

Cigarette Brand Preference amongst University students in the Greater eThekweni Metropolitan area

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Abstract

This article focuses on cigarette brand preference amongst University students in the Greater eThekweni Metropolitan area. Due to the fact that the cigarette industry is now in a maturity stage of the product life cycle, it is important to know the factors which influence cigarettes brand preferences. This research is on cigarette brand preference amongst University students. The research will be done in the KwaZulu Natal Province. It will focus on Universities in the greater eThekweni Metropolitan area. The aims of the study are to identify if brand popularity has any effect cigarette brand preference, to determine if price has any effect, if packaging affects cigarette brand preference and also to analyse the availability of cigarette brands on the university. This research was a quantitative and exploratory in nature. There were 30 respondents who participated. The majority of the respondents (67%) were males and they agreed that brand popularity, price, packaging, availability and motivation had a positive impact towards their brand preference of cigarettes.

Keywords: Brand, brand preference, brand popularity, price, packaging

1. Introduction

According to Steyn (2012: 1) the cigarette industry in South Africa is now a mature industry and the cigarette as a product is in the declining stage because many people are now becoming health conscious that is why there is less consumption of cigarettes. The cigarette industry is facing a big challenge from illegal traders who sell illicit cigarettes. The cigarette industry is highly monitored by regulatory bodies especially on their promotional and branding activities so that they discourage young people from smoking.

It is important to research on brand preferences and factors which influence the preferences so that retailers and manufacturers can use this information on promotions and selling the product. Brand preference is when customers choose a brand over all the other brands available because

he or she has a habit or a favourable past experience over that brand (Perreault, Cannon and McCarthy 2014: 207). They are a number of factors which influence brand preference among university students like price, packaging, advertising, distribution and brand popularity.

2. Literature review

Brand preference is when consumers choose a brand over all the other brands available because he or she has a habit or a favourable past experience over that brand (Perreault *et al.* 2014: 207). According to Lamb, Hail, Mcdaniel, Boshoff and Teblanche (2012: 221) states that brand preference is when a consumer often buys a brand before other consumers buy because of a habit or fulfilment use of the brand in the past. Cigarette is a habit forming product so once a student buys a certain brand they may end up preferring that brand over other brands.

Brand preference is a stage of brand loyalty on which consumers will want a brand and being loyal that brand if it is available (Product and pricing strategies 2013). It is a powerful degree of brand loyalty. Consumers will prefer certain brands among competitor brands available. However, if the preferred brand is not available, consumers tend to buy other brands available and not search for the brand they prefer (Hult, Pride and Ferrell 2012: 368).

According to Kurtz (2012: 379) brand preference is the second level of brand loyalty, consumers usually depend on their past experiences there have with the product when there want to choose it again. There will only choice that same brand if it is available over competitor's brands.

From the offerings above brand preference is a level of brand loyalty. The authors agreed that when consumers prefer certain brands they will only buy those when they are available and if these brands are not available consumers will buy other available brands.

Factors which determine brand preference

Brand preference is affected by a number of things which influence consumers on which products they will use. In this research university students who smoke are affected by a number of things which influence the brand of cigarette that they smoke. The following factors influence the brand that students prefer smoking, race and ethnicity, gender, age, advertising, packaging, consumer preference tastes and referral groups (Kristinsdottir 2010: 1).

Price is the total cost of having a product. It includes the buying price, the cost of using the new product over using the old product (Blythe 2010: 410). Price is that which the consumer must offer to get the advantages which are given by the business marketing mix (Perreault *et al.* 2010:408). According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 405) price is one of the marketing mix

components which bring income to the business while all the other bring costs. Price is not only a number but is made up of many things.

Brand popularity is the size of buyers who know the brand. Brand popularity is increased by word of mouth. The stronger the word of mouth towards a brand the more the brand becomes popular. However bad information towards a brand reduces its popularity or it causes negative brand popularity (Winther 2011: 7).

If a brand is not good and well popular, even if the product is of good quality the preference of consumers will be affected. Consumers prefer popular brands and they usually prefer these brands over the unpopular brands. Consumers when they are buying they combine brand names with the product that they will be buying. A popular brand on a good packaging usually influences the consumer preference and increases consumer impulse buying (Laforet 2011: 21).

3. Methodology

This study was quantitative and explanatory in nature. It was conducted with 30 respondents from Kwazulu Natal in South Africa. 10 respondents were from University of Kwazulu Natal, 10 from Durban University of Technology and 10 from Mangosuthu University of Technology. 30 individuals who are smokers and ex-smokers participated in the study. Probability sampling was used. Participants were selected using stratified sampling. This was the most appropriate method because it increases the accuracy of the study and is used when the target population is not the same. Self-administered questionnaires were given to 30 students. The questionnaire was designed using closed and open ended questions on people's demographics, questions based on the title, objectives and the problem statement of the study. The questionnaire had a likert scale and dichotomous questions.

4. Results

Table 1: Biographical information

Characteristic	Percentage
Gender	
Males	67
Females	33
Age	
17-19	17

20-22	30
23-25	33
26-28	20
29+	0
Race	
African	40
White	7
Coloured	3
Asian/Indian	50

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents (67%) were males and 33% were females. With regards to age, the majority of the respondents (33%) were in the age group 23-25, 30% were in the age 20-22, 20% were 26-28 and for 17-19 age groups it was 17%. There were no respondents for over 29 years. The majority of the respondents were Asian (50%), Africans were 40%, Whites 7% and Coloured 3%.

Figure 1: Area where respondents stay

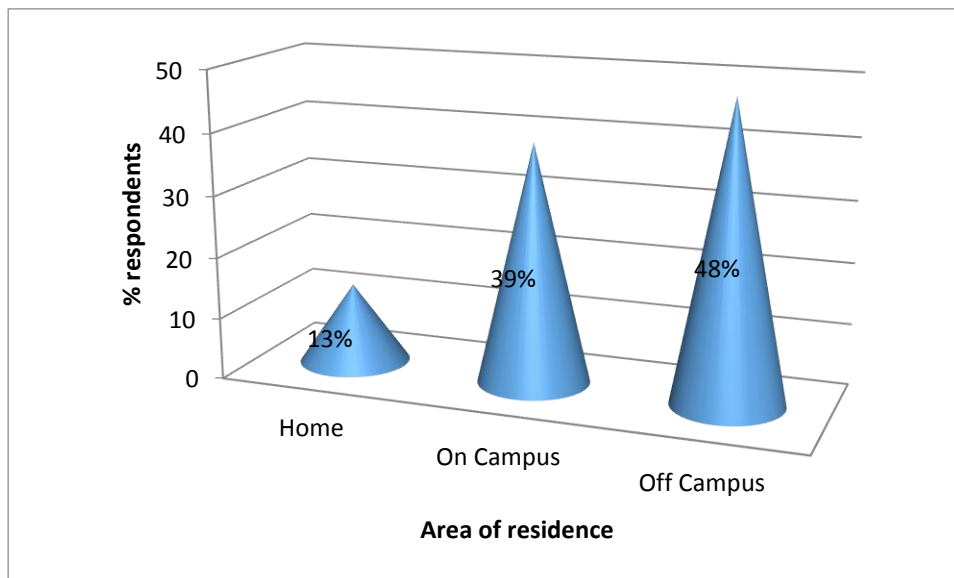
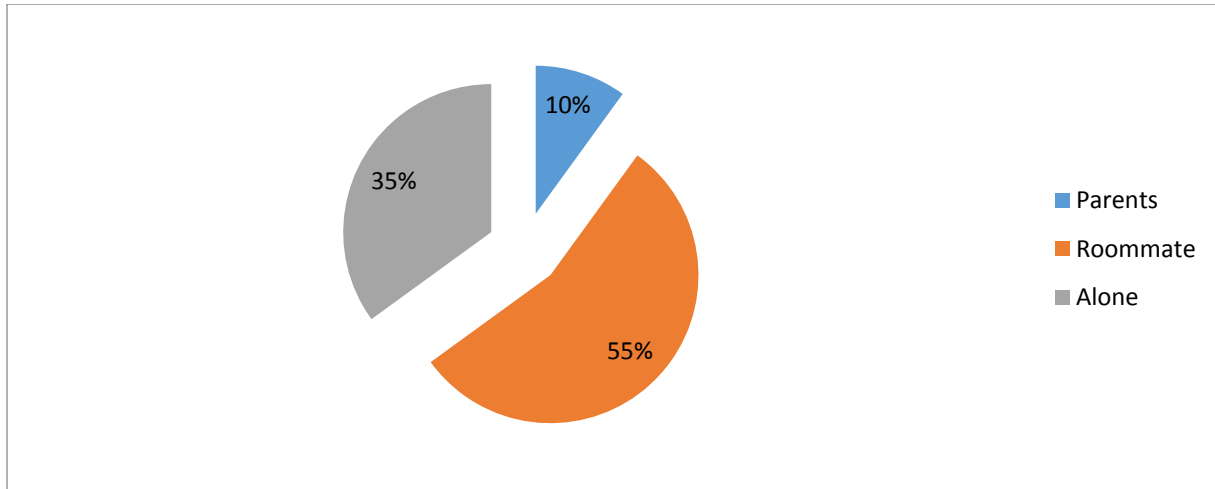


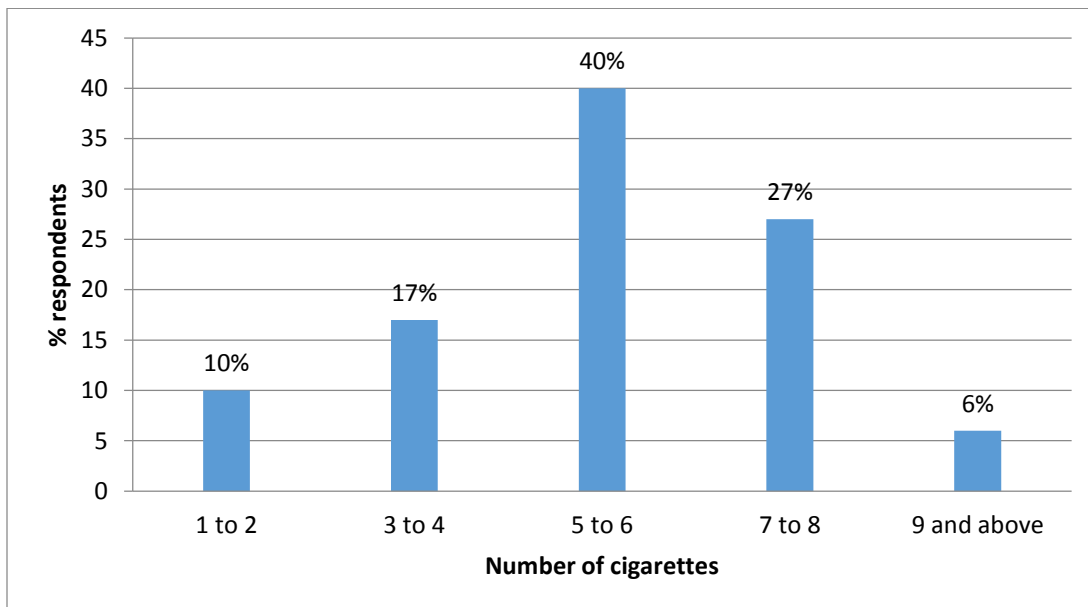
Figure I shows that 13% stay at home, 39% stay on school campus and 48% stay at residences but outside campus. The highest percent of students who smoke are those who stay at residences outside campus while the lowest is of those who stay at home. This implies that more students who stay off campus smoke cigarettes.

Figure 2: Respondents opinion of who they stay with



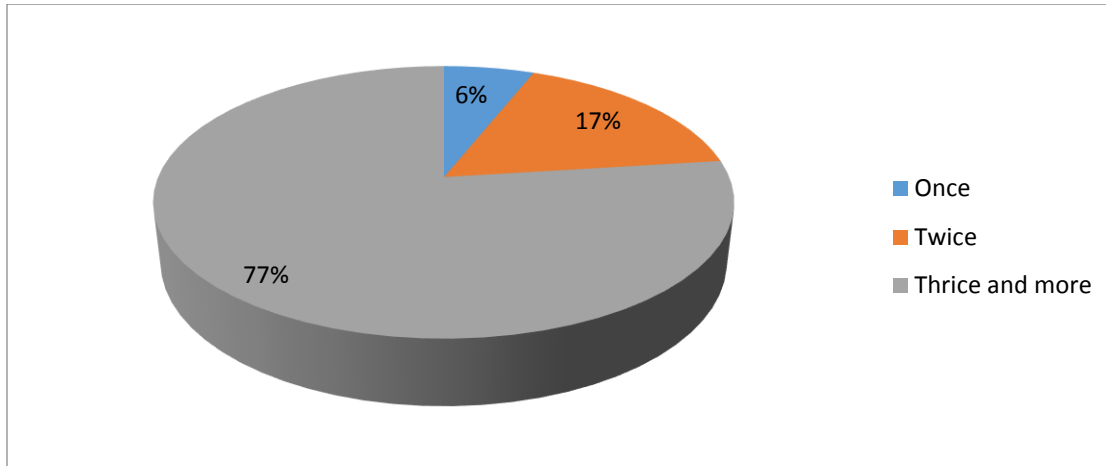
From the pie chart above 35% stay with alone, 10% stay with parents and 55% stay with a roommate. The highest percent of students who smoke cigarettes are those who stay with a roommate while those who stay with parents have the lowest. This implies that reference group impact students on smoking.

Figure 3: Cigarette usage rate



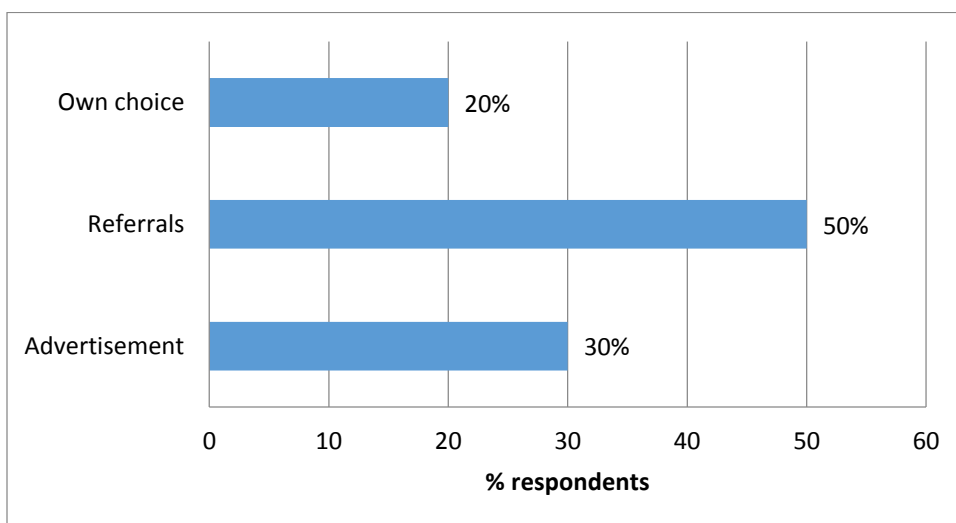
The sample showed that those who smoke 1 to 2 cigarettes are 10%, 3 to 4 cigarettes are 17%, 5 to 6 cigarettes are 40%, 7 to 8 cigarettes are 27% and 9 and above cigarettes are 6%. The highest percent of students are those who smoke 5 to 6 cigarettes. This implies that most students smoke a number of cigarettes and it is rare for them to smoke few cigarettes.

Figure 4: Number of times respondents purchase cigarettes per week



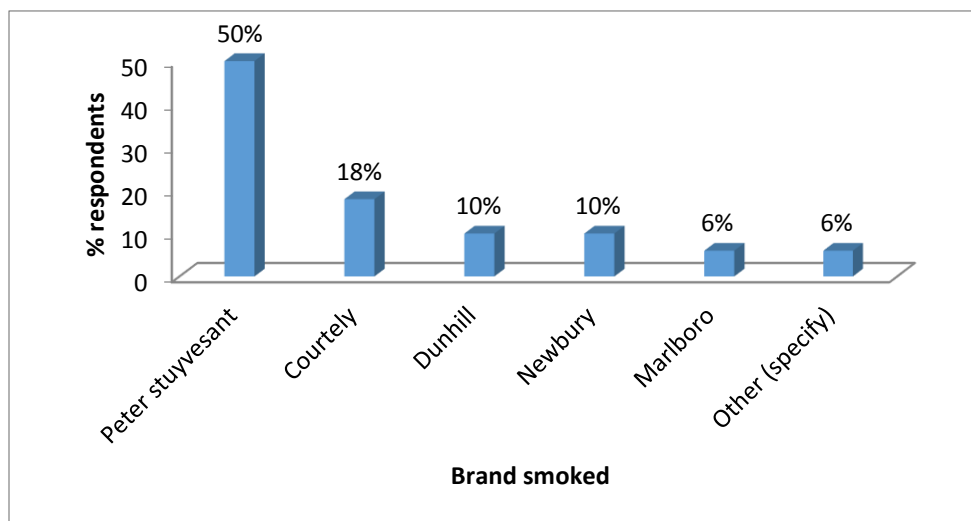
77% purchase cigarettes thrice and more times, 6% purchase once and 17% purchase twice. The highest rate at which students purchase cigarettes is thrice and more times a week while the lowest is once. This implies that students purchase cigarettes many times in a week and it shows that addiction influences the frequency and quantity they purchase student cigarette preference (Wu, Colson and Shonkwiler 2013: 10).

Figure 5: Motivation to smoke



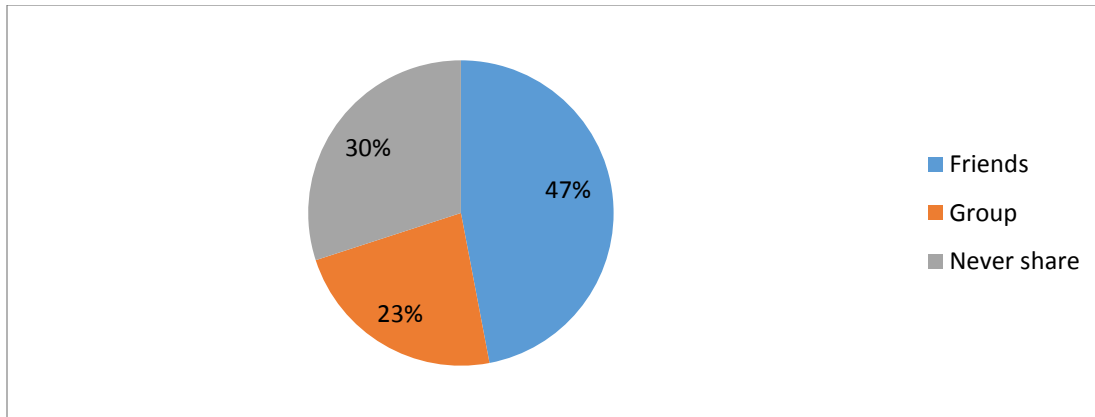
20% were motivated by their own choice, 50% were motivated by referrals and 30% by advertisement. The highest percent of respondents were motivated by referrals. This shows that most students who smoked are being referred, told or follow someone especially friends or close people around them that motivates them. Basak (2013: 52) also adds to the fact that reference groups motivate students into smoking.

Figure 6: Brand respondents smoke



50% smoke Peter Stuyvesant, 18% Courtely, 10% Dunhill, 10% smoke Newbury, 6% smoke Marlboro and 6% other. The highest percent of students smoke Peter Stuyvesant, this implies that brand name impacts the choice of cigarette that students smoke.

Figure 7: Cigarette sharing



The pie chart above shows that 47% students shares their cigarettes with friends, 30% never share their cigarettes with anyone and 23% share in a group. The results show that most students shares with their friends rather than in a group. This implies that friends influence the choice, type and number of cigarettes one smokes.

Figure 8: Package design consideration

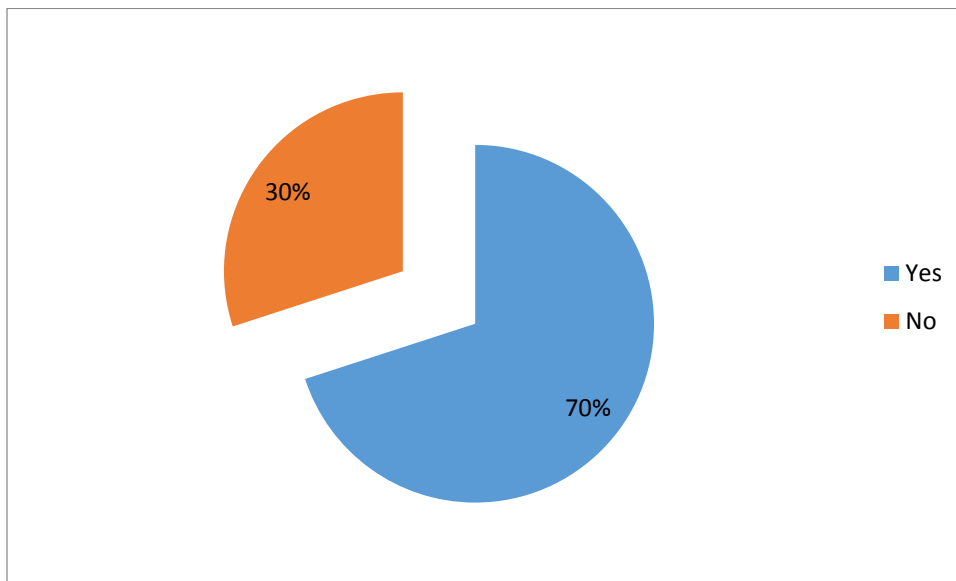
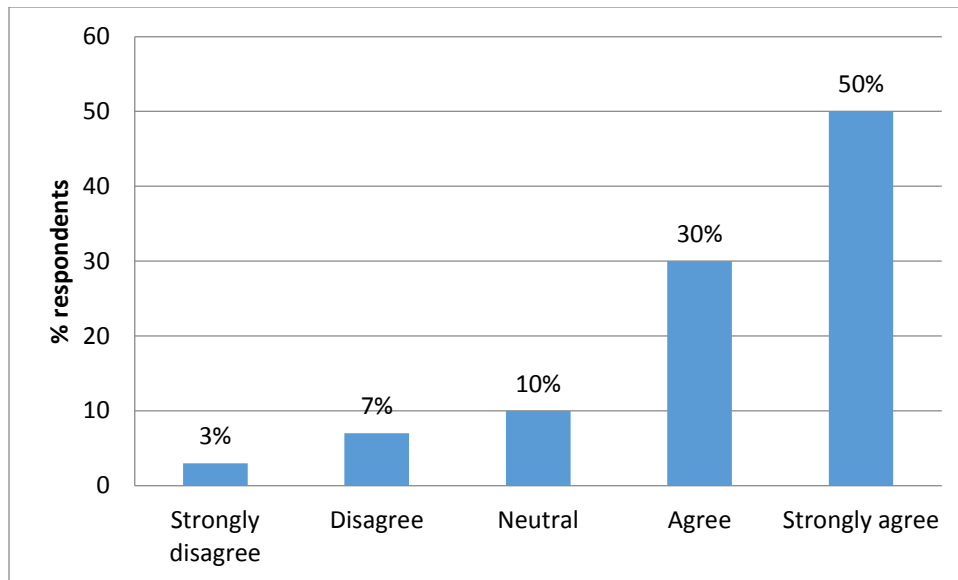


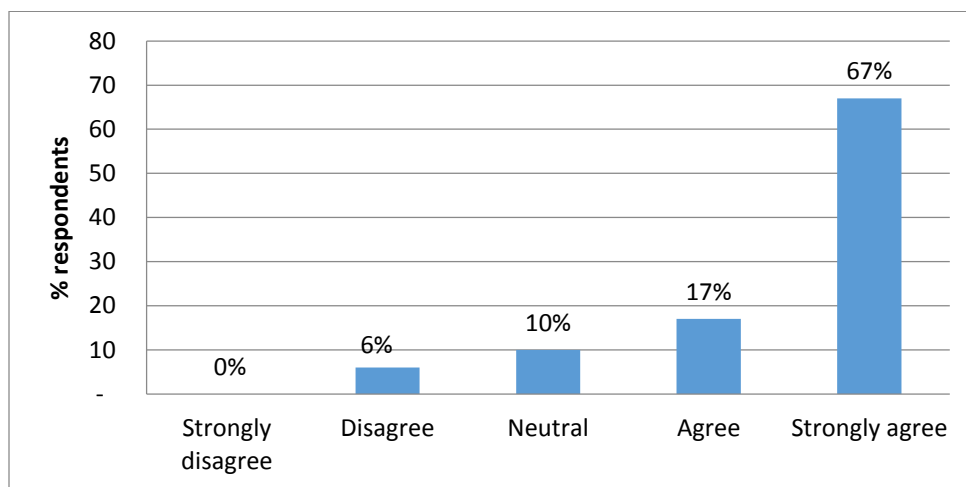
Figure 8 above indicates that 70% of the respondents said yes they considered package design and 30% said no. This implies that many students when purchasing or choosing their cigarettes they look at the design of the package; that is the colour, shape and size of the packet.

Figure 9: Availability of cigarettes



3% strongly disagree, 7% disagreed, 10% were neutral, 30% agreed and 50% strongly agreed that cigarettes were always available in cafeterias, at vendors and in kiosk. The highest number of respondents strongly agreed that cigarettes are always available. This implies that the availability of cigarettes at the universities is good and it impacts the number of cigarettes the students smoke.

Figure 10: Price of cigarettes



6% disagreed, 10% were neutral, 17% agree, 67% strongly agreed and 0% strongly disagreed to that they consider prices when buying cigarettes. The highest percent of student strongly agreed to the fact that they consider prices when buying cigarettes. This implies that price affect the choice of cigarettes that students buy.

Figure 11: Brand name of cigarette

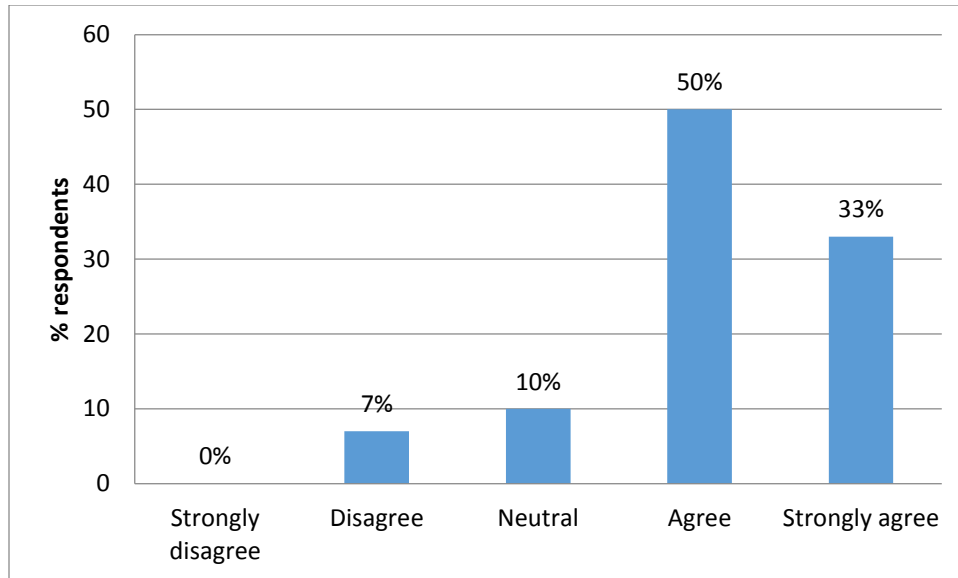
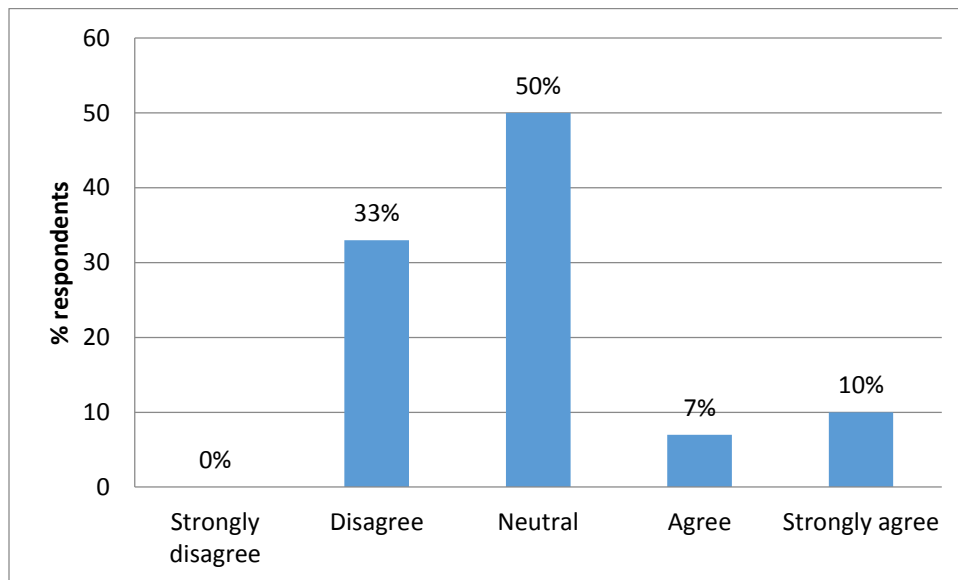
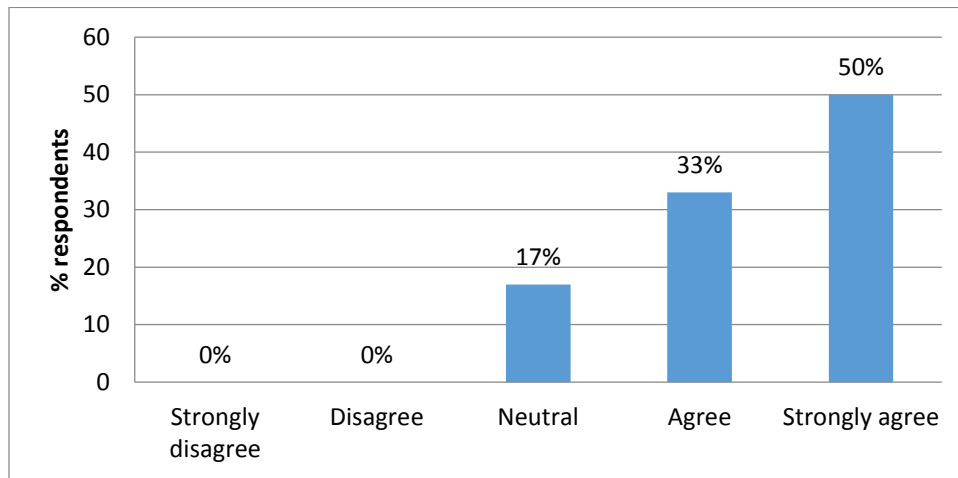


Figure 11 shows that 7% disagree, 10% were neutral, 50% agreed, 33% strongly agreed and 0% strongly disagreed that they consider brand name when buying cigarettes. The highest percentages of students agreed that they consider brand name when they purchase cigarettes. This implies that brand name affect the choice of cigarettes that students prefer.

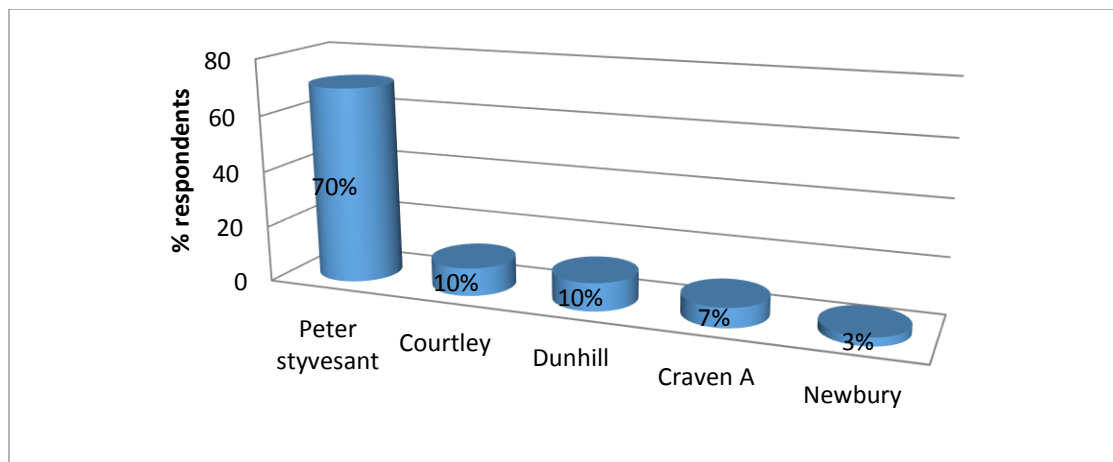
Figure 12: Location where the students purchase



From the sample 7% disagreed to the fact that they consider place when buying cigarettes. 50% were neutral, 33% agreed, 10% strongly agreed and 0% strongly disagreed. The highest percent of respondents were neutral, this implies that 50% just buy cigarettes wherever they are available they are not worried about considering a certain area to purchase, while 33% disagreed to the fact that consider the place they buy since cigarette is a convenient product.

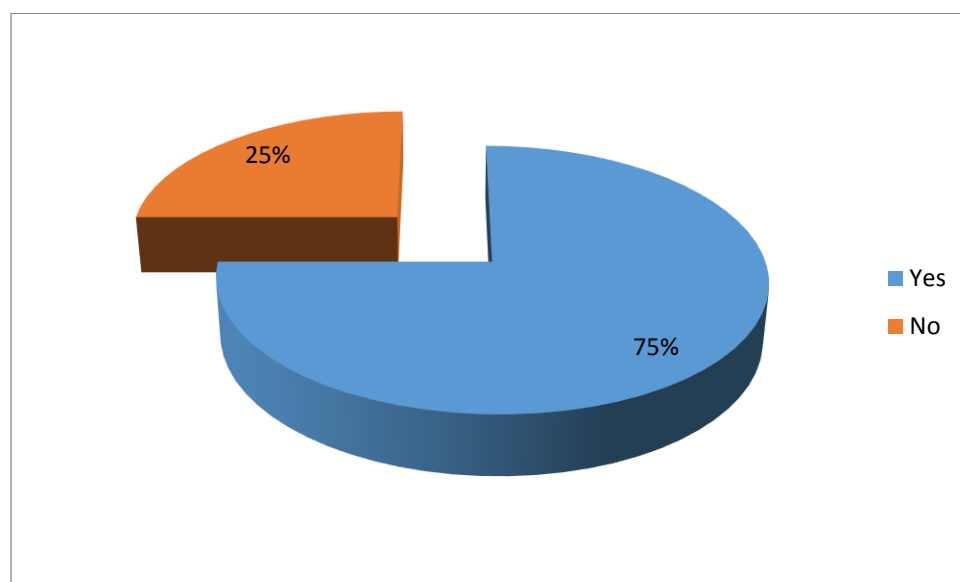
Figure 13: Taste of cigarette brand

The results shows that 17% respondents are neutral, 33% agree and 50% strongly agree. It also shows that there were no respondents who strongly disagreed and disagreed to the fact that they consider taste when choosing a brand. This implies that most students when they select the brand they prefer, they consider the taste of the brand because brands have different tastes.

Figure 14: Cigarette popularity

70% respondents consider Peter Stuyvesant as the most popular cigarette, 10% consider Courtely and Dunhill while 7% consider Craven A and 3% Newbury. This implies that since most students smoke Peter Stuyvesant, they also consider it popular.

Figure 15: Brand popularity



The results shows that 75% respondents consider brand popularity when buying cigarettes while 25% respondents said no. This implies that brand popularity is one of the factors which influence students' buying decision of cigarettes.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of the respondents were males and were from the 22-24 age range. The study showed that 75% of the students consider the popularity of the cigarette that they smoked. Most of the students' decision was affected the price of the cigarette that they smoked. 70% of the respondents said that the packaging of the cigarette had a great influence on the choice that they made. The cigarettes were available in cafeterias, vendors and kiosk which affected the number of cigarette a student can have. The results showed that 20% of the respondents motivated themselves to start smoking. However, 50% were motivated by referrals especially from their friends and peers.

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