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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONSUMER PREFERENCES IN " MAQUIS " IN ABIDJAN (COTE D'IVOIRE)

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ABSTRACT

The need for retail brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors by influencing consumer loyalty has elevated the perceived atmosphere at the point of sale into a strategic variable. Through this research, we try to highlight the preferences of consumers in the maquis(points of sale of beverages to consume on the spot) in Abidjan. The research was conducted using a mixed method: firstly, we conducted a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews in the municipality of Yopougon (Abidjan). Then, we made a quantitative study by questioning through a questionnaire, 800 consumers in the outlets of beverages to consume on the spot in Abidjan (the ten communes of the city) and we ended with in-depth interviews with consumers by compared to the results obtained. The results of this research indicate that consumers who visit Abidjan's beverage outlets are relatively young men from all sectors of activity. They go there more than a day a week, at least four times a month. Regarding the types of outlets, it appears that consumers prefer much more maquis (on the open air maquis) and cellars. As for the types of drinks, the study indicates that the majority of consumers prefer beers and wines in these beverage outlets.

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INTRODUCTION

The need for brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors and to retain customers by offering them pleasant shopping conditions has raised the point of sale atmosphere into a strategic variable (Lunardo et al., 2012). Thus, in distribution, the point-of-sale atmosphere has become a key variable in the perspective of differentiating competition (Basma et al., 2016). Indeed, distributors in all areas have difficulty in facing competition simply because of the mix-marketing, because they offer uniform offers both in terms of prices and the quality of products offered. In addition, to allow consumers to make their choices in a pleasant context, marketers seek to create a specific atmosphere of the store by combining different variables of the physical environment such as music, colors, design, lighting, scents, etc. (Lemoine, 2003). According to these authors, the atmosphere perceived at the point of sale has an influence on the purchasing behavior of the consumer. This influence could be used as a management strategy that enables outlets that make up small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to increase their profitability. Indeed, according to Anassé (2013), although these SMEs hold an

important place in the African economies because representing more than 98% of the universe of the companies in Africa, tens of thousands of SMEs perish each year because of their fragility. Also, Anassé (2007), he explains that in Côte d'Ivoire, the current management of maquis (traditional restaurants) is not always efficient, which very often leads to their early disappearance. This disappearance also affects establishments selling beverages to be consumed on site. Regarding the outlets for drinks to be consumed locally commonly called maquis in Ivory Coast, Kouadio (2016), indicates the existence of difficulties in this sector of activity. Indeed, according to him, several institutions are created, but many do not reach a year or perhaps even six months. This study could thus contribute to the resolution of these difficulties by a good manipulation of the atmosphere perceived in these outlets. So, the central question underlying this study is: what are the preferences of consumers in the maquis of Abidjan? The objective of this research is to highlight the preferences of consumers in the maquis in Abidjan. This work is organized around three points. The first step will be to define the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research, then to indicate the methodological approach of the work and at the end to present the results.

Conceptual and theoretical framework for research: In this section, it will first be necessary to clarify the main concepts of the research and then to indicate the theoretical foundations of this study.

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Main concepts of research: The main concepts of the research are the atmosphere of the point of sale, the loyalty of the consumer and the point of sale of drinks to consume on the spot (maquis).

Atmosphere of the point of sale: From an etymological point of view, the term atmosphere comes from the Greek atmos (vapor) and sphaira (sphere): it is the air that surrounds the sphere. Transposed to the store, the sphere represents the product with its intrinsic characteristics (packaging, price, etc.), and the atmosphere is composed of all the intangible elements that surround the sphere (Daucé and Rieunier, 2002). On the marketing front, Kotler (1973-1974) was one of the first to use the atmosphere as a marketing tool. Indeed, it encourages marketers to use the "aesthetic space" as skilfully as they do with price, advertising and public relations. He goes on to say that "the atmosphere is the effort to design purchasing environments that produce specific emotional effects for the buyer, which in turn increases the likelihood of buying".

Regarding this research, we have retained that the atmosphere of the point of sale consists of all the tangible and intangible elements mobilized by the distributor to provide an unforgettable experience to the consumer to promote the purchase and return of it.

Consumer loyalty: The concept of brand or brand loyalty is the focus of marketing specialists, given the pervasiveness of competition (Boyer and Nefzi, 2008). It is defined by Boyer and Nefzi (2008) as a continuous relationship established between the consumer and a brand or a sign, and which represents the expression of the continuous emotional relationship that binds a consumer to a brand and manifests itself in situations of purchase and consumption. We note for this study that consumer loyalty is explained by its desire to attend a point of sale drinks continuously for consumption on the spot following a pleasant experience lived in this place.

Main types of points for sale of beverages to be consumed in Abidjan: In this research, we call the point of sale of drinks, spaces whose main activity is the sale of drinks to be consumed generally on the spot. The sale of drink to consume on the spot in Ivory Coast is done in several types of spaces according to Kouadio (2016). Thus, we have the maquis, bars, cellars, and refreshments that constitute the population of these outlets.

Theoretical basis of research: On the theoretical level, we based ourselves on the situationist, empiricist and interactionist theories as proposed by Mucchielli and cited by Filser (1994), to allow a good understanding of the results. Concerning the situationist theory, it should be noted that according to this trend, consumer behavior is completely determined by external influences to the individual that are either material constraints (the availability of the product in the store usually used by the consumer, or its financial resources), normative social constraints that can encourage the individual to adopt behaviors that will be valued by the group (purchase of a prestigious brand). Then, according to the empiricist theory, the individual would be shaped by the experiences he experiences and the influence of his environment. Indeed, this current also explains the influence of the atmosphere of the point of sale on the behavior of the consumer, because the

atmosphere of the point of sale allows him to live an experience that will determine his decision to future purchase. For interactionist theory, the motivation of the individual arises from the meeting of a subject and an object whose characteristics interact. Thus, the behavior of an individual, at a given moment, is the product of the forces involved (negative or positive) in his psychological field; that is to say, his behavior is due to the perception he has of the atmosphere of the point of sale or the context in which it is located, therefore due to the confrontation between its environment and its cognitive state.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

In order to test our hypotheses empirically and develop conceptual scales of measurement, we adopted a mixed strategy. This strategy includes an exploratory phase and a confirmatory phase. The confirmatory phase, in the light of the results of the qualitative phase (Kouadio, 2016) was done through a quantitative study followed by in-depth interviews with consumers.

Choice of study field: This sector's study specifically distributes the sale of beverages to be consumed on site. Indeed, the sale of drinks to be consumed on the spot in Ivory Coast is done in several types of points of sale: the maquis, the bars, the cellars, and the refreshments (Kouadio, 2016). The city of Abidjan served as a framework for the study. Indeed, it concentrates 75% of outlets for drinks to be consumed locally at the national level (6538 out of a total of 8907) and 19.4% of the Ivorian population (RGPH, 2014).

Measurement of buildings: We generated items from existing scales of the literature (Donavan and Rossister, 1982, Cacioppo and Petty, 1982, Baker et al., 2002) and verbatim from the qualitative study (the diffusion of traditional-modern music (music made using traditional and modern instruments), the presence of food, the impression of safety, the cleanliness of the setting, the attractiveness of the staff, the affluence). Following the interviews, items specific to the language of the distribution of drinks were generated and supplemented by others drawn from the literature to be in harmony with the context of the sale of drinks.

The perception of the atmosphere at the point of sale was measured in three dimensions: atmosphere dimension (6 items), physical frame dimension (4 items) and social dimension (5 items). These dimensions have been adapted from the measurement scale of Baker et al. (2002) and also refer to the semi-directive interviews of the exploratory study. To evaluate the need for cognition, we used in reference to Renata (2009), the reduced version of the scale of Cacioppo and Petty (1982). This scale consists of 18 items. To measure consumer loyalty to the atmosphere of the point of sale of drinks to be consumed on site, we used a scale (3 items) adapted from Donavan and Rossiter (1982). The scales used are all 5-step Likert types ranging from strongly disagree to totally agree with a neutral point in the middle.

Collection of Data: An initial data collection was conducted with 20 consumers in the outlets to ensure that the respondents understood the items correctly. Following this pre-test, modifications and readjustments were made regarding the wording of the questions. Then, a second collection was conducted among 800 consumers in the outlets (bars,

refreshments, cellars, maquis) in the 10 municipalities of the city of Abidjan for 3 months. In-depth interviews were conducted with consumers following the results obtained for their explanation. These ten consumers are designated by CST.1, CST.2 ... CST10.

RESULTS

It is a question of indicating the typical profile of the consumptions, the preferences of the consumers when they go in the maquis, the manifestations of the preference of the consumers in the points of sale of drinks.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of sociodemographic variables

Variables	Workforce	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Sex			
Male	701	88.7	88.7
Female	89	11.3	100
Age			
[18-25 years]	96	12.2	12.2
[26-35 years]	328	41.5	53.7
[36-45 years]	281	35.6	89.2
[46-55 years]	59	7.5	96.7
[56 years old and more [26	3.3	100,0
Activity area			
Employee	157	19.9	19.9
Employed	305	38.7	58.6
Liberal activity	215	27.2	85.8
Others	112	14.2	100.0
Status			
In activity	667	84.5	84.5
In retirement	10	1.3	85.8
Unemployed	14	1.8	87.6
Others (student, students...)	98	12.4	100.0
Level of study			
No	8	1.0	1.0
Primary	66	8.4	9.4
Secondary	224	28.4	37.7
Superior	492	62.3	100.0
Civilstatus			
Single	492	62.3	62.3
Married	293	37.1	99.4
Divorced	3	0.4	99.7
Er / Widow	2	0.3	100.0

Source: developed by the author

Table 2. Average Frequency in Days in the Month of Consumers in Beverage Outlets

Number of visits (in days in the month)	3	4	5	6	8	10	12	14	15	16	18	20	25	30	T
Number of de consumers	1	72	8	22	189	121	218	5	75	19	2	30	16	12	790
Percentage (%)	0.1	9.1	1	2.8	23.9	15.3	27.6	0.6	9.5	2.4	0.2	3.8	2	1.5	100

Source: developed by the author

The typical profile of consumers: In this sub-section, we present the typical consumer profile, the percentages of consumer frequency in beverage outlets and consumer preferences in terms of types of outlets and types of drinks consumed. The results show that more than 85% of the respondents who frequent the points of sale of drinks to consume on the spot are men. On the other hand, women account for a small proportion, less than 15%. The analysis of the age variable reveals that about 90% of the respondents who frequent the points of sale of drinks to be consumed on the spot are less than 45 years against 10% who are advanced in the age. Thus, among respondents under age 45, about 60% are between the ages of 18 and 35, that is, young people, and nearly 40% are between the ages of 36 and 45. This shows that the population attending drinks outlets is relatively young. This could influence the strategies developed by the managers of these beverage outlets to attract customers.

Regarding the sector of activity, we note that 39% of the respondents are employees (private sector workers), after come those exercising liberal activities which occupy a proportion of 27%. In addition, 20% of the respondents are civil servants (public workers). In addition, 12.4% of the respondents are pupils and students, and 1.8% is unemployed. The respondents are made up of teachers, policemen, gendarmes, freight forwarders, building contractors, commercial agents, insurers, employees of companies, doctors, research professors, musical artists, mechanics, economic operators, etc. The results of the respondent's status variable show how an individual's income can influence their decision to attend the beverage outlets. In fact, nearly 85% of respondents are active, compared to 15%

of respondents made up of retired people, the unemployed and students. For the variable instruction, we noted that more than 90% of the respondents have at least the level of primary education of which more than 50% have a higher level of study. Concerning the marital status of the respondents, we note that nearly 62% of the people who visit the places of sale of beverages to consume on the spot are single. All these results are summarized in Table 1 below.

Frequency of consumers in the maquis: Regarding the frequency of consumers in beverage outlets, Table 2 below shows the average number of monthly visits of respondents. Table 2 above shows that:

- 87% of the consumers surveyed go to a point of sale of drinks to be consumed on site more than one day a week, i.e. more than four (4) days in the month;

Table 3. Expression of consumer loyalty in relation to the size of the point-of-sale atmosphere

The decoration				
Recommend this point of sale to your relatives and acquaintances		13.5%	86.5%	
Return to consume often in this place		13.5%	86.5%	
Spend more time in this place		13.8%	86.2%	
The welcome in this place				
Recommend this point of sale to your relatives and acquaintances		10.1%	89.9%	
Return to consume often in this place		10%	90%	
Spend more time in this place		3.9 %	96.1%	

Source: developed by the author

NOTES: Preference of respondents regarding beverages and types of beverage outlets

Statistics by preference				
	1	2	3	4
N	Valid	790	790	790
	Missing	0	0	0
Fashion	Beers	Wines	Spirits	Sweets

Preference 1 (Q4A)				
	Workforce	Percentage	ValidPercentage	Cumulativepercentage
Valid	wines	279	35.3	35.3
	Beers	317	40.1	75.4
	Spirits	136	17.2	92.7
	Sweets	58	7.3	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	100.0

Preference 2 (Q4B)				
	Workforce	Percentage	ValidPercentage	Cumulativepercentage
Valid	Wines	401	50.8	50.8
	Beers	257	32.5	83.3
	Spirits	98	12.4	95.7
	Sweets	34	4.3	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	100.0

Preference 3 (Q4C)				
	Workforce	Percentage	ValidPercentage	Cumulativepercentage
Valid	wines	47	5.9	5.9
	Beers	122	15.4	21.4
	Spirits	327	41.4	62.8
	Sweets	294	37.2	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	100.0

Preference 4 (Q4D)				
	Workforce	Percentage	ValidPercentage	Cumulativepercentage
Valid	wines	65	8.2	8.2
	Beers	91	11.5	19.7
	Spirits	229	29.0	48.7
	Sweets	405	51.3	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	100.0

Statistics by preference				
	1	2	3	4
N	Valid	790	790	790
	Missing	0	0	0
Fashion	Maquis	Cave	Snack bar	Bars

Preference 1 (Q13A)				
	Workforce	Percentage	ValidPercentage	Cumulativepercentage
Valid	Bars	136	17.2	17.2
	Snack bar	169	21.4	38.6
	Caves	177	22.4	61.0
	Maquis	308	39.0	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	100.0

Preference 2 (Q13B)				
	Workforce	Percentage	ValidPercentage	Cumulativepercentage
Valid	Bars	24	3.0	3.0
	Snack bar	118	14.9	18.0
	Caves	235	29.7	47.7
	Maquis	412	52.2	99.9
	Total	790	100.0	100.0

Preference 3 (Q13C)				
	Workforce	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Bars	174	22.0	22.0
	Snack bar	343	43.4	65.4
	Caves	244	30.9	96.3
	Maquis	29	3.7	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	

Preference 4 (Q13D)				
	Workforce	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Bars	458	58.0	58.0
	Snack bar	159	20.1	78.1
	Caves	135	17.1	95.2
	Maquis	38	4.8	100.0
	Total	790	100.0	

- More than a quarter (28%) of the respondents frequent the outlets 3 times (three days) a week, i.e. twelve (12 days) in the month;
- 1.5% of the respondents attend daily outlets for drinks to be consumed on site, that is to say every day in the month.

Consumer preferences in the maquis

As for consumer preference, it is analyzed in terms of types of outlets and in terms of types of drinks consumed.

Consumer preference according to types of outlets for drinks to be consumed on site

For types of beverage outlets, the preference of consumers is as follows (see Annex):

- First preference: the maquis (especially the maquis outdoors)
- Second preference: the cellars
- Third preference: refreshments
- Fourth preference: bars

Consumer preference for beverages consumed in on-site beverage outlets

With regard to the drinks consumed in these outlets, the preference of consumers is as follows (see annex):

- First preference: beers
- Second preference: wines
- Third preference: liqueurs
- Fourth preference: sweets (soft drinks).

Consumer preferences often lead to loyalty behaviors that manifest themselves in many ways. These manifestations of consumer loyalty and their foundations are presented in the following point.

Manifestations of the preference of consumers in the points of sales of beverages: According to the consumers, the manifestation of their fidelity can result in the recommendation of the point of sale to other persons or acquaintances, with the intention of returning to consume often in this same point of sale and the duration of the visit in the place when they are satisfied with the atmosphere prevailing in the point of sale. The detail of this expression of the loyalty according to the size of the atmosphere perceived at the points of sale is presented in the following table 3.

From Table 3 above, we find that consumers demonstrate to varying degrees their loyalty to outlets for on-site drinks depending on the size of the atmosphere in the area. Thus, for the atmosphere dimension of the perceived atmosphere, it emerges that the diffusion of music in the beverage outlets brings:

- 72.2% of consumers surveyed recommend this same point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;
- 70.6% of the consumers surveyed to come back to consume often in this same point of sale;
- 71.4% of consumers surveyed spend much more time at this point of sale.

Concerning the physical framework of the perceived atmosphere consisting of the air quality, the impression of security, the cleanliness of the place, the layout of the frame and the decoration of the space, we note that each of these constituent elements have a different influence on consumer loyalty.

First, the quality of the air in the drinks outlet encourages:

- 95.5% of consumers surveyed recommend this point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;
- 95.4% of consumers surveyed to return often consume in this point of sale;
- 94.9% of consumers surveyed spend much more time in this point of sale.

Then, the security impression in the point of sale pushes

- 98% of consumers surveyed recommend this point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;
- 97.7% of consumers surveyed to return often consume in this point of sale;
- 97.6% of consumers surveyed spend much more time at this point of sale.

In addition, the cleanliness of the premises encourages:

- 98.3% of consumers surveyed recommend this point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;
- 98.2% of consumers surveyed to return often consume at this point of sale;
- 96.6% of consumers surveyed spend much more time in this point of sale.

In addition, the development of the point of sale of drinks also brings:

- 94.3% of consumers surveyed recommend this point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;

- 94.1% of consumers surveyed to return often consume at this point of sale;
- 92.4% of consumers surveyed spend much more time in this point of sale.

Finally, the decoration of the frame makes you want to:

- 86.5% of consumers surveyed recommend this point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;
- 86.5% of consumers surveyed to return often consume in this point of sale;
- 86.2% of consumers surveyed spend much more time at this point of sale.

With regard to the social dimension of the atmosphere of the point of sale of beverages, ie the reception of consumers by the staff (helpfulness, availability, conviviality), it appears that this dimension encourages:

- 89.9% of consumers surveyed recommend this point of sale to their relatives and acquaintances;
- 90% of consumers surveyed come back often to consume at this point of sale;
- 96.1% of consumers surveyed spend much more time at this point of sale.

The atmosphere perceived at the point of sale of drinks to be consumed on the spot has an influence on consumer loyalty and this fidelity is expressed to a different degree depending on the importance given to the size of the atmosphere of the point of sale.

Conclusion

This study made it possible to determine the preferences of the consumers who frequent the "maquis" (points of sale of beverages to consume on the spot.) Thus, we retain that the consumers who visit the outlets of beverages to consume on the spot in Abidjan are relatively young men from all sectors of activity, who go there more than one day a week, at least four times a month, and the types of outlets show that consumers prefer the types of drinks, the study indicates that the majority of consumers prefer beers and wines in these beverage outlets, consumers express their preference (loyalty) in these "maquis" through the recommendation of the point of sale to relatives and acquaintances, the frequent visits in this area points of sale and the duration of the visit in these points of sale.

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