



**ADVERTISING AND CONSUMER BRAND PREFERENCE FOR MOBILE PHONE SERVICES IN KENYA**

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### ABSTRACT

*Kenya's mobile telephony industry has been characterized by cut-throat competition among the industry players in the last one decade with the resultant closure or complete sell off of the businesses of some of the mobile phone service providers to competitors. It is against this background that measuring a consumer's brand preference is an important step towards understanding the choice behaviour of a consumer. The study's objective was to establish the influence of advertising on consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used, with data collected using a structured and semi-structured questionnaire. A multi-stage stratified random sampling was used to collect data from mobile phone service subscribers domiciled in Nairobi County. Of the 500 questionnaires administered, 387 subscribers responded, giving a response rate of 77.4%. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. Regression analysis was used to test the study's hypotheses using F and T-tests. The study revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between advertising and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya. The study concluded that advertising is a significant factor in influencing consumer brand preference for a mobile phone service. Marketers in the mobile telecommunication services industry need to effectively utilize advertising with the aim of creating awareness and influencing consumers to form positive attitudes towards their brands.*

**Key Words:** Voice Traffic, Advertising, Brand Preference, Mobile Phone Services

## INTRODUCTION

Kenya's voice traffic market, one of the mobile phone services, has an array of tariff offerings. These brands are offered in Kenya by Safaricom Ltd, Telekom Kenya, Airtel Kenya, and Finserve Africa Ltd. A consumer's frequent use of any of these brands thus reflects the consumer's brand preference. Kenya's mobile telecommunication industry has been characterized by stiff competition among the mobile phone service providers. This has seen the exit or selling out of some of the network providers' businesses to competition from within and from outside the country. It is against this background that measuring a consumer's brand preference becomes very critical as it enables one to understand consumer choice behavior, as pointed out by Ebrahim (2013). Lin (as cited in Alamro & Rowley, 2011) concurs and states that a single brand preference can be regarded as a measure of brand loyalty. Yet despite its importance, brand preference has received scant attention, as shown by Alamro & Rowley (2011).

Grace & O'Cass (2005) state that advertising, a component of controlled communications, is recognized as an important avenue by which marketers can make their offerings to customers tangible, noting that the perceived risks associated with service purchases emphasize the importance of controlling and transmitting messages which reduce consumption apprehension. It has been argued that advertising is the key for building, creating and sustaining brands, as it also plays a major role in persuading, informing and reminding both potential and existing customers towards making a purchase decision (Ingavale, 2013). This line of argument concurs with the findings of a study by Silberstein & Nield (2008) who demonstrated a relationship between long term memory encoding for brand information in a television advertisement among females and a shift in consumer preference to the

advertised brand. In disagreeing with the arguments that advertising influences brand preference, Fam et al. (2013), however posit that research has shown that the concept of advertising as a whole is hated by consumers. This dislike for advertising results in consumers "switching off", yet they note that in order for advertising to be effective it must be "liked" by the consumers. This position rhymes with Littlejohn & Foss's (2009) argument that advertising's impact on sales seems to be less immediate and direct than originally assumed, given that there are many other factors which influence sales. At the same time, the two perspectives of strong and weak theories of advertising, as expounded by Fill (2002), confirm the contradicting views held on the influence of advertising on sales and behaviour. With these inconsistencies on the effect of advertising on sales or behaviour, the study filled in this gap by incorporating advertising as predictor variable. In the Kenyan context, mobile phone network providers have continued to use advertising with an aim of creating awareness and increasing their market share, among other objectives. With no prior studies on the effect of advertising on consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya, it remains unclear how advertising affects brand preference for these mobile phone services. Given that the effect of advertising remains largely unexamined in academic literature in Kenya, a need, therefore, exists which necessitates a practical study on the relationship it has with consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. On the same note, even though voice traffic has been the largest contributor to mobile phone operators' revenues in Kenya, consumer research has devoted little attention to the motives underlying consumer brand preference for a service provided by a network provider. It is for this reason that the study examined how consumer preference for these services are influenced by advertising.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study's objective was to establish the relationship between advertising and consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Consumer Brand Preference

Assessments of brand preference endeavor to measure marketing activities' influence in the potential and current customers' hearts and minds. As pointed out by Ebrahim (2013), measuring a consumer's brand preference is a significant step towards comprehending consumer choice behaviour. He further notes that brand preferences reveal the kind of traits possessed by a brand, and how these attributes bolster the brand's position and boost its market share. As indicated by Lin (as cited in Alamro and Lowrey, 2011), a single brand preference can be regarded as a measure of loyalty. Higher brand preference would thus normally result in more revenues and profitability. Alamro and Rowley (2011) assert that there is no consensus on the definition of brand preference. They state that different authorities conceptualise brand preference in different ways and suggest different relationships between brand preference and other branding variables. For example, Keller (as cited in Alamro and Rowley, 2011), discusses brand preference as an antecedent of brand loyalty and brand equity, whereas Chang and Ya Ming (as cited in Alamro and Rowley, 2011) discuss brand preference as a consequence of brand loyalty and brand equity. Brand preference, according to Dadzie and Boachie-Mensah (2011), is the measure of brand loyalty in which a consumer will select a specific brand in the existence of competing brands, but will accept alternatives if that brand is unavailable. They contend that it could also be considered as the inclination to choose a particular brand of product in preference to any other having a comparable

make-up and cost or preference features. Rahman and Azhar (2011), on the other hand, define brand preference by looking at the concept as having two components, namely stated preference, which is based on the importance of various characteristics associated with it; and revealed preference which is explained as actual choice by the consumer.

Other authors use brand preference and brand loyalty interchangeably (Rundle-Thiele and Mackay, as cited in Alamro and Lowrey, 2011). Hellier et al. (as cited in Alamro and Lowrey, 2011), on the other hand, define brand preference as the extent to which a customer favours the chosen service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the other services provided by other companies in his or her consideration set. Ebrahim (2013) however, indicates that there is a difference between brand preference and brand loyalty. He explains that brand preference represents the attitudinal brand loyalty leaving out the action of repeat purchasing. This position is supported by Bass and Talarzyk (1972) who posit that brand preference does not convert directly into purchasing behaviour, though noting that the two concepts are related. The study adopted this definition of brand preference by Ebrahim (2013) by seeking to investigate it from an attitudinal point of view. He further notes that knowing the pattern of consumer preferences across the population is a critical input for designing and developing innovative marketing strategies, though noting that forecasting consumer's preferences between brands, however, is not an easy task. Bass and Talarzyk (1972) concurred and stated that prediction of individual preference is a difficult and elusive task. They however, argue that it is a vital task given that it represents a major step in understanding consumer choice. Ebrahim, (2013) indicates that he had employed the use of attitude models in his study to measure brand preference. Use of attitude models in measuring brand preference could also be seen in an earlier study by Bass and Talarzyk (1972) in which they

indicated that they applied a model of consumer attitudes. They further note that their study compared the predictive results of the attitude model with two multiple discriminant analysis models, and the results indicated that for all product categories analysed, the attitude model was significantly better than the other models in predicting the most preferred brand.

Empirical data show that the theory of reasoned action has been put to test in a number of consumer circumstances with a view to predicting behaviour of customers (Shrum, Liu et al, 2012). For example, they indicated that the Fishbein model has been shown to be predictive of the acquisition of a certain brand of grape drink, generic prescription drugs, football tickets, among other brands. Empirical evidence thus suggests that decisions a consumer makes on a brand therefore stems from brand attitude, a concept which captures the meaning a consumer attaches to the brand, and which in turn is influenced by satisfaction, brand evidence, and brand hearsay (Grace and O’Cass, 2005). Alamro and Rowley (2011) explain that brand evidence consists of brand name, price/value for money, servicescape, core service, employee, and self-image congruence; while brand hearsay encompasses controlled communication (advertising and promotional activities), and uncontrolled communication (word-of-mouth, and publicity). The study was therefore built from prior studies, including that of Alamro and Rowley (2011), Shrum, Liu et al (2012), Grace and O’Cass (2005), among others. The point of departure from these earlier studies, however, lay in the use of brand attitude to the services to operationalize the measurement of consumer brand preference. This is consistent with an earlier study by Ebrahim (2013) which showed that brand preference exemplifies the attitudinal brand loyalty which excludes the repeat purchase action. This position is supported by Bass & Talarzyk (1972) whose study showed that brand preference does not

necessarily convert immediately into a purchasing behaviour by a consumer.

### **Advertising**

According to Belch & Belch (2003), advertising as any paid form of non-personal communication about an idea, a product, an organization or a service by a known promoter. Percy (2008) on the other hand defines advertising by looking at its Latin root, *advertere*, which translates roughly as turning towards. She notes that advertising is meant to change the mind of a consumer towards the advertised brand, and this it does by raising awareness for the brand among the target audience. As pointed out by Hackley (2005), one weakness of the linear model of communication is that it is easy to interpret in such a way that meaning and message are understood to be the same. This risks misconstruing the interpretive possibilities that exist within a given promotional communication. He notes that cultural and linguistic studies of advertising have shown that advertisements usually use ambiguity as a virtue. According to Belch & Belch (2003), significant research in marketing, social psychology, and communications has led to questioning of the traditional cognitive → affective → behavioural sequence of response to advertising. They note that several other configurations of the response hierarchy have been theorized. Karlsson (2007) concurs with these criticisms of the models and notes that the models have been criticised by different sections of the advertising community. She further posits that AIDA model, which is seen by many as the strongest advertising theory, but has along with the other models been criticised by the advertising professionals. Belch & Belch (2003), for example, claim that there is no evidence that customers behave in this rational, linear way. This in essence means that mass media advertising in general fail to stimulate desire or action. They also note that the model ignores the role of context, environment and mediation in influencing the effectiveness of the advertisement.

Karlsson (2007) further note that another criticism that the AIDA model has met is that it represents only high-involvement purchases. According to this model, customers always go through this rational process when buying products, but many of the practitioners say that purchases more often are spontaneous (Hackley, 2005). The criticism on hierarchy-of-effects model is very similar to the one made on AIDA (Karlsson, 2007). She, for instance, note that there is still no evidence on the fact that awareness of a products leads to purchase, and the steps are still unclear. She adds that criticism has also been made on each individual step in the model. She thus argues that critics do not think that the model explains how the customers will go from one step to another. Littlejohn & Foss (2009), on the other hand, argue that despite the ongoing modification attempts to the structure of hierarchy-of-effects models, the persistent attention given to it in advertising research confirms its enduring significance. They however, note that questions about the direction of research tied to this concept remain. For example, a result of challenges and subsequent debates about the "right" hierarchy has been a growing perception that advertising might be less powerful than originally thought and that its major contribution lies more in its reinforcement of an idea than in its original persuasive force. Furthermore, hierarchy-of-effects models are theoretically weak as they are missing the motivational mechanisms necessary to explain how to move individuals to the various stages in the models. Belch & Belch (2003), on the other hand, note that the hierarchical response models centre on identifying relationships between specific controllable variables (such as source and message factors) and outcome or response variables (such as attention, comprehension, attitudes, and purchase intentions). This approach has been criticized for its black-box nature, since it can't explain what is causing these reactions. Littlejohn & Foss (2009) further argue that given the many influence factors present, advertising's

impact on sales seems to be less immediate and direct than originally assumed.

Belch & Belch (2003) posit that advertising and consumer researchers recognize that not all response sequences and behaviours are explained adequately by either the traditional or the alternative response hierarchies. They state that a review of these alternative models of the response process shows that the traditional standard learning model does not always apply. They note that the notion of a highly involved consumer who engages in active information processing and learning and acts on the basis of higher-order beliefs and a well-formed attitude may be inappropriate for some types of purchases. It is believed that sometimes consumers make a purchase decision on the basis of general awareness resulting from repetitive exposure to advertising, and attitude development occurs after the purchase, if at all (Belch & Belch, 2003). They thus note that the role of advertising and other forms of promotion may be to induce trial, so that consumers can develop brand preferences principally on the basis of their direct experience with the product. According to Fill (2002), the two perspectives of strong and weak theories of advertising illustrate the dichotomy of views that has emerged about advertising. He notes that the two perspectives are important because they are both right and wrong. He thus posits that the question "how does advertising work?" lies somewhere between the two views and is dependent upon the particular situation facing each advertiser. He explains that where elaboration is likely to be high if advertising is to work, then it is most likely to work under the strong theory. He further explains that where products have become established and their markets have matured, advertising works by protecting the consumer franchise and by allowing users to have their product choices confirmed and reinforced. In this situation weak theory of advertising applies. In concurring with these arguments, Hackley (2009) posit that many

contemporary ads shun the 'strong' sales pitch format in favour of a less direct narrative which is designed to build long-term brand equity. He points out that advertising seldom actually persuades a non-buyer to buy in the short term, but more typically acts like publicity to reassure existing buyers that the brand remains relevant and current.

Empirical evidence shows that advertising shapes consumer preferences through the informative, persuasive and transformative effect it has on the consumers, as noted in a study by Mehta, Chen, & Narasimhan (2008) whose objective was to propose a framework that models the process by which informative and transformative effects of advertisements influence consumers' brand evaluations and their subsequent brand choice decisions. They estimated their model on secondary data obtained from a single-source scanner panel data on liquid soap and powdered detergent using goodness of fit tests. The results of their study indicated that there were significant effects of advertising along both informative and transformative dimensions. One of the limitations of the study by Mehta, Chen, & Narasimhan (2008) is that it didn't model the decay of advertising effects since forgetting of advertisements was not incorporated in their model. The second limitation is that data used was around purchase, while the model was formulated around consumption. The current study therefore filled in these gaps by including advertising as one of independent variables; and by formulating a model around consumer brand preference and using data around consumer brand preference.

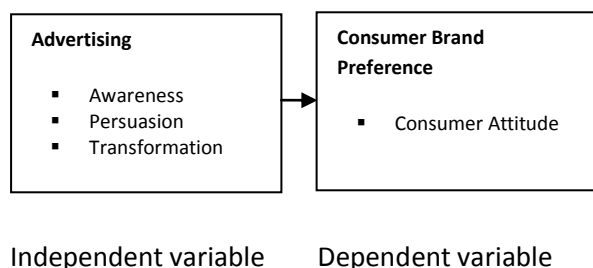
In a study by Priya, Baisya & Sharma's (2010), in which they sought to analyse the impact of children's attitudes towards television advertisements on their resultant buying behaviour, exploratory and descriptive research design was used. The study's findings indicated that the demand for the advertised products is influenced by the children's attitude towards the

advertisements. One of the limitations of this study is that it was restricted to children studying only in the English speaking schools in Delhi in India, as opposed to targeting all the children in the city, thus making the samples small and unrepresentative. The current study filled in this gap by including samples from different adult age groups drawn from diverse backgrounds in Nairobi County. In a previous study by Silberstein & Nield (2008) which sought to examine and demonstrate the relationship between television advertising and changes in consumer brand preference, brain activity measures were used through experimental research design. In this study, steady-state topography (SST) was used to estimate brain activity at eight scalp sites, as the participants were asked to choose six products from a range of 'door prizes' located in a display case. The findings of this study suggested that SST activity at lateral prefrontal sites during television advertisement branding may be a useful indicator of advertising effectiveness. In this study, it was noted that one of the limitations was that the data obtained was only restricted to female participants, thus limiting generalization of the study's findings to both genders. The current study incorporated gender to fill in this gap.

In Alamro & Rowley (2011) study whose objective was to investigate the antecedents of consumer brand preference in the context of telecommunications service brands in Jordan, quantitative methodology was used by employing a questionnaire-based survey. The study used a multi-stage sampling design in data collection. Multiple regression was used to investigate the relative impact of the identified factors on brand preference. One of the limitations to this study is that while it sought to embrace a wide range of potential antecedents to brand preference, it did not consider other factors that might influence brand preference, among them customer demographics, such as age, and income and psychographic factors such as consumer personality and lifestyle. Another gap identified in

Alamro & Rowley's (2011) study is the fact that their report did not specify the particular service/s targeted in the study. This is despite the fact that the mobile telecommunication service sub sector has quite an array of services. The current study filled in this gap by including customer demographics as moderating variables and by specifying voice traffic as the service under investigation. Fam et al. (2013), whose study sought to determine what could cause the dislike for advertisement's message in Asia, however, in disagreeing with the arguments that advertising influence consumer brand preference, posit that the concept of advertising as a whole is disliked, leading consumers to "switch off", yet they noted that for advertising to be effective it must be "liked" by the consumers. Fam et al's (2013) study was conducted using random telephone interview methodology and data analysis carried out. The research findings indicated that consumers dislike advertising because of advertisement style, difficulty in understanding it, exaggeration, its irresponsible or negative impact, scary/indecent/violent nature, containing a pornographic content; and lastly, a feeling that it is a bad/hard sell. It further indicated that disliking a commercial affected consumers' brand choice decisions, as more than three quarters of the respondents indicated that they will not purchase the advertised service if it contains disliked execution. From the foregoing discussions, these inconsistencies noted on the effect of advertising on consumer brand preference, the current study sought to fill in these gaps by incorporating advertising as one of the predictor variables.

**Conceptual Framework:**



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**METHODOLOGY**

Cross sectional survey research design was used in this study with data collected using structured and semi-structured questionnaire from mobile phone service subscribers domiciled in Nairobi County. Data was obtained using multi-stage stratified random sampling method from a sample size of 500 respondents (Garson, 2012). The instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficients which was set at the recommended 0.7 (Smith & Albaum, 2010). Pearson product-moment correlation (r) was used to measure the strength of linear relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference. As pointed out by Pallant (2005), correlation coefficient provides a numerical summary of the direction and the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. Simple linear regression analysis was used in the study to determine the relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. The study's hypothesis was tested using a simple linear regression model. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was used to show the change in consumer brand preference as explained by sales promotion. P value and t statistic were used to establish the significance of the coefficients (Field, 2009), while the F statistic was used to determine significance of the model. To answer the study's objective simple linear regression model, as shown below, was used.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_i x_i + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y is the consumer brand preference response variable which in this case was the attitude of consumers towards the mobile phone service, as measured by the beliefs consumers have about the specific attributes of the attitude object.

$\beta_0$  is the least squares estimates of the intercept

$\beta_i$  is the coefficient of  $x_i$ ,

$x_i$  is the influence of advertising on consumer brand preference

$\epsilon$  is the error term



## THE STUDY HYPOTHESIS

The study's objective was to establish the relationship between advertising and consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya. The relationship between the two variables was hypothesized as follows:

*Ho<sub>1</sub>: Advertising is not positively related to consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya.*

## THE STUDY FINDINGS

The results, as shown in Table 1, revealed that there was a positive and moderate relationship between advertising and consumer brand preference ( $r = .368$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This showed that an increase in positive perception towards a mobile phone service resulted in an increase of consumer brand preference for the advertised service. As pointed out by Field (2009), the correlation coefficient provides a good estimate of the overall fit of the regression model. To test the hypothesis that advertising influences consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services, a simple linear regression analysis was carried out. The results of linear regression analysis, shown in Table 1, revealed a positive linear relationship of  $R = .368$  ( $n = 356$ ,  $p < .01$ ), an  $R^2$  value of .136 with an  $F_{(1, 354)}$  value of 55.492 and an adjusted  $R^2$  of .133. This meant that 13.6% of the variability in consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services could be explained by advertising. The remaining 86.4 per cent were explained by other factors not considered in the model.

To determine how well the model generalizes to the population, the value of adjusted  $R^2$  was analyzed and it showed that there was a small difference between  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  (.136 -.133 = .003, about 0.3%). Table 1 (b) showed an  $F_{(1, 354)}$  of 55.492, which was statistically significant at  $p < .00$ . The null hypothesis  $\beta_1 = 0$  was thus rejected

and the alternative hypothesis  $\beta_1 \neq 0$  held. This confirms that there is a positive linear relationship between advertising and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. To determine the unique contribution of each of the predictors to the model, a test of the beta coefficients, as shown in Table 1 (c) indicated that the constant,  $\alpha = 1.962$ , was statistically different from 0, with a  $p$  value = 0.00 which is less than  $p = .05$ . The coefficient  $\beta = .502$  was also shown to be significantly different from 0 with a  $p$  value = 0.00 which was less than  $p = .05$ . This demonstrated that both the constant and advertising made a significant contribution to the model. The contribution of advertising to the model was further tested using  $t$ -statistic. Advertising was shown to make a statistically significant contribution with a  $t_{(354)}$  value of 7.449 at  $p < .01$ . The study model was thus represented by the following equation:

$$Y = 1.962 + .502X_1$$

Where  $Y$  is consumer brand preference while  $X_1$  advertising.

The beta coefficient of advertising was significant ( $\beta_1 = .502$ ,  $t = 7.449$ ,  $p = .00$ ). This implies that a unit increase in sales promotion led to an increase of .328 of consumer brand preference for mobile phone services.

**Table 1: Model Summary of Relationship Between Advertising and Consumer Brand Preference**

<b>(a). Model Summary</b>									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.368 <sup>a</sup>	.136	.133	.43273	.136	55.492	1	354	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising

<b>(b). ANOVA</b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	10.391	1	10.391	55.492	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1	Residual	66.290	354	.187		
	Total	76.681	355			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Brand Preference

b. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising

<b>(c). Coefficients</b>					
Model		Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.962	.232	8.469	.000
	Advertising	.502	.067	7.449	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Brand Preference

### Discussion on the Results of Advertising and Brand Preference for Mobile Phone Services

The study's findings, as shown in Table 1(a), indicated a moderate, positive correlation ( $r = .368$ ,  $n = 356$ ,  $p < .01$ ) between advertising and consumer brand preference. As pointed out by Field (2009) the correlation coefficient provides a good estimate of the overall fit of the regression model. Linear regression analysis, Table 1 (a), showed coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of .136 with an  $F(1, 354)$  value of 55.492 and an adjusted  $R^2$  of .133. This implied that 13.6% of the variability in consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services could be explained by advertising. The model therefore explained 13.6%

of the variance. The remaining 86.4 per cent were explained by other factors not considered in the model. The value of coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) thus showed the goodness of fit of the model. As pointed out by Ngugi (2012),  $R^2$  is a coefficient of determination in a linear relationship which explains how well the regression line fits the data set. He further noted that  $R^2$  is an important indicator of the predictive power of the equation. This is in agreement with Field (2009) who noted that  $R^2$  gives a good gauge of the substantive size of the relationship between the predictor and outcome variable. To determine how well the model generalizes to the population, the value of adjusted  $R^2$  was examined and it was shown that

there was a small difference between  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  (.136 -.133 = .003, about 0.3%). What this decrease implies is that if the model was derived from the population rather than from a sample it would account for roughly 0.3% less variance in consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services.

Table 1(b) showed an  $F_{(1, 354)}$  value of 55.492 which was statistically significant at  $p < .01$ . This implies that there is less than a 0.1% chance that an F-ratio this large would happen by chance if the null hypothesis were true (Field, 2009). In agreeing with the preceding arguments Pallant (2005) notes that F-ratio is a measure of how much the model has improved the prediction of the outcome compared to the level of inaccuracy of the model. She further argued that a good model should have a large F-ratio. The null hypothesis  $\beta_1=0$  was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis  $\beta_1 \neq 0$  held. It was therefore concluded that the regression model results in significantly better prediction of consumer brand preference than the use of mean value of consumer brand preference. This therefore confirmed that there was a positive linear relationship between advertising and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya.

To determine the unique contribution of each of the predictors to the model, a test of the beta coefficients, as shown in Table 1 (c), indicated that the constant  $\alpha = 1.962$  was statistically different from 0, with a p value = .000 which is less than  $p = .05$ . The coefficient  $\beta = .502$  was also shown to be significantly different from 0 with a p value = 0.00 which was less than  $p = .05$ . This demonstrated that both the constant and advertising made significant contributions to the model, hence both were retained in the model. As pointed out by Pallant (2005) the beta value represents the unique contribution of each variable, when the overlapping effects of all the other variables are held constant. The contribution of advertising to the model was further tested using t-statistic. Advertising was shown to make a statistically

significant contribution with a  $t_{(354)}$  value of 7.449 at  $p < .01$ . This position is supported by Field (2009) who posited that the t-statistic tests the null hypothesis that the value of b is 0. Therefore, if the t-statistic is significant, there is confidence in the hypothesis that the b-value is significantly different from 0 and that the predictor variable significantly contributes to the model's ability to estimate the outcome values. Since advertising b value was different from 0, it was concluded that advertising made a significant contribution ( $p < .01$ ) to predicting consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services.

These findings are in agreement with earlier studies which showed that advertising has a significant influence on consumer brand preference. Alamro & Lowrey (2011), for example, argued that if an advertisement is evaluated positively by a consumer, the consumer will form a positive perception of the brand, and the higher the positive perception of the brand, the greater the likelihood of a brand being preferred. They thus demonstrated that advertising has an influence on consumer brand preference, consequently a positive association exists between the two variables. They further noted that previous studies had suggested that advertising has a great influence on brand awareness, which, in turn may influence brand preference. Concurring with these findings is Mehta, Chen, and Narasimhan's (2008) findings which demonstrated that advertising directly influence a consumer's brand evaluations. They noted that this is achieved through its informative, persuasive and transformative effects. In supporting the preceding arguments, Ingavale (2013) pointed out that it has been argued that advertising is the key for building, creating and sustaining brands, as it also plays a major role in persuading, informing and reminding both potential and existing customers towards making a purchase decision. This line of argument concurs with the findings of a study by Silberstein & Nield (2008) who demonstrated a relationship between long term memory encoding for brand

information in a television advertisement among females and a shift in consumer preference to the advertised brand.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research**

The study sought to establish the influence of advertising on consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya. It was observed that advertising was a significant factor in influencing consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. It was evident that when a consumer positively evaluates an advertising message and forms a positive perception or a liking for the advertising then this liking is transferred to the advertised brand and this consequently results in the advertised brand being preferred by the consumer. The fact that advertising has the potential to make a consumer form a positive attitude towards the advertised brand resulting in a consumer's preference for the advertised mobile phone service was evident. This was illustrated by results which showed that a consumer's attitude towards a brand's advertising influenced his formation of a positive attitude towards the brand. This was as a result of the information learnt by the consumers from advertising which positively converted their attitude towards the advertised mobile phone services. Thus when consumers attended to and processed the advertising message, they formed in their minds favourable ad-execution thoughts which subsequently resulted in the formation of a favourable attitude towards the advertised brand. It was evident that advertising messages had the ability to arouse a desire in the consumers to use the advertised mobile phone service. This was due to advertising's persuasive and transformative effect. One of the main reasons why advertisers need to take service advertising earnestly is because of its power to persuade and transform the consumers towards being loyal users of the

mobile phone services. The persuasive power of advertising was confirmed by the findings which showed that consumers had been influenced to use a new mobile phone service which they had never known or used before. On the other hand, the transformation of consumers towards the mobile phone service was confirmed by findings which showed that advertising influenced the way the consumers experienced and evaluated the quality of the service from their subsequent consumption after seeing the brand advertised.

The fact that advertising reinforces the decisions made by consumers in choosing mobile phone services was evident. From the findings, it was shown that advertising did this by providing information which confirmed that the decision which the consumers made in choosing their preferred mobile phone service was correct. Advertisers therefore need to understand that the effort of advertising should be aimed at reinforcing consumers' choices and ensure that a repeat behavior of choosing the service is maintained. It was also demonstrated that the information retained in consumers' memories from previous advertising is very crucial as it helped them in choosing a mobile phone service at a later a point in time when the need for the service arose. The setting of the current study was based on samples drawn from Nairobi County alone to represent the Kenyan population. The study recommends that further research could consider studying how subscribers in other counties in Kenya would respond to the instrument used in the study. This will give a researcher an opportunity to compare how these selected service brand communication elements influence consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in other parts of the country. It could also enable the researcher to replicate and confirm the current study's findings.

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