established.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance customer perception and indirectly the sale of its products, the network market product must work on their product reliability, guaranteeing quality control and performance consistency throughout purchases. Improving

transparency in manufacturing processes and effective steps regarding the reported packaging issues will further be crucial to reduce the level of concern amongst customers. In addition, the means of targeted marketing should be adopted that brings out the reliability and quality of the products through ad campaigns that unfold positive customer reviews and are effective. Obtaining constant feedback from customers, at the very least, will go a long way to point out what needs change and modifying the products to customer expectations, in turn leading to even more trust and loyalty from the customer base.

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