

RESEARCH ARTICLE

BRAND ASSOCIATION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN ALCOHOLIC BEER PRODUCTS IN KABALE DISTRICT, UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Brand Awareness is regarded as a very important concept in business because business organizations can use it to gain competitive advantage. Competitive advantage has been approached by looking at the external environment of the firm that is how the economic power of firms can be used to create competitive position in an industry. This study focuses on Resource Based View a model that provides a framework for identifying unique set of resources and this perspective shifts the approach of assessing competitive advantage from the external to the internal environment that is the resource power. This study, therefore, set out to determine the effect of brand Association on competitive advantage in beer products in Kabale district. The specific objective of the study was to (i) To determine the effect of brand Association on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products in Kabale district. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The target population was 1783 including wholesalers, retailers, customers and brand and marketing managers of Nile Special Lager, Eagle Lager, Senator Extra Lager, club and Bell beer products in the District of Kabale, South Western Uganda. Multistage sampling techniques were used in this study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select alcoholic beer products and producers. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to sample shopping center to collect consumer information. Shopping centers were selected based on a marketing investigation. Primary data were used and collected using questionnaires. The descriptive analysis involving computing the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the brand Association and competitive advantage variables was conducted. The inferential analysis was conducted using multiple regression analysis and the t-statistic and the p-value were adopted to test the hypotheses of the study. The study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) as a tool to process and analyse data. The study found out that brand Association does not significantly affect competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda. The study concludes that consumers of beer products in Kabale district do not attach much association with the beer brands and hence the levels of associations both positive and negative are very low in Kabale district among beer brands. The study recommends that brand managers should focus their marketing communications on the experiential benefits of their product such as fun, excitement, and enjoyment in order to create positive associations in the minds of beer consumers.

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Key Words: Brand Association, Competitive Advantage, Beer Products.

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INTRODUCTION

Brand association is everything related to the memory of a brand. Brand Association ensures the organisation provides positive cues to their target segments, either through direct interaction with the target customers themselves, or indirectly through collaborations with external entities (Brian and Masayuki, 2016). Competitive advantage is an advantage gained over competitors by offering customers greater value, either through lower prices or by providing additional benefits and services that justify similar or possibly higher prices. Advantage falls into only two categories, something that you own that is a barrier to competition or something that you do very well that effectively bars competitors. So competitive advantage is somehow correlated with value added and the constructs of confidence in the purchase decision, cost advantage, efficiency and effectiveness of marketing programs, higher profitability and differentiation have been used to measure competitive advantage. Due to brand proliferation witnessed especially in beer industry in Uganda, there is a

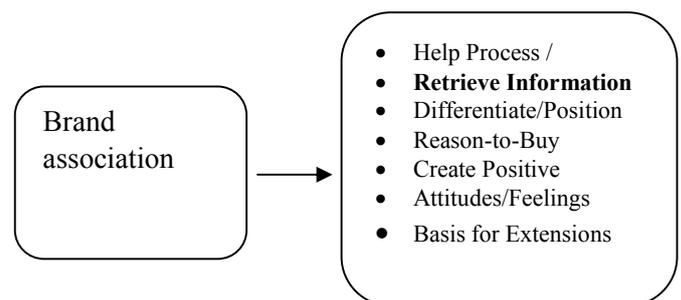
growing importance of branding and brand equity in beer industry. To address these issues, more theory development and empirical research are necessary for a better understanding of consumer based brand equity in beer industries. Firms in Uganda compete in marketing various brands of locally produced beer and the beer market seem to be flat. There are many challenges faced by beer companies in Uganda including; so many brands in the market, increasing advertising costs, low sales, low market penetration and lowering of prices by other firms among others. Despite the many brands in the market, the question is why do customers continue to choose the unbranded products. According to Walekwa (2009), despite the efforts Uganda Breweries Limited had put on communicating the Senator Extra Lager through various channels, including cultural galas, advertising and sales promotion, brand communication effectiveness had remained low signified through low sales performance of less than 10% on average countrywide since its inception in 2004, while in Western districts and Kabarole District in particular, the brand sales had declined signifying low brand choice and therefore a low ranking of the Brand Communication

Effectiveness. Firms in Uganda compete in marketing various brands of locally produced beer and the beer market seem to be flat. There is a lot of alcohol consumed in the market in south western Uganda which is not branded and some of it the traditional brew like muramba, toto, marwa, kwete and spirits like Kasese make up about 60% of the market. There are many challenges faced by beer companies in Uganda including; so many brands in the market, increasing advertising costs, low sales, low market penetration and lowering of prices by other firms among others. Despite the many brands in the market, the question is why do customers continue to choose the unbranded products. This means the potential in branded alcohol is still very big since there is a very big portion of the untapped market and the challenge is for beer companies in South Western Uganda to come up with brand association strategies to create positive brand equity in the mind of consumers to access this market among those consumers who have not associated themselves with the branded alcohol. This study addresses the aforementioned weaknesses of previous research and attempted to fill the gaps left behind by previous conceptualizations of branding by investigating brand awareness as a new source of competitive advantage. The objective of this paper was to determine the effect of brand association on competitive advantage among beer products and producers in Kabale District in South Western Uganda. The findings of this study are important to existing and prospective alcoholic beer producers in Uganda, regulators of alcoholic products, and to future researchers. The producers of alcoholic products, for example, will understand how brand association drives competitive advantage. The findings will further enrich existing knowledge on brand association and competitive advantage as well as provide literature for future researchers on brand association and competitive advantage. This study investigated whether brand association from the customer level can lead to competitive advantage. The study surveyed among consumers of beer products in the District of Kabale. A part from the consumers of beer products, the study also drew from the sellers (wholesalers, distributors and retailers) of beer products operating in the District of Kabale.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Association and Competitive Advantage: Brand association ensures the organisation provides positive cues to their target segments, either through direct interaction with the target customers themselves, or indirectly through collaborations with external entities (Aaker, 2014). Brand association: associations triggered by a brand can be accessed on the basis of the five following indicators: (1) The extent to which a brand is able to retrieve associations from the consumers brain (2) The extent to which associations contribute to brand differentiation in relation to the competition. (3) The extent to which brand association create positive attitude/feelings. According to Kotler and Keller (2006) noted that brand associations consist of all brand-related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, attitudes and is anything linked in memory to a brand. Brand association as anything linked in memory to a brand (Tang and Hawley, 2009) and the most accepted aspect of brand equity (Fayrene and Lee, 2011). Consequently, Kotler and Keller (2015) claimed that brand associations are built by all brand related-thoughts, perceptions, feelings, images, experiences, beliefs and attitudes toward a brand. The discussions and analyses of study by Brian *et al.*, (2016), on

The Development of Brand Association Measures in Multiple Product Categories: New Findings and Implications for Goods and Service Brands merits further marketing research with respect to formulating an explanation of what factors contribute most to driving brand equity through tangible and intangible products. Aaker (2013) defines Brand Association as anything linked in memory to a brand. Accordingly, the more experiences a consumer has with the brand, the stronger the link will be. Aaker (2013) identifies five distinct ways in which associations can create value to both the organisation and its customers as depicted in Figure: 1. Aaker (2014) describes the five distinctive ways in which associations create value to the organisation and its customers as: firstly, helping customers to process and retrieve the large amount of information about the brand, especially during decision-making, and to assist organisations to effectively communicate to its customers; secondly, to differentiate the brand from its competitors within a product class when the competing brands are not easily distinguishable by most consumers (i.e. food and beverage products); thirdly, to link associations that involve product attributes or benefits to customers to provide reasons to buy or use the brand and to create a specific basis for purchase decision and Brand Loyalty; fourthly, to use associations that stimulate positive feelings during purchase or use experience which can then be transferred to the brand (i.e. likable symbols/characters or good ambience); and lastly, to link associations that fit between the brand and new products by providing reasons to buy or use the extension.



Source: Aaker (2013), Wong, (2013)

Figure 1. The value of brand association

Chen (2001) categorized two types of brand associations that is product associations and organizational associations (Fayrene and Lee, 2011). Product associations include functional attribute associations and non-functional associations. Functional attributes are the tangible features of a product; while evaluating a brand, consumers link the performance of the functional attributes to the brand (Fayrene and Lee, 2011). If a brand does not perform the functions for which it is designed, the brand has low level of brand equity (Cheing, 2011). Non-functional attributes include symbolic attributes which are the intangible features that meet consumer's needs for social approval, personal expression or self-esteem. Organizational associations include corporate ability associations, which are those associations related to the company's expertise in producing and delivering its outputs and corporate social responsibility associations, which include organization's activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations (Fayrene and Lee, 2011)

To achieve the objective of this study, the following hypothesis was tested:

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of Brand Association on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products in Kabale District.

METHODS

This study was conducted using primary data. The primary data were collected self-administered questionnaires distributed to producers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers of alcoholic beverages in Kabale District, Uganda. The questionnaire was selected as an instrument to collect the data because it is straight forward and less time consuming for respondents. The questionnaires were structured and were administered through drop and pick later method. The target population of the study was the locally 1783 including wholesalers, retailers, customers and brand and marketing managers of Nile Special Lager, Eagle Lager, Senator Extra Lager and club beer products in the Kabale District. The sample size was determined using the Slovene’s formula below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(0.05)^2}$$

Where
 Where; n=sample size;
 N=target population;
 0.05 level of significance.

Therefore with the target population of 1783 (N)

$$n = \frac{1783}{1 + 1783(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1783}{1 + 4.5}$$

n= 324

The sample size was 324 respondents

Therefore the minimum sample size chosen in this study was 324 respondents. Multistage sampling techniques were used in this study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select alcoholic beverages products and producers. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to sample shopping center to collect consumer information. Shopping centers were selected based on a marketing investigation. The choice criterion was that the clubs/bars more than 20 customers per day. A total of 84 hotels, restaurants and bars were chosen for the study and in each of the hotels, restaurants, clubs and bars, 2 customers and 1 manager were chosen for the survey. This is in line with Nworgu (1991) who stated that no fixed number is ideal, rather it is the circumstances of the study situation that determine what number or what percentage of the population that should be studied.

Validity of research instrument: To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, expert opinion and content validity index (CVI) were used. The instrument was validated by four experts: Two experts in measurement and evaluation and two content experts. The four experts measured the face validity of the instrument, ensuring that the item/statements addressed the research purposes and questions, as well as the adequacy of the constructs used in the questionnaire. All their criticisms,

corrections and suggestions gave birth to the final copy of the instrument used for data collection. The content validity index (CVI) was computed to determine the content validity of the instrument. Amin (2005) notes that the overall CVI for the instrument should be calculated by computing the average of the instrument and for the instrument to be accepted as valid the average index should be 0.70 or above. The CVI was computed in equation below. The CVI was estimated as follows:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of questions declared valid}}{\text{Total number of questions}}$$

$$CVI = \frac{79}{84}$$

CVI = 0.94

A CVI value of 0.94 is greater than 0.7 minimum CVI required for a valid instrument. Hence the instrument is valid.

Reliability of research instrument: In order to ensure that the research instrument is reliable and can consistently produce reliable data when administered, the researcher adopted are test-retest, split half and Cronbach’s alpha. The test-retest reliability method measures the stability of the research instrument. It intends to determine the extent to which a measure, procedure or instrument yields the same result on repeated trials. This was done by administering the research instrument twice on the same set of respondents at different times. The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents. Same instrument was re-administered to the respondents after two weeks. Data collected from the two intervals were estimated with correlation coefficients (Pearson *r*). Hence a reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained and presented below. This indicates that the instrument was reliable for the study. According to Maduabum (2004), an instrument is considered reliable when it has a coefficient ranging from 0.60-0.99. Split-half method measures the internal consistency of the instrument. In this method, research instrument was split into two equivalent halves and the test score correlated together (Oyerinde, 2011). This study employed split halves method to measure the degree to which the items that made up the scale were all measuring the same essential attribute. This was estimated with correlation coefficients (Pearson *r*) and Cronbach’s coefficient alpha. Correlation coefficients range from 0.00 to 1.00. Correlation coefficient of 0.00 means no correlation, while correlation coefficient of 1.00 means perfect correlation. The results of the split-half presented in Table 1 indicate that the instrument was reliable for the study. Similar to the test re-test and split-half methods, Cronbach’s coefficient alpha is the measure of scale’s internal consistency. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient greater than 0.7, is commonly acceptable, as a rule of thumb, as internal consistency of research instrument. As can be seen in the results of the reliability tests presented in Table 1, the Cronbach’s

Results of reliability tests for the survey scale

Number	Type of Reliability Test	Value	Remarks
1	Cronbach’s Alpha	0.929	Very Reliable
2	Split-half	Part 1 =0.886 Part 2 =0.884	Very Reliable
3	Correlation Between Forms	0.870	Very Reliable
4	Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length=0.824	Very Reliable
5	Guttman Split-half	0.823	Very reliable

Source: Field Study 2017

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response rate and demographic characteristics of respondents: Response rate is usually conducted to ascertain the percentage of the targeted respondents that actually responded to the questionnaire. From the results presented in Table 2, notice that out 324 targeted respondents who were given questionnaires, 312 of them filled and returned the questionnaires. This represents a response rate of 96%. This percentage was considered high and good enough to represent the target population, given the busy schedule of the targeted population. This high response rate was achieved due to marking-up of the minimum sample size by 20% (64), which resulted in distributing 388 questionnaires. The essence of the mark-up is to minimize the problem associated with non-return of questionnaire by some respondents. The questionnaires returned from the field were assessed and found to be duly completed for use in this study.

Response Rate

Targeted respondents	Actual respondents	Responses as percentage of targeted respondents
324	312	96%

Source: Response rate analysis (2017)

The study presents the demographic profiles of the respondents below. From below notice that majority of the respondents were males with 80.1%, and 19.93% of the respondents were females. The gender of respondents shows that more males consume alcoholic beverages in Kabale, Western Uganda. It also shows that the finding of the study does not suffer from gender bias.

Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	250	80.1
Female	62	19.9
Total	312	100

Source: Demographic analysis of respondents (2017)

Notice also, from the Table below, that that majority of the respondents were aged between 36 – 45 years of age (37.8%), followed by those aged between 46–55 (26.3%). The least of the respondent were those aged between 18 – 24 years (4.5%). These indicate that the respondents were adults. Ages of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-24	14	4.5
25-35	73	23.4
36-45	118	37.8
46-55	82	26.3
55 and above	25	8.0
Total	312	100

Source: Demographic analysis of respondents (2017)

The study requested the respondents to indicate their level of education. Notice from the Table below that diploma education is the level of education with the highest response rate. From the table, 36.2% of the respondents indicated their highest education level as diploma. This is followed by bachelors and certificate education, with 30.8% and 17.3% respectively. The respondents with masters’ degree are the least sampled with 5.1% response rate. Table 2 indicates that all of the respondents sampled in this study have formal education.

Level of Education of Respondents

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
high school	33	10.6
Certificate	54	17.3
Diploma	113	36.2
Bachelors	96	30.8
Masters	16	5.1
Total	312	100

Source: Demographic analysis of respondents (2017)

Data was collected from the respondent on their beer brand. From the Table below, see that majority of the respondents take Nile beer (29.5%), closely followed by Club beer with respondents rate of 27.9%. The least brand of alcohol consumption according to the respondents was local beer with a 9.3% response rate. These imply that Nile beer is the favorite for respondents sampled. The lowest respondents were local beer with a 9.3% response rate. These imply that Nile beer is the favorite for respondents sampled.

Beer Brand of Respondents

Beer brand	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Eagle	70	22.4
Nile	92	29.5
Club	87	27.9
Senator	34	10.9
Bell	29	9.3
Total	312	100

Source: Demographic analysis of respondents (2017)

Descriptive statistics for brand Association on competitive advantage among beer products in Kabale district

The table below shows the descriptive statistics of the brand association and competitive advantage variable of alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district in South Western Uganda. As shown in the Table below, the average and standard deviation of brand association(3.5) and The corresponding standard deviations are 0.4 indicate minimal variability from the mean responses. Skewness and kurtosis represent the nature of departure from normal distribution. In a normally distributed variable, skewness is zero (0) and kurtosis is three (3). Positive or negative skewness indicate asymmetry in the variables and kurtosis coefficient greater than or less than 3 suggest peakedness or flatness of the data (Decarlo, 1997). The skewness values for the brand association (0.04) and competitive advantage (0.05), are close to zero. These imply that variables of this study are approximation of normal distribution. The implication is that there are normal changes in the variable as predicted by normal distribution. Similar to skewness, the kurtosis coefficients for all the variables are approximately 3, thus provide support for normal distribution in the variables (Wilcox and Keselman, 2003).

Descriptive statistics for brand Association variables and competitive advantage among alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, South Western Uganda

Variable	Mean	Std Dev.	Kurtosis	Skewness
Brand Association	3.5302	.42265	3.035	.048
Competitive Advantage	3.6355	.36519	3.856	.057

Source: author’s computation (2018)

Analysis of Multicollinearity in Brand Association Variables Multicollinearity exists whenever two or more of the predictors in a regression model are moderately or highly correlated. It is a state of very high intercorrelations or inter-associations

among the independent variables. It is therefore a type of disturbance in the data, and if present in the data the statistical inferences made about the data may not be reliable (Gujarati, 2003). In the presence of high multicollinearity, the confidence intervals of the coefficients tend to become very wide and the statistics tend to be very small. It becomes difficult to reject the null hypothesis of any study when multicollinearity is present in the data under study (Tsay, 2005). The presence of multicollinearity in study was evaluated using Tolerance levels and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The decision rule for the Tolerance level is to accept absence of multicollinearity if the tolerance level is greater than 0.5. Similarly, there is absence of multicollinearity if the VIF is less than 3. Notice from the Table 4.8 that the Tolerance level is greater than 0.5 in the variable of association equity, and the intervening variables (price level and product innovation). These indicate evidence of absence of multicollinearity in the predictor variables. Similarly, coefficients of the VIF are less than 3 for all brand equity variables. Hence, provide support for the absence of multicollinearity shown by the Tolerance level. Consequently, there is no existence of multicollinearity in the predictor variable. They are therefore good for empirical analysis.

Collinearity Statistics

Construct	Tolerance	VIF
BrandAssociation	0.704	1.419

Source: author's computation (2018)

Inferential Analysis of the Effect of Brand Association on Competitive Advantage among Alcoholic Beer Products and Producers in Kabale District, South Western Uganda

The F-statistics indicate that all coefficients (that is brand equity variables, price level, and product innovation), excluding constant, are not zero. This is evident in the p-value (0.00) of f-statistics is less than the critical value (0.00). Standard error of estimate represents the imprecision of the regression equation in fitting the data. The closer the coefficient of standard error of estimates to zero, the better and more reliable the analysis. From Table 4.9, coefficient of standard error of estimates is close to zero (0.01). This suggests that the regression equation is properly fitted the data. More so, the Durbin-Watson coefficient (1.97) indicates that there is absence of serial correlation in the residual of the regression estimate. This is because the Durbin-Watson value is near to 2.

Variable	B	Std. error	t-stat.	p-value
Brand Association	0.114	0.063	1.809	0.071

R=0.75; R²=0.67; Std. error=0.01; Durbin-Watson=1.97; F(7, 304) = 16.24 [0.00]

Source: author's computation (2018)

Effects of Brand Association on Competitive Advantage among Alcoholic Beer Products and Producers in Kabale District, South Western Uganda

The results of the regression model estimates of the effect of brand association on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda. Notice from Table the table below that although brand association has positive effect on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda, the effect is not significant at the 5% percent significance level. This is evident in the coefficient of the t-

statistic (1.809) being less than the theoretical t-statistic (1.96), and the p-value (0.07) being above the significance level (0.05). It worthy to note however that, at the 10% percent significance level, brand association has positive effect on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda.

Results of brand association and competitive advantage among alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, South Western Uganda

Variable	Coefficient	T-Statistics	Significance
Brand Association	0.114	1.809	0.071

Source: author's computation (2018)

H₀₂ Brand Association does not significantly affect competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda.

Decision: The findings presented above provide support for H₀₂ stated in Section 1.6, since the calculated t-statistic (1.809) of the brand association coefficient is less than the critical t-statistic at the 5% significance level (± 1.960). Similarly, p-value of the effect of brand association on competitive advantage (0.07) is greater than the significance level (0.05), and thus indicates evidence in support null hypothesis 2. This implies that brand Association does not significantly affect competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda. Hence, we do not reject the null hypothesis of no significant effect of brand Association on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda at the 5% significance level. Consequently, H₀₂ is not rejected.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of brand association on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda

The study set up to determine the effect of brand association on competitive advantage among alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda and this was done through testing the second hypothesis (H₀₂): Brand Association does not significantly affect competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda. The results of the regression model on the effect of brand association on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda indicates that although brand association has positive effect on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda, the effect is not significant at the 5% percent significance level. This led to the non rejection of null hypothesis of no significant effect of brand Association does not significantly affect competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda at the 5% significance level. It worthy to note however that, at the 10% percent significance level, brand association has positive effect on competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products and producers in Kabale district, south western Uganda. These results are not consistent with findings reported on brand association in previous studies as supported below. According to the study conducted by Dina (2017), the findings

confirm that brand association was a strong dimension influencing brand equity. The results of that study by Dina (2017) show that Hypothesis 1 is supported, as brand association was found to positively impact on brand equity ($\beta=0.328$; t value 2.818; $p < 0.05$). The findings on this objective of determining the relationship between brand association and competitive advantage among beer products in kabale district are also inconsistent with previous studies about the relationship between brand association and brand equity towards sportswear brands in Malaysia, (Sasmita, Jumiaty and Norazah Mohd Suki, 2015), research by Pouromid and Iranzadeh (2012) among Iranian female consumer of household products and research by Atilgan et al (2005) among Turkey's beverage consumers also show that brand association has an impact on brand equity. The findings on this objective are also inconsistent with Talatu (2012), study on The Practicality and Application of Aaker's Customer Based Brand Equity Model in the Nigerian Banking Sector which suggest that banks should manage strong and unique brand associations to engender favorable feelings and continued loyalty to products in order to sustain competitive advantages. The findings on this objective are contrary to previous research on brand associations and its value outcome and shows that brand awareness of beer products in Kabale district are not sufficient for creating and sustaining competitive advantage in beer products. However, at the 10% significance level, the finding agrees with extant literature on brand awareness and competitive advantage.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The researcher concludes that consumers of beer products in Kabale district do not attach much association with the beer brands and hence the levels of associations both positive and negative are very low in Kabale district among beer brands. Based on the results and discussion of this research, the researcher recommends that brand managers should prioritize brand equity elements as their strategy to attract potential customers because it does show significant relationships with competitive advantage. The results on the effects of brand association on competitive advantage indicated no positive effect and based on this finding the researcher recommends that brand managers should focus their marketing communications on the experiential benefits of their product such as fun, excitement, and enjoyment in order to create positive associations in the minds of beer consumers. The study recommends that beer producers and Brand managers should further develop their brand equity by focusing on activities that will aim at improving their brand association profile in order to achieve competitive advantage because the findings indicate that brand association do not effect competitive advantage in alcoholic beer products in kabale district. The researcher recommends brand managers to move false loyalty customers, those who are prone to competitive promotion and new products, to a higher level of bonding with the brand through socio-psychological ties and engaging customers in more corporate-sponsored activities.

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