Branding for Competitive Advantage: An Assessment of Branding Strategies within the Maize Seed Sector in Mashonaland, Zimbabwe

Maceline Nyatsambo [1](Corresponding Author) **& Willard Gwarimbo**[2]

Abstract

Branding has become a topical issue in most organisations, mainly because it is one aspect of marketing strategy which can sustain competitiveness, if carefully crafted and implemented in the long term. In Zimbabwe maize farming is popular and is carried out for both subsistence and commercial basis. The problem is that brand awareness and loyalty strategies are being implemented in the maize seed sector in Zimbabwe, but no studies have been done to assess these branding strategies and how they affect customer perception of brand quality and buying behaviour. The study was carried out to determine brand loyalty and awareness strategies being used and how they affect customer perception of brand quality at point of purchase. A descriptive research design was adopted. A survey was carried out in Harare and Mashonaland region. Data was collected by a questionnaire distributed to 300 respondents. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted. Results indicate that Pioneer's branding strategies appeal more to large scale commercial farmers and Seed-Co's activities appeal to small scale farmers.

[1] Lecturer-Department of Electronic Commerce, School of Business and Management Sciences Harare Institute of Technology, Harare, Zimbabwe Email marcianyat2@gmail.com Telephone+263 4 741422 Cellphone+263 772 919 912

[2] Dean-School of Business and Management Sciences Harare Institute of Technology, Harare, Zimbabwe wgwarimbo@hit.ac.zw or wgwarimbo@gmail.com Telephone +263 4 741422 Cellphone +263 772 426 839

1

The most popular branding strategies are field days, in-store promotions and branded demonstration plots. A Pearson Chi –Square test was used to test the hypothesis. Awareness and loyalty strategies had a significant and positive effect on perceived brand quality. Perceived brand quality had a significant and positive effect on purchase decision. The authors recommend that companies in this sector invest in branding activities so that their brands can be perceived as high quality and can be trusted.

Keywords: *Brand awareness, Brand loyalty, Competitive advantage, Perceived brand quality, Purchase decision, brand equity.*

1.0 Introduction

Branding has become a topical issue in business organisations across all sectors, particularly due to the fact that it is one aspect of marketing strategy which can create a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm if carefully crafted and implemented in the long term. The land reform programme in Zimbabwe has extensively changed the customer behaviour in the farming sector this is primarily due to the fact that the customer base has increased as vast land that was once occupied by one farmer has now been allocated to many. Maize farming plays a pivotal role in the Zimbabwean economy as maize seed is the staple food for most people. In Zimbabwe maize farming is the most popular farming activity and is carried out for both subsistence farming and commercial basis throughout Zimbabwe. The new millennium is witnessing an increase in marketing activities as companies try to position themselves as global brands through the internet. The researcher sought to assess these brand awareness and brand loyalty strategies being used in maize seed sector in Zimbabwe.

Seed producing companies in Zimbabwe large and small have embarked on various brands building activities hence the need to assess the role of these branding activities in creating a sustainable competitive advantage. In their work Tripp and Pal (2000) suggest that established seed companies have reputations to protect, hence branding is a convenient short –cut for communicating product quality**.** The seed sector has remained vibrant in economic activity with major players in the sector recording upward overall performance with an increase on revenue pegged at 20%, Profit after tax increased by 10% and sales volume up by 22% for year ending 31 March 2012 (SEED-CO Annual Report 2012 Chairman's Statement).

1.1The Zimbabwean Seed Industry And Branding Activities

Seed Co prides itself as the market leader in this sector, which is geared to promote sustainable farming practices and leading in research and development. Seed Co the biggest seed company in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of volumes sold with interests in 15 countries including Zimbabwe. Seed Co has always embarked on various brand building activities such as the roadside demonstration fields, exhibitions and field days.

Pioneer is a global seed company operating in 70 countries worldwide and distributes its products in East   Africa in countries that include Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania with its East headquarters in Zimbabwe. Pioneer hi-bred (Zimbabwe) Private limited began operating in Zimbabwe in 1992 distributing through area sales agronomists, dealers, rural traders who link pioneer to Zimbabwe's farmers. Its major branding activities include annual exhibitions at the Harare Agricultural show, conducting field days, demonstration plots and sponsorships and in –store branding strategies**.**

Pannar a South African company established in 1958 and has a distribution centre in Harare.Pannar's main branding activities include annual exhibition at the Harare Agricultural Show and field days. Other activities being done by these major companies are field days, sponsorships, various giveaways, editorials, advertising and in store branding activities. Agri-seeds, Prime seeds and Arda seeds have been conspicuous with vehicle branding and other in store branding activities.

Observation show that currently these companies are carrying out various brand building activities , as such the researchers have sought to assess these activities in order to determine if these branding activities create a competitive advantage for the firms. In Zimbabwe the maize seed industry has witnessed a proliferation of private maize seed companies in recent years. The new maize seed industry is young, dynamic, growing and very competitive. The problem is that brand awareness and loyalty strategies are being implemented in the maize seed sector in Zimbabwe but no studies have been done to assess these strategies and how they affect customer perception of brand quality and buying behaviour. This study assesses three constructs of brand equity brand awareness and brand loyalty as well as perceived brand quality. The objectives of the study were to identify the branding strategies in the maize seed sector in Zimbabwe; assess the branding strategies that are used in this sector; and establish if branding strategies   have an effect on consumer perception of brand quality during purchase in this sector.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Branding

Branding is all the marketing activities that a company undertakes in order to be identifiable as a company by the target market   and to differentiate itself from other competitor companies Keller et al(2008).Brands are the heart of marketing and business strategy (Doyle 1997). Branding can be defined as way of distinguishing the products of one manufacturer from another. The first stage of branding requires that companies find a name, logo, symbol or packaging design that can distinctively identify themselves from competitors.

Technically each time a name, a symbol or a design is created for a product; a new brand has been created. Brand name signifies the perceived quality of the product. Brand name is the base of brand awareness and brand communication (Keller et al 2008). Marketers define a brand as more than that and will define it in terms of having created awareness, reputation and prominence (Keller et al2008). According to Bharat Ramaswami (2002) branding is also an entry barrier to small and new firms that cannot afford advertising or do not have past reputations to build on. Morris and Smale (1999) alluded that private firms use a mix of brand names, logos, trademarks, advertising, and field demonstration, personal selling and agronomic advice signals to inform farmers about characteristics of their products. They further suggested that certification remains a prudent exercise in ensuring that small players gain acceptance and recognition. However Tripp and Pal (2002) argued that such information is not used by farmers, as most farmers in their survey could not explain the difference between certified and truthfully labelled seed. Considering these different views, it can be suggested that marketers often define a brand as more than just a brand name but as how known and reputable the brand is ,as well as how consumers perceive its quality at the point of purchase.

The impact of branding on product differentiation is profound as evidenced by emergence of strong brands amongst some highly commoditised product category as noted by Keller et al (2008). Interestingly the world has witnessed the emergence of some strong global maize seed brands such as Monsanto, Pioneer, Cargill, DeKalb, Novartis and others. Success is derived when consumers become convinced that products in the same category are markedly different. The work of Pallabi and Biplab (2011) revealed that Brand Managers should formulate strategies to convey the meaning of the brand name to the

customers using proper brand communication strategies. It is imperative to note that in Zimbabwe few researches have focused on branding strategies in the maize seed sector. Past researches has focused on branding in as far as development of brand names is concerned as well as improvements on seed quality and functionality of various seed brands in order to comply with the expectations of customers from a scientific perspective such as increases on yields and the rate of growing of the plants.

2.1.1A Brand

A brand can be defined as a specific name ,symbol, or a design , or a combination of these, which is used to distinguish a particular seller's product (Doyle 1997).An ordinary person might describe a brand as logos, taglines and advertising campaigns, whilst an advertising executive would give a broader description of a brand as a product's unique selling proposition (FjosephLepla and Lyn Parker (2002:1).Brands have been considered as the second most important assets for a firm after customers (Ambler, 2000 ; Doyle, 2001; Jones, 2005).These assertions by various authors in branding strategy indicate that there is general consensus as to the notion that a successful brand is indeed an invaluable asset for the firm, however its long term sustainability requires incredible continuous investment in branding strategies.

2.1.2 Brand Equity

Essentially branding strategies enable the firm to derive brand equity. Brand equity defines the value of a brand. Existing literature divides brand equity into three categories: mental brand equity, that is, the impact of the brand on the consumer's consciousness; behavioural brand equity, that is, the consumer's behavioural response to the brand ; and, financial equity, that is, the financial impact of the brand as expressed through return on investment, profit, turnover, price-to-earnings ratio (Franzen, 1999). Aaker(1998:173) defined brand equity as the set of assets or liabilities linked to a brand name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm's customers. Brand equity is the value of these additional cash flows generated for a product because of its brand identity Doyle (1997:165. Aaker (1991) proposed the six elements of brand equity which are brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand identity, brand associations, brand image and perceived quality. In this paper the researcher will focus attention on those branding

strategies that are concerned with building g brand awareness and building brand loyalty in this highly competitive sector.

2.1.3 Brand Awareness

Baker e.t.a.l(1986) asserted that a brand that is not considered cannot be chosen. According to Rajan Saxena (2002) brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to recall or recognize that a brand is a part of product category. Keller e.t.a.l 2008 argued that brand awareness can produce a lasting competitive advantage, the salience of brand will be determined if is recalled at a critical time purchasing process. This was supported by Chernatony and McDonald 2009 who stated that brand awareness reflects the salience of a brand and facilitates consumers 'abilities to identify brands within a specific brand category. Keller (2010) further defined brand awareness as the customers' ability to recall and recognise the brand, as reflected by their ability to identify the brand under different conditions. This demonstrates that firms that invest in brand awareness activities will eventually gain a competitive advantage on the market place in the long term as acknowledged by these various authors.

2.1.4 Brand Loyalty

The American Marketing Association defines loyalty as the situation in which a consumer repeatedly purchases the products or services of the same manufacturer over time as opposed to purchasing from multiple suppliers (AMA). (Doyle 1997) shares the same sentiments that loyalty is the commitment that a brand gets from satisfied customers such that they will continue to prefer it over other similar products over a long period. Aaker(1996) also echoes the same sentiments that loyalty reflects the unlikelihood that customers will switch to another brand even if there is change in price , product features and distribution programs. Motameni and Sharohki (1998) asserted that brand loyalty is assessed with the customer's willingness to buy the brand repeatedly irrespective of the changes in price. These assertions share a common position on the fact that loyalty has to do with commitment over a long period of time and in the face of change in the market place, this could implies that marketing activities that are meant to build loyalty should be on going so that consumers are constantly reminded about the existence of their preferred brand. Brand Loyalty is influenced by awareness and other elements of brand equity (Rauyrene.ta.l2009) .

2.1.4 Perceived Brand Quality

Perceived brand quality can be defined as the consumer's judgement about a brand 's overall excellence or superiority with respect to its intended purpose relative to alternatives.(Ziethmal, 1988, Aaaker and Jacobson 1994). In a study (Hooley, Piercy and Nicoulaud 2012) alluded that a prime factor in differentiating the product or service from that of competitors is quality. Buzzell and Gale 1987 hypothesized that relative perceived quality was the single most important factor in affecting the long-run performance of a business. In the case of maize seed in Zimbabwe observation of buying trends reflect that quality is a key factor that farmers consider when buying seed as they seem to believe that yield is directly related to the quality of the seed brand.(SeedCo Report 2012).Having noted that perceived quality is key to customer judgement of a product ,the current study is concerned with establishing if this can then affect the customer's behaviour at point of purchase.
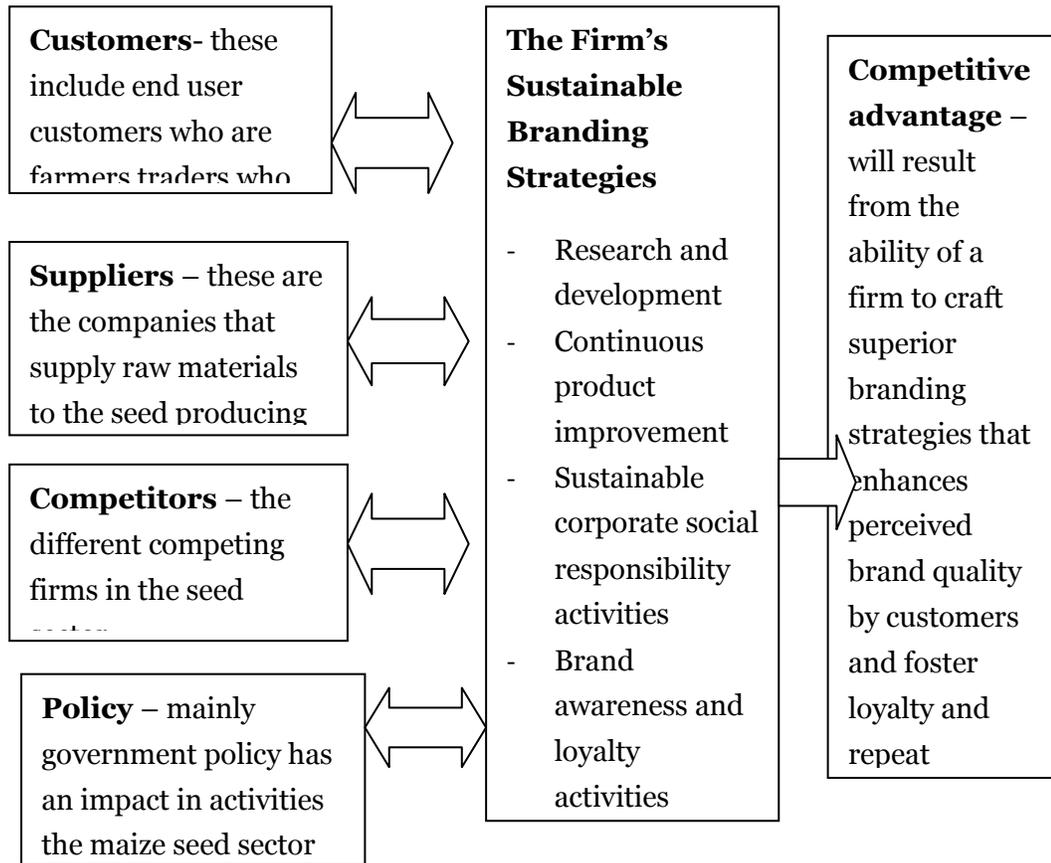
2.2 Competitive Advantage

By definition Competitive advantage is an advantage over competitors gained by offering consumers greater value, either by means of lower prices or by providing greater benefits and service that justifies higher prices(Porter 1980).Michael Porter identified four Competitive strategies one of them being Differentiation. Differentiation Strategy is usually associated with charging a premium price with firm uniquely positioning itself and its products in the minds of buyers in the market. The two concepts branding and differentiation are inseparable because when a firm embarks on branding activities its main aim is to be different. If the uniqueness is perceived as greater value by customers this enables the firm to charge a premium price hence it has developed an intangible asset that of brand equity. In many developing countries maize seed is an important crop, thus many governments still have a stake in price determination within this industry as a way of protecting citizens. This puts pressure on companies within this highly competitive industry. According to John Matorofa in Zimbabwe seed business faces significant competition as it is generally quite profitable (SEED-CO Annual Report 2012 Report of the Directors).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

In order to present a clear analysis of the role of branding in building competitive advantage within the maize seed sector, the researcher set out the to assess various

7

branding activities currently being pursued in the seed sector. The assumptions are built on the premise that if the firm embarks on branding strategies that are aimed at building brand awareness and loyalty consistently over time a this result in the firm achieving a competitive advantage over its competitors. This Competitive advantage is reflected by the ability of customers to perceive its brand as better quality at point of purchase.

Customers- these include end user customers who are farmers traders who

Suppliers – these are the companies that supply raw materials to the seed producing

Competitors – the different competing firms in the seed sector

Policy – mainly government policy has an impact in activities the maize seed sector

The Firm's Sustainable Branding Strategies

- Research and development
- Continuous product improvement
- Sustainable corporate social responsibility activities
- Brand awareness and loyalty activities

Competitive advantage – will result from the ability of a firm to craft superior branding strategies that enhances perceived brand quality by customers and foster loyalty and repeat

Figure 1 Above: Conceptual Model- Source Author

This conceptual model shows the relationship between the firms' branding strategies and the other four variables which are suppliers, competitors, customers and other stakeholders such as policy formulators like government.

8

According to that model the firm's branding strategies have a direct effect on customers perception about the brand and their loyalty to the brand, if these strategies fail to induce customer loyalty, then the strategy becomes a liability, in essence the model implies that the firms sustainable competitive advantage comes about when there is brand loyalty and perceived quality of the brand which is be exhibited by continued purchase of the brand even when its price is high relative to competitors. The perception of quality can be considered one of the core determinants to consumer behaviour and thus product success (Livo Stojanov 2013) .If the firm fails to create a differentiated and unique brand image which is viewed as superior by customers it will not command loyalty and thereby lose market share. The customer is essentially the key player in determining the effectiveness of branding strategies as their response is often measurable using such performance measures as market share.

The model also shows that sustainable branding strategies will enhance the image of the brand, thereby creating better relationships between the firm and policy makers as well as other stakeholders, and if the firm's image is better than competitor's image this presents a competitive advantage to the firm. Activities in the Zimbabwe maize seed sector are greatly influenced by government policy as the maize crop is a highly strategic crop because of its importance as a staple food. It is imperative that companies in this sector create a positive image about themselves through embarking on image enhancing branding activities.

According to the model weak branding strategies by competitor's means that the firm can grow or maintain the size of its market share but intense and effective branding strategies by completion means the firm will lose part of its market share. In summary a firm that maintains superior branding strategies that are sustainable in the long term builds a sustainable competitive advantage.

The model assumes that the relationship between the firm and its suppliers is greatly affected by the firm's branding strategies and image. Suppliers want to be associated with able and successful client. Poor branding strategies which result in negative brand image will reduce the firm's competitiveness in the eyes of suppliers. This paper, however, focuses on assessing branding strategies in this sector and how they affect brand quality perception and buying behaviour of customers.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The researcher adopted a descriptive and cross sectional research design. Research design provides the glue that holds the research project together (William M.K Trochin 2006).It is a framework for collecting and analysing data (Bryan J, 2004). The researcher adopted a descriptive research design in order to get an in-depth description and analysis of the role of branding strategies in the maize seed sector.

3.2 Research Strategy

The researcher adopted a case study method because it provided an intense and in-depth study of the branding strategies within the seed sector in Zimbabwe which can be used as a basis for future studies in various other industries. A case study provided a greater amount of detail which was necessary in describing the phenomena. Once a phenomena has been described in detail many future research questions can follow and this justifies why the researcher choose this. However In Zimbabwe the seed industry is an important economic sector such that results of case study offers other researchers opportunities to pursue further studies within this area.

3.5 Sampling

The population from which the study was carried out were maize farmers who are the users of maize seed .Sampling is the process of selecting a representative subset of observations from a population to determine the characteristics of a random variable under study(Wegner T, 1999).In this study the researcher adopted Stratified Random sampling technique for the simple reason that in this particular study the population included all maize farmers sector who fall in three groups see table 3.1 below. Branding strategies could affect buying behaviour of all groups.

Table 3.1 Customer Groups Strata

Customer Group	Stratum
Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union Members(large scale maize Farmers)	1
Zimbabwe Farmers Union members(small scale maize farmers)	2
Unregistered Maize Farmers	3

3.6 Data Collection

A   survey was conducted ,were unregistered maize farmers were intercepted at retail outlets in Harare , Chinhoyi, Bindura , Marondera and Kadoma and other smaller towns in the of the threeMashonaland provinces of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union provided contact details of registered commercial farmers and appointments were made to submit questionnaire to commercial farmers in Harare and the three Mashonaland provinces. The Zimbabwe Farmers Union members were intercepted at Provincial offices after conducting meetings. All customer groups were given the same questionnaire and a random selection of respondents was done at every point of data collection. A self administered questionnaire with both structured and unstructured questions was used for data collection from 300 respondents .The researchers used simple English on designing the questionnaire. Where respondents found it difficult to understand translation to the local language was provided.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

The data was presented on tables and graphs. Analysis was done using SPSS version 19, cross tabulations and the Pearson Chi-square test was used to test the hypothesis.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

The questionnaire was examined for its reliability by use of Cronbach's Alpha. Most aspects were meeting the required alpha greater that 0,7(Davies et al 2009)**.**Brand preference had a 0,743 alpha score. However, some constructs were lower though not significantly low 0.623 minimum. Brand recognition at a low of 0.640 was included for

further analysis as it was regarded as key aspect in assessing awareness. Alpha values are shown on recordings for every construct. Experts in branding at HIT reviewed the questionnaire for content and face validity.

4.2 Demographic Profile And Response Rate

The response rate was 275 out of 300 which represented a 91.6% response rate, Males were the majority of respondents at 67.3 % while women were32. 7% this trend could be a result of increased male participation in commercial farming activities as compared to women. See figure 1below.
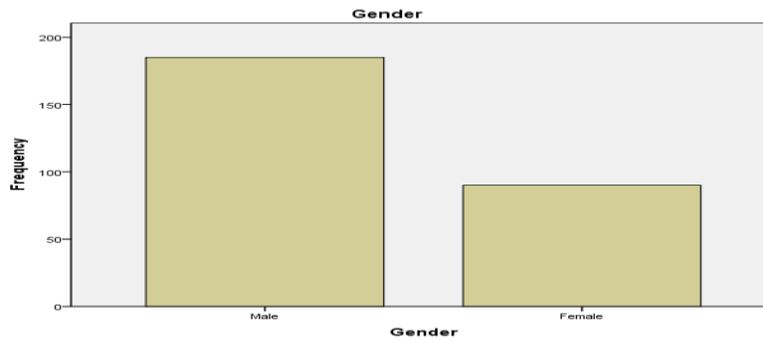
Figure4. 1 Gender distribution of the sample

Table4.1 Farmers Membership Group

Farmers Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Zimbabwe Commercial farmers Union	59	21.4
Zimbabwe Farmers Union	54	19.6
Unregistered Farmers Union	162	58.9
Total	275	100.0

In this study registered large scale commercial farmers constituted 21.5% of maize farmers, registered small scale farmers constituted 19.6 %, and the majority of maize farmers are not registered at 58.9%, this situation exists possibly because the commercial farming of maize

has been negatively affected by the land reform were large farms have been subdivided into smaller ones hence activities on smaller farmers become mainly for subsistence reasons. The other reason for this scenario could also be that most resettled farmers have shifted attention to tobacco farming as it has better returns than maize farming whose output has perennial pricing problems in Zimbabwe. See table 4.1 above

4.3 Brand Awareness Strategies

Farmers indicated that in-store adverts, radio adverts, billboards and news paper adverts were most effective in drawing their attention. Internet advertising does not seem to appeal to farmers perhaps because most maize farming areas have poor internet access or it could be that the majority of farmers themselves have poor Information skills technology or they may just not be interested. See figure4.2 below
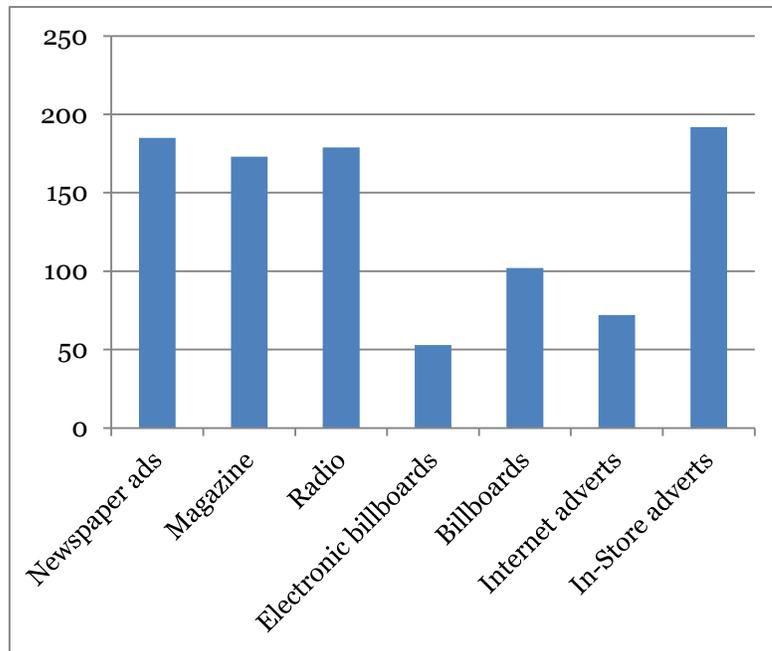
Figures 4.2Responses On Modes Of Advertising That Draw Attention Of Farmer

Table 4. 2 Item Statistics Mean Score Values-Brand Recognition.

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I recognise Arda maize seed brand ahead of all other brands	3.70	1.034	197
I recognise Agri Seeds maize seed brand ahead of all other brands	3.19	1.060	197
I recognise Pannar seeds maize seed brand ahead of all other brands	1.94	.855	197
I recognise Pionner maize seed brand ahead of all other brands	1.73	.900	197
I recognise Prime seeds maize seed brand ahead of all other brands	3.66	1.203	197
I recognise Seed Co maize seed brand ahead of all other brands	1.42	.783	197

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.640	6

These findings suggest that most farmers are recognise of the existence of the Seed-Co 1, 42 mean score brand ahead of all the other brands as well as Pionner 1, 73. A significant number of farmers are also aware of the Pannar brand. However Arda, Agri-seeds and Prime-seeds are virtually unknown with Arda being the least recognisable brand.

4.4 Strategies That Help Customers Recognise Maize Seed On The Shelf During Purchase

Respondents were asked to indicate strategies which helped them recognise maize seed brands on the shelf before purchase. Responses on a five point Likert scale suggest that branded demonstration fields with a mean score of 1.34 help customers recognise their brand of choice before purchase followed by the merchandising and in-store promotions with a mean score of 1.60. Electronic billboards were noted to be least effective in this aspect. See table 4.3 below

14

Table 4.3 Strategies That Aid Recognition Before Purchase

Strategies that help in recognising the brand of choice before purchase	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Exhibitions	2.00	1.132	179
Print adverts(Newspapers)	2.47	1.093	179
Radio adverts	2.07	1.036	179
Electronic billboards	3.30	1.043	179
Billboards (traditional highway road)	2.44	0.960	179
Merchandising	1.60	0 .761	179
Branded demonstration fields (fields along major roads)	1.34	0.540	179
Workshops and Training (Field days)	1.77	0.886	179

Reliability Statistics

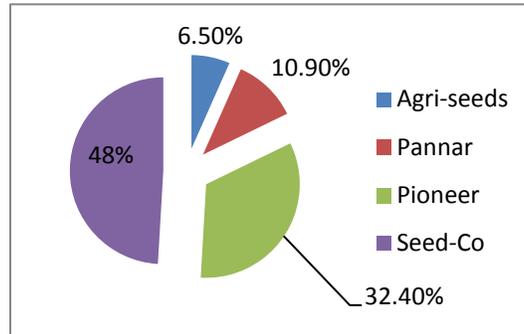| Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.623	8

5. Brand Loyalty Strategies Responses

5.1 Brand Preference

Brand loyalty was assessed by asking farmers questions relating brand preference, the length their relationship with their most preferred brand (see table 4.2 below), and whether they would recommend their brand of choice to others (see table 4.3). Farmers were also probed through qualitative questions so they would explain why they would recommend their brand of choice, what its strengths were and how they would rate the brand if it were a person. 48

% of farmers' preferred Seed Co, 32.4 % preferred Pionner, 10.9% preferred Pannar and the least preferred was Agri-seeds. None of the respondents indicated that they would prefer Arda seeds or Prime seeds, and this might be a result

Figure4.3 Brand Most Preferred Brand

Table 4. 4 Farmers Who Recommend Their Preferred Brand

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	269	97.8	100.0	100.0
Missin System g	6	2.2		
Total	275	100.0		

Brand loyalty was assessed by asking farmers questions relating brand preference, the length their relationship with their most preferred brand, whether they would recommend their brand of choice to others. Farmers were also probed through qualitative questions so they would explain why they would recommend their brand of choice (**see table4.4 above**), what its strengths were and how they would rate the brand if it were a person. 48 % of farmers' preferred Seed Co, 32.4 % preferred Pionner, 10.9% preferred Pannar and the least preferred was Agri-seeds. None of the respondents indicated that they would prefer Arda seeds or Prime seeds, and this might be a result of their minimum efforts, hence they are failing to leverage in the market.

Table 4.5 Mean Scores For Responses On Strategies Used By Most Preferred Brand

Most preferred brand does the following	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Exhibitions	1.55	.743	161
Merchandising and In-store promotions	1.40	.615	161
Branded demonstration fields	1.30	0.600	161
Workshops and training(field days)	1.63	0.780	161
Electronic billboards	2.81	0.823	161
Television adverts	1.89	0.629	161
Magazines	1.96	0.697	161
Radio adverts	1.81	0.726	161
Newspaper adverts	1.81	0.776	161

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.743	9

Respondents agreed that Seed Co maize seed company conducts field demonstrations more often than other companies with a mean score of 1.58 followed by Pioneer at 1.76.Interestingly when respondents were asked to indicate which branding strategy was more popular with their preferred brand of choice they   choose branded field demonstrations(mean score1.30), followed by merchandising and in store promotions(mean score 1.40) and on third place there was exhibitions mean Score 1.55(**see table 4.5 above)**

Farmers indicated they valued all branding activities but at the very top was field days workshops and training at 86.9% followed by branded demonstration fields at 84.8% (**see table 4.6 below**)This shows a positive relationship between a brand's competitive position and the extent of its branding activities. Over 70% of farmers had used their preferred brand for more than 5years. Nearly all respondents indicated that they would recommend their preferred brand of choice to others, because they believe their preferred brand gave them better value, was reliable and enduring. Farmers also cited reliability, pest resistant, high yields, and variety as the strengths of their preferred brands.

Table 4.6 Responses on branding strategies that farmers value most

	Strongly agree		Agree		
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Valid %
Strategy					
Branded demonstration fields	191	69.5	42	15.3	84.8
Workshops and Training(Field days)	185	67.3	54	19.6	86.9
Exhibitions	167	60.7	36	13.1	73.8
Print adverts	114	41.5	95	34.5	76
Merchandising (in-store promotion)	156	56.7	65	23.6	80.3
Billboards	102	37.1	107	38.9	76
Radio adverts	96	34.9	95	34.5	69.4
Magazine	60	21.8	107	38.9	60.7
Total number of respondents (275)					

6. Tests for Associations

Table 4.7

Gender * I will buy the most well known brand Crosstabulation

Count

		I will buy the most well known brand		Total
		yes	no	
Gender	Male	143	12	155
	Female	60	30	90
Total		203	42	245

Further tests for associations revealed that gender has an influence on purchasing decision. Looking at the cross tabulations and Chi-square tests above (*p-value =0,000)* males seem to have more, trust on well known brands, whilst women are willing to try an unknown brand**. See table 4.8 below**

Table 4.8

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.253ᵃ	1	.000		
Continuity Correctionᵇ	24.482	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	25.468	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	26.146	1	.000		
N of Valid Casesᵇ	245				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.43.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

7. Perceived Brand Quality

7.1 Hypothesis Testing

The relationship between perceived brand quality and purchase decision

H_1 :   Perceived quality has an influence on purchase decision in the seed sector

H_0 : Perceived quality does not have any influence on purchase decision in the seed sector.

In order to ascertain if there was a relationship between perceived quality and purchase decision , respondents were first asked if they regarded a well known brand as of high quality, they were further asked if they would buy a well known brand . Cross tabulations below shows the relationship between perceived quality and purchase decision. Chi-Square tests were also done to test the hypothesis .The P value for the Pearson Chi-Square is less than 0,05*(P-value =0.000<0.05)* hence we reject the alternative H_0, and accept H_1 implying that perceived quality has an influence on purchase decision. Assumption is that by accepting H_1 we have established that indeed branding activities can lead to building of competitive advantage through enhancing recognition, awareness, loyalty and ultimately a more favourable perception on quality which then leads to a more willingness to purchase amongst customers in this sector. **See table 4.9 below**

Table 4.9 (Cross Tabulation And Chi-Square Test For Hypothesis Testing)

If a brand is well known it means it is of good quality * I will buy the most well known brand Crosstabulation

Count

		I will buy the most well known brand		Total
		yes	no	
If a brand is well known it means it is of good quality	Strongly Agree	125	18	143
	Agree	48	6	54
	Disagree	12	18	30
Total		185	42	227

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.535[a]	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	31.135	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.577	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	227		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.55.

7. Recommendations and Conclusions

Basing on the findings above conclusions could be made that branding strategies are effective because they aid farmers in recognising the brand of choice during purchase, which means they have a direct impact on the purchase decision. It could be concluded that branding activities in this sector contribute towards building competitive advantage as evidenced by the fact that both Seed-Co and Pioneer who lead in carrying out branding activities also are the most preferred brands. Seed Co has 48 % preference or loyalty and is popular with small scale farmers who form the larger market segment, while Pioneer has 32.4% loyalty and is more popular with Commercial farmers. This shows that these companies have built a fairly high level of loyalty in their market segments and both have a competitive edge to other players in their respective market segments. Nearly all respondents indicated that they would recommend their preferred brand of choice to others. Chi-Square tests that were also done to test the

hypothesis   showed that the P value for the Pearson Chi-Square is less than 0,05*(P-value =0.000<0.05)* hence we reject the alternative H0 implying that perceived quality has an influence on purchase decision. These findings further supports the notion that a prime factor differentiating product or service from that of competitors is quality suggested in an earlier study by Hooley, Pierce and Nicoulaud in 2007.

The researcher recommends that new players in the maize seed sector should embark on various branding strategies in order for them to gain a sustainable market share. This is because the seed industry is such a sensitive sector as most farmers would only want to deal with a brand they know well because maize farming is a high risk business. Varied risks exist ranging from natural disasters like drought, or floods and economic risks like price controls and imports. Furthermore researchers recommend that all maize seed companies need to invest more in branding activities in order for their brands to be known, preferred and trusted. Given that there is so much branding activity in this sector further research is recommended in order to investigate the impact of these activities in building brand equity

References

Aaker, D A (1998) Strategic Marketing Management 5[th]Edition , John Wiley

Aaker , D A. (1991) ,Managing Brand Equity, New York, Free Press,

Bryan, J. (2004)   Problems in gene clustering based on gene expression data. Journal of Multivariate analysis

Chernatony, L. McDonald, M. and Wallace, E. 2011 4[th]Edition , Creating Powerful Brands, UK Butterworth- Heinemann Elsevier

Doyle, P. (1998) Marketing Management and Strategy, PrenticeHall Europe

Doyle, P   (2001), Shareholder- value based brand strategies. Journal of Brand Management, 9(1) : 20-30.

Keller, Aperia and Georgson (2008). Strategic Brand Management, A European Perspective, Pearson Education Publishing

Franzen,, G. (1999) Brands and Advertising: How advertising effectiveness influences brand Brand Equity, Admap Henley –on -Thames

Jones, R.,(2005) .Finding sources of brand value: Developing a stakeholder model of brand equity. Journal of Brand Management 13(1):10-32

Keller, Aperia and   Georgson (2008) . Strategic Brand Management, A European Perspective, Pearson Education Publishing

Lepla F,   and Lyn Parker (2002:1) Integrated Branding   Model, London,   Kogan Page Publishing

Motameni R, and Shahrokhi,   1998), "Brand Equity valuation: A global perspective" Journal of Product Mangement, Volume 7 No 4, pp. 275-209

Pallabi, M and Biplab D (2011) Perpetual Asset Brand Management of Customer- Based Brand Equity- The PAM Evaluator : Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 3 (1): 34-43 2011.

Porter, M E. 1985, Competitive Advantage:Creating and sustaining superior performance, New York , The Free Press

Ramaswami, B (2002) Understanding the seed industry:Contemporary trends and analytical issues. Indian Statistical Institute, New Dehli.

Rauyren , P. Miller KE, &Groth, B. (2009) Business to Business Services:Linking service loyalty and brand equity, Journal of Services Marketing volume 23 (3):175-186

Saxena , R. (2002) Marketing Management 2nd Edition,   New Dehli, McGraw Hill.

The 2012 Annual Report of the Directors (2012), the SEED-Co company of Zimbabwe, Harare

Tripp and Pal (1998) Asian Journal of business and Management Sciences Volume 1 No 10[17-24]

.Trochin MKW (2006) The Research Methods Knowledge Base Cornell University US

Wegner T, (1999)   Applied Business Statistics Methods and Applications, JUTA Cape Town , RSA.