



**INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF IMPORTED GOODS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Globalisation has made it easier for traders to import goods into the country at the expense of local industries. In Kenya the Jua kali industry has been adversely affected by the business of importation which has seen the performance of the industry sharply decline. This study sought to establish the effects of imported products on the performance of locally produced goods by small scale metal work enterprises in the economy. Moreover, the study was guided by two theories: Schumpeter's theory of economic development and the export base theory. The study targeted small-scale metal enterprises which were estimated to be 160 businesses in Kamukunji Market. Out of this, a sample of 120 respondents was arrived at using the Cochran formula. Data was collected by the use of structured questionnaires which contained closed ended questions. Descriptive analysis including frequencies, percentages and cross tabulations, was used to summarize and organize quantitative data. The collected data was then summarized, coded and analysed quantitatively and presented in tables to draw inference on the research questions. The study arrived into various conclusions; notably the consumer attitude and perception of imported products is overwhelming good as compared to that of local products. It also emerged that local industries lacked elaborate structures to pursue marketing and research and development activities. Moreover, key stake holders such as the government should facilitate the growth of the industry by lowering the cost of doing business and providing financial incentives to encourage the growth of the business.*

**KEY words:** Jua Kali, Performance, Consumer

## INTRODUCTION

The global flow of goods, services, technologies, resources, people, and ideas among markets through international trade has major effects on countries and their governments, companies, and individuals (Wang & Chen, 2004). At the global level, participation in international trade enables countries to take advantage of the international expertise in commerce to deliver goods and services into the international marketplace. It also increases the varieties of goods and services available in national markets and exposes consumers to new lifestyles and ideas. Over time, these exposures affect national cultures including their political and economic institutions, and impact a society's behaviours, attitudes, and lifestyles. Governments have major effects on international business activities in determining how open (or closed) national economies are to external influences such as trade and investment (Grosse, 2005).

For the informal manufacturing sector, global trade increases competition in local markets as similar products are imported which are fairly cheaper for the consumers. Global competition therefore forces industries operating in the informal sector to be more inventive and efficient in their use of resources in order to face the ever-increasing level of competition. For consumers, global trade brings increased varieties of goods and services into the world marketplace and boosts living standards. Just as important, open borders mean increased exposure to new products, skills, and ways of doing things (Auger, 2010).

International trade has transformed over time with a number of environmental factors forcing the changes in ways of trade. Most of these factors flow from the effect of globalization. (Griffin *et al.*, 2010). Other factors that have contributed to these massive changes include: Historical positions, such as the end of the cold war and the breakup of the Soviet bloc, helped to generalize the free trade

model and increase further the number of States and therefore potential trading partners (Buckley, 2011). This number had already been sharply amplified by the decolonization process in the years 1950 to 1970. The other factor is encouragement or regional integration that gave rise to associations such as ASEAN and NAFTA (Kimura, 2010). The formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement also indicated a common desire to liberalize trade.

Changes global trade are, however, brought about solely by environmental factors of different kinds that rapidly change the state of matters, as they were previously. Any location with a good political environment tends to favor prosperity and business. A good Economic environment lays a good foundation to thrive in international associations, which in turn translates to more business being brought into the country as well as its produce and services being exported to partners and allies (Daniels *et al.*, 2008). Natural environment, which is in many cases categorized under social environment, will allow trade from a wide range of relating countries to conduct business. This is without failing to note that for all this to run in an affordable and smooth way, the technological infrastructure should also be of high quality (Hill, 2005).

Kenya's Jua Kali industry (Informal industry) has been there since the early 1900s and it was the leading manufacturing industry until the 1980s, though this changed considerably during the 1990s. The country was plagued with large scale under capacity resource utilization in terms of manufacturing (GOK, 2009). Marketing effects of the above scenario have been the irregular supply of products, supply of low quality products, fluctuating prices due to product shortages, low reputation of manufactured goods, low motivation towards advertising, low marketing orientation and a general consumer discontent with locally manufactured products (Kibua & Nzioki, 2004).

The Jua Kali sector in Kenya showed signs of early industrialization, since it is a very labour-intensive sector (GOK, 2005). Presently the near-collapse of the industry shows a reality where cheap imports and second-hand products have ominously reduced competitiveness of the industry (Fukunishi, 2012). The few Kenyan products that exist contend to survive since they cannot compete with the cheap imports and second-hand products that find their way into the Kenyan market. The Jua Kali sector in Kenya fails to communicate the value of the locally manufactured commodities to the consumers, and questions have been raised on how to increase the interest and crave for locally manufactured products amongst the population in order to increase the level of economic growth (Hamin & Elliot, 2006).

The informal sector in the country is commonly referred to as the Jua Kali which means “fierce sun” in Swahili (GOK, 2006). The name is derived from the fact that workers in this sector operate under the hot sun as they produce or sell their products in the markets or along the streets. The work done is usually harsh and hard, often under conditions that are unsuitable for labour and at times not even safe. The businesses in Jua kali sector have fewer employees, improvise their working tools and skills are often acquired through apprenticeship (Pancer, 1994). However, this is the extreme view of the sector, as currently, Jua kali spans a wide range of sizes of businesses and may even have a large number of employees depending on the product being produced and the activities involved.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The local metal Jua Kali industry in the country has in the recent past experienced a decline in performance due to the increase in the number of imports in the country. The age of globalisation has

made it easier for traders to import and sales products in the country and this continues to hurt the local industry. Equally, there have been concerns that the consumer market perception and attitude of local products is poor and bad as compared to that of imported products. Poor market perception and attitude makes consumers to prefer imported goods over local ones and this undermines the performance of locally produced goods.

For the last decade, manufacturers in the informal sector have been competing with firms in developing countries rather than those in industrialised countries (Fukunishi, 2012). The upsurge of imported products has negatively affected the informal sector in Kenya leading to loss of market for locally manufactured products. Though trade has been identified as a key driver of industrialization and anchored in the vision 2030, most of Kenyan goods are semi-processed, less diversified and concentrated in few markets (Fukunishi & Takahiro, 2009). Accordingly, the manufacturing industry in Kenya has moved to a condition of near collapse with massive job losses, low output and low sales due to loss of market. It is worth noting that the informal sector is critical for Kenya’s development (GOK, 2008). This study examined the effects of importation on the performance of locally-produced products in Kenya by metal work artisans. Moreover, the study investigated the consumer attitude and perception of imported goods vis-a-vis locally produced goods to find out whether the perceptions influence the demand of locally produced metal products.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To evaluate the effect of imported product characteristics on the performance of locally produced goods.

- To assess the effect of consumer perceptions of imported manufactured products on the performance of locally produced goods.

## Theoretical Review

### Schumpeter's Theory of Economic Development

In Schumpeter's theory of economic development, the companies seize competitive advantage to create or adopt innovations that make the competitors' position obsolete, which is called creative destruction (Wilkinson & Brouthers, 2006). This type of competition is considered much more effective and beneficial than price competition or creating monopoly power. However, investing in radical innovations is inherently risky and requires larger companies to invest and develop revolutionary innovations through competitive advantage (Ahmed, 2014).

At the centre of Schumpeter's theory of competitive behaviour is the assertion that competitive advantage will become increasingly more difficult to sustain in a wide range of industries. Drucker (2014) noted that the pursuit of sustainable advantage has long been the focus of strategy. The key predictions of Schumpeterian theory for strategy researchers are that firms are increasingly less able to sustain a strategic advantage over their competition, that such behaviour is characteristic of a wide range of industries; and that sustained competitive advantage has become less a matter of finding and sustaining a single competitive advantage and more a case of finding a series of competitive advantages over time and concatenating them into a sustained competitive advantage.

Notably, the Jua Kali sector in Kenya is unable to make disruptive innovations mainly due to limitations in resources and skills. This has made the industry less competitive as compared to the import

business. Most are the times; artisans in the Jua Kali industry are forced to copy trends from imported goods to remain competitive in the industry.

### Export-Base Theory

The key concept of the export- base theory is that export activity is the engine for regional economic growth through export sales. The export-base theory of growth is grounded in the idea that a local economy must increase its monetary inflow if it is to grow and the only effective way to increase monetary inflow is to increase exports (Blair & Blair, 1995). Export base theory argues that a county's or community's economy may be bifurcated into two sectors: an export or basic sector and a non-export or non-basic sector (Andrews, 1970; North, 1956; Tiebout, 1956). In this case basic sector is a sector made up of local businesses (firms) that are entirely dependent upon external factors and non-basic in contrast is composed of those firms that depend largely upon local business conditions for example restaurants sell their goods to local households, businesses, and individuals. Its clients are locally based and therefore products are consumed locally.

In export -base theory, it is argued that an economy is divided into two sectors; export or basic sector and the non-export or non-basic sector (Lewis, 1972). The export or the basic sector is portion of the local economy that trades with firms outside the local region (Williamson, 1975). The export trade brings in income to the area, which according to the export base theory generates future development in the local economy. The non-export or non-basic sector sell their products within the local economy and exist to support export or the basic sector. Therefore, expansion in the basic economic sector will likewise increase economic in the non-basic economic sector.

Traders in the Jua Kali industry in Kenya are unable to make use of the export base theory due to their nature of operations. Of note, most of the firms sell their goods locally and lack avenues and channels to export their goods to.

## **Empirical Review**

### **Effects of Importation on the Performance of Locally Produced Goods**

Opoku and Akorli (2009) assert that in economically underdeveloped countries, preference for domestic products tends to be weaker with for instance, consumers in the former socialist countries of eastern and central Europe preferring western to domestic products. The authors report that some studies (Chao, 1993) have established that price was relatively less important than COO in Russian, Polish and Hungarian consumer purchase intentions for TV sets while others (Opoku & Akorli, 2009) have indicated that Czech consumers preferred German cars and TV sets, but not polish ones, to those made in the Czech Republic. Mexicans have a poor perception of domestic goods, rating American and Thailand household electronic products above Mexican-made brands while there is also a great demand for Western consumer goods among Indian consumers. Perception of country of origin image as one of the distinct attributes when making purchasing decisions, a strong taste and general preference for western products have also been established among Chinese, Bangladeshi and Pakistanis consumers (Opoku & Akorli, 2009)

### **Product Characteristics and Performance of Locally Produced Goods**

Marketing scholars' interest in the influence of product characteristics such as the country of origin on the demand of products has intensified during the past two decades. This influence at the local

and international marketing level has continued to attract considerable attention among international trade academicians and practitioners, yielding several perspectives (Yim, 2007). According to Yim (2007), these studies have yielded important insights and information on how consumers, use a brand's country-of-origin as a signal to inferring its purchase decisions and actions. Much as some studies have argued that these effects do not exist, or that if they do, they are of only minor significance in the wide array of influences on the purchase decision, Studies done by Ouellet, (2007) and Luan & Sudhir, (2010) support the assertion that the effects do exist, although the magnitude and the mechanism of influence remains unresolved.

### **Consumer Perception and Performance of Locally Produced Goods**

Kotler (2008), defined perception as the process by which information is received, selected, organised and interpreted by an individual. Some of the factors that influence consumer perceptions of a brand include Quality, which is taken into account when making the choice of apparel. According to Kotler, quality is an integral part of a brand identity. Price, which according to McDonald and Sharp (2010), can be used as a basis for apparel choice in two ways; going for the lowest price in order to escape financial risk or the highest price in order to achieve product quality.

Another factor is influence by other people which according to Kotler, Wong, Saunders, and Armstrong, (2005) plays a vital role in consumers' decision processes. Consumers usually consult each other, regarding a new product or brand and seek advice. Advertisement also influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Advertisement is a conspicuous form of communication. Another one is convenience of a brand, including its accessibility.

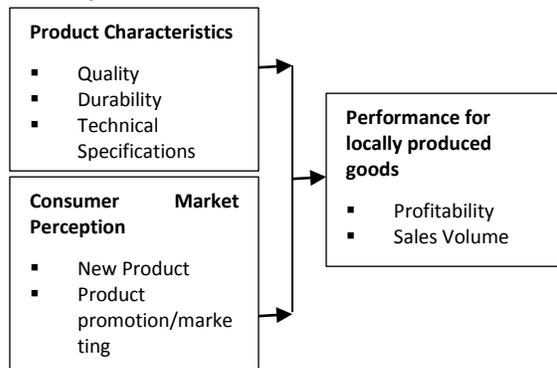
Such has a significant effect on consumers (Lin & Chang, 2013). Customer satisfaction is also another key factor in modern marketing. If the customers are satisfied with the provided goods, the probability that they would buy the goods again increases (Chen & Ko, 2007).

### Performance of Locally Produced Goods

The performance of locally produced goods in the country has been well below par. According to Adeyeye (2016), the growth of SMEs has been hindered by unfavourable government policies and the presence of cheap imports from Asia. In addition, local industries lack the much-needed skill and expertise due to lack of solid management structures. One argues that the lack of operational structures in Jua Kali industries undermines the performance of the sector mainly in marketing and research and development.

In addition, the Jua Kali industry in Kenya operates on a limited budget due to limitations in funding and the nature of operations of Jua Kali industry. Off note, Jua kali industries operate on a small scale and this makes it hard for them to scale up their production activities or invest in research and development activities (R&D). This has made the industry to underperform when compared to foreign companies which have substantial budgets on R&D. Equally the performance is undermined by the inability of the local industry to benefit from economies of scale due to the microenterprise nature of operations.

### Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables    Dependent Variable

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

Source, Author (2018)

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The major role of descriptive research was to explore and describe the state of affairs as they were and then reporting the findings. The target population of this study were the small enterprises operating in Kamukunji, Nairobi County. The study adopted a content analysis method of analysis. Content analysis may broadly be defined as the quantitative description of variables in the study.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Traders' Perception and Attitude on Imported Products

The study sought to investigate how the respondents responded to the increased preference of imported goods over imported goods.

**Table 1: Whether businesses had responded to Importation**

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	52	69.3
No	23	30.7
Total	75	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2018

A modest 52 of the 75 which represents a 69% of the respondents noted that they had responded to the growing demand of imported products by importing similar products mainly from china. However, the artisans contended that some products could not be imported citing examples of wheelbarrows, metal boxes and other metal items. The respondents however noted that they stopped crafting items that could be easily imported such as cutlery and crockery since it was more economical to import. The traders and artisans were also

asked to give their view on how the researchers viewed factors that increase the demand of imported products. The factors were: The consumer market feels that imported goods are superior, the imported goods are cheaper compared to locally produced goods, the businesses importing products into the country have unique marketing strategies that cannot be matched by the local informal business, view that government policies favour importers more than local manufacturers.

**Table 2: Traders perception and attitude on imported goods**

	Frequency	Percentage	Standard deviation	Mean
<b>Traders feel imported goods are superior goods</b>				
Less extent	7	8.9		
Moderate extent	21	28.0		
Great extent	28	37.3	0.934	3.79
Very great extent	19	25.3		
Total	75	100		
<b>The imported goods are cheaper compared to locally produced goods</b>				
Not at all	23	30.7		
Less extent	26	34.7		
Moderate extent	17	22.7	1.119	2.21
Great extent	5	6.7		
Very great extent	4	5.3		
Total	75	100		

Source: Survey Data 2018

The average score to the research question “Traders feel imported goods are superior goods” was 3.79 while that of the research question “The imported goods are cheaper compared to locally produced goods” was 2.21. This suggested that the traders viewed that imported goods were somewhat superior but not especially cheaper. Equally, more than half of the traders noted that consumers perceived imported goods to be of higher quality than that of locally produced goods (The responses great extent and very great extent).

Though the outcomes were not conclusive, this confirmed the assumption of the study that the consumer market in Kenya perceived imported products to be of better quality than that of local goods. Nonetheless, the traders were critical on the assertion that imported goods were cheaper, that imported goods are of better quality with over half the respondents indicating that the market view was incorrect (the responses less extent and not at all).

**Table 3: Trader attitude and perception on business operation**

	Frequency	Percentage	Standard deviation	Mean
The businesses importing products into the country have unique marketing				
Not at all	1	1.3		
Less extent	9	12.0		
Moderate extent	8	10.7	1.010	3.92
Great extent	34	45.3		
Very great extent	23	30.7		
Total	75	100		
Government policies favour importers more than local manufacturers				
Not at all	16	21.3		
Less extent	12	16.0		
Moderate extent	23	30.7		
Great extent	16	21.3	1.284	2.84
Very great extent	8	10.7		
Total	75	100		

#### Survey Data 2018

Notably, the respondents confirmed the assertion of the study that imported goods were more creatively and aggressively marketed as compared to locally produced goods. Unique marketing made imported goods more popular in the market as evidenced by the positive consumer perception of imported goods in the market. The outcomes on the question inquiring whether the existing government policies favoured importation over local good were inconclusive. For instance, 30% of the respondents noted that the government favoured importation business while 21% noted that the government did not favour importation business. However, the respondents agreed that there had been a substantial increase in the quantity of imported goods in the market mainly from Asian countries.

The study also investigated the trader's attitude and perception on the products costs of locally manufactured goods as compared to that of imported ones. Notably, most of the respondents in the study traded in both imported and local goods and therefore had hands-on experience on both products. However, there was the risk of bias in responses as the participants would generally incline towards giving positive comments about their goods. Below are the responses to the research question: "How do you compare your goods with imported ones in terms of the following?" The characteristics that were considered in the research question were Quality, Price, Appeal, and Perception. The table 4 below showed the percentage comparison of the responses.

**Table 4: Quality, price, perception and attitude comparison of local versus imported goods**

Descriptive Statistics	Responses in percentage						
	Best	Better	Good	Bad	Worse	Mean	Std.

									Deviation
Price comparison of local versus imported goods	12	36	30.7	17.3	4	2.65	1.033		
Quality comparison of local versus imported goods	45.3	41.3	5.3	4	4	1.8	1		
Appeal comparison of local versus imported goods	4	6.7	21.3	44	24	3.77	1.021		
Perception comparison of local versus imported goods	5.3	14.7	21.3	28	30.7	3.64	1.215		
Aggregate Score						2.965	1.067		

Source: Survey Data 2018

As shown in table 4 the mean response for price was 2.65 with that of quality being 1.8. This indicated that the pricing of local products was less competitive as compared to that of imported products. The mean response for quality was 1.8 which suggested that the quality of imported goods was better than that of imported ones. The mean responses for both consumer appeal and perception were 3.77 and 3.64 respectively which indicated that the consumer perception and attitude was generally negative. From the table, it was also evident that appeal and perception of locally manufactured goods in bad to worse with over 58% of the respondents indicating that the customer perception of local products was bad to worse and 68% indicating that the appeal was bad

to worse. This could be broadly generalised that despite the quality and pricing of local goods being favourable, the consumers were prejudiced on the use of locally produced metal products. For instance, a respondent pointed out to the fact that Jua-Kali frying pans costed less than half of what commercial frying pans cost and had longer lifespan. However, despite the superior characteristics, he noted that most consumers still preferred buying the low quality imported products. The traders were also asked on how they compare the sale of local items to that of the sale of imported products. The outcomes were rather sceptical with 51% of the respondents noting that their business was worse as shown in the chart below.

**Table 5: sale comparison of local items to the imported products**

	Frequency	Percentage
Better	11	14.7
Similar	26	34.7
Worse	38	50.7
Total	75	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2018

Since the importation business outperforms local business, traders were often forced into venturing in the sale of imported products and this significantly affected the growth of the local businesses. Notably, most of the respondents noted that they traded both imported and local goods and

that the sale of imported goods was better than that of local goods. This confirmed the hypothesis of the study that the import business was better than that of local metal products. Moreover, the study compared the performance of sales and profits between imported and locally produced

goods. The outcomes further confirmed the assertion of the study that the business of imported goods is more lucrative as compared to that of local goods. The table below showed the responses to

the research question “How large are the volumes/sales local goods when you compare with the imported range?”

**Table 6: The local sales volumes as larger compared to imports**

Descriptive Statistics	Responses in percentage						Mean	Std. Deviation
	Not at all	Less extent	Moderate extent	Great extent	Very great extent			
The local sales volumes as larger compared to imports	24.0	25.3	30.7	12.0	8.0	1.211	1.467	
The local sales volumes as larger compared to imports	21.3	44.0	13.3	9.3	12.0	1.266	1.604	

Source: Survey Data 2018

As shown in the table, the mean response for both the sales volume and profits are well below average. A generalisation can thus be made that the sales volumes and profits of local goods is outperformed by that of imported products.

### Conclusions

The study came into a conclusion that the consumer market perception of manufactured imported goods profoundly affects the performance of local products. Notably, imported goods are aggressively marketed and this builds their brand equity. The traders noted that they lacked channels to advertise their goods which would help improve the perception of local products. Overall, the lack of marketing makes local goods less competitive in the consumer market. From the research, it also emerged that Jua Kali industries lack elaborate management structures. Notably, competing industries have marketing departments which are concerned with advertising imported products a fact that makes imported goods more popular in the market.

The consumer market attitude and perception of local goods is generally poor which is a worrying revelation. The poor perception of local goods has

made Jua Kali traders to venture in the import business which altogether harms the local industry. Moreover; the lack of government policies to ban the importation of cheap imported products continues to harm the Jua Kali industry since imported goods are relatively cheaper especially imports from China. Since the imported goods are in most cases cheaper than locally produced ones, the general public often opts to buy imported products. Another pertinent issue that emerged from the study is that locally produced goods are less appealing and trendy. This also contributes to the poor perception and attitude of locally produced goods.

### Recommendations

From the study, it has emerged that the consumer perception and attitude of the consumer market on locally manufactured metal products is cynical. Mainly this is because local goods especially house hold items are less appealing and trendy. Accordingly, it is vital that traders in the industry devise methods of producing trendy goods just like the imported ones. This could be achieved by fostering product innovation and investing in product research and development. Moreover, manufactures in the Jua Kali industry should

benchmark with manufacturers of imported goods in order to equally trendy products. This would

improve the consumer attitude and perception of locally produced goods.

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