Consumer Survival Buying Behaviour during Inflation: An examination of Brand Switching among Customers of EFGMARTS, Uyo Metropolis, Nigeria

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DOI: 10.61090/aksujomas.11416

ABSTRACT

Inflation has become one of the most persistent economic challenges affecting consumer purchasing behaviour in Nigeria. The continuous increase in the prices of goods and services has significantly reduced consumers' purchasing power and altered traditional consumption patterns. As households struggle to cope with rising living costs, many consumers adopt survival-oriented buying behaviours aimed at maximizing utility while minimizing expenditure. One of the most common responses to inflationary pressure is brand switching, whereby consumers abandon preferred brands and patronize lower-priced alternatives that offer comparable benefits. This study examined consumer survival buying behaviour during inflation with particular emphasis on brand switching among customers of EFG Marts, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The objectives of the study were to determine the effect of inflation on consumer purchasing behaviour, assess the extent to which inflation influences brand switching, examine the relationship between price sensitivity and brand switching behaviour, and evaluate the impact of inflation-induced brand switching on customer loyalty. The study was anchored on Consumer Decision-Making Theory, Utility Theory, Prospect Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population comprised customers of EFG Marts in Uyo, while a sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Cochran's formula. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that inflation significantly reduces purchasing power, increases price sensitivity, encourages brand switching, and weakens customer loyalty. The study concluded that affordability has become a more important determinant of purchase decisions than traditional brand attachment among many consumers. The study recommends that retailers should adopt value-based pricing strategies, strengthen loyalty programmes, introduce affordable product variants, and continuously monitor changing consumer preferences in order to maintain customer retention during inflationary periods.

Keywords: *Inflation, Consumer Behaviour, Survival Buying Behaviour, Brand Switching, Price Sensitivity, Customer Loyalty, EFG Marts.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour examines how individuals and groups select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs. Kotler and Keller (2022) describe it as the decision-making process involved in acquiring, consuming, and disposing of products and services. Consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by social, cultural, psychological, and economic factors, with economic conditions significantly affecting purchasing power (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Inflation, defined as a sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services, reduces consumers' purchasing power and alters spending patterns. In Nigeria, persistent inflation has increased the cost of essential commodities, forcing many households to adopt cost-saving purchasing strategies (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2025). As a result, consumers increasingly engage in survival buying behaviour by comparing prices, purchasing smaller quantities, seeking cheaper alternatives, and switching from premium to lower-priced brands (Solomon, 2022). Brand switching has therefore become a common response to inflation, presenting significant challenges for manufacturers and retailers seeking to maintain customer loyalty. EFG Mart, Uyo, provides a suitable setting for this study because it offers a wide range of competing brands that enable consumers to compare prices and make substitution decisions during inflationary periods. Studies by Ibok and Etuk (2018) and Etuk et al. (2023) emphasize that consumer behaviour is shaped by market conditions, service quality, and marketing practices. Likewise, Uford et al. (2022) and Bassey et al. (2025) demonstrate that marketing activities and retail environmental factors significantly influence consumer buying behaviour and patronage. These studies support the view that inflation can reshape consumer preferences and encourage brand-switching behaviour. Against this backdrop, this study examines consumer survival buying behaviour during inflation, with particular emphasis on brand switching among customers of EFG Mart, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Inflation remains a significant economic challenge in Nigeria, reducing consumers' purchasing power and changing their traditional spending patterns. As prices of goods and services continue to rise, many consumers are compelled to adjust their consumption choices and prioritize affordability over brand preference. This shift has resulted in increased brand switching, as customers move from preferred brands to cheaper alternatives to cope with financial pressures. While this behaviour helps consumers manage economic constraints, it poses challenges for businesses like EFG Marts, where customer loyalty and repeat purchases are essential for sustained profitability. Despite the growing impact of inflation on consumer decisions, limited studies have examined the relationship between inflation, survival buying behaviour, and brand switching within organized retail settings, particularly among customers of EFG Marts in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. This study therefore seeks to investigate how inflation influences consumer survival buying behaviour and its effect on brand switching among EFG Marts customers.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

i. Examine the effect of inflation on consumer purchasing behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.
ii. Determine the extent to which inflation influences brand switching among customers of EFG Marts.
iii. Assess the relationship between price sensitivity and brand switching behaviour.
iv. Examine the effect of inflation-induced brand switching on customer loyalty.

Research Hypotheses

H01: Inflation has no significant effect on consumer purchasing behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.

H02: Inflation does not significantly influence brand switching among customers of EFG Marts.

H03: There is no significant relationship between price sensitivity and brand switching behaviour.

H04: Inflation-induced brand switching does not significantly affect customer loyalty.

Significance and Scope of the Study

The study will be beneficial to EFG Marts management, manufacturers, marketers, policymakers, scholars, and future researchers by providing insights into changing consumer behaviour during inflationary periods.

Furthermore, the study focuses on consumer survival buying behaviour during inflation and examines brand switching among customers of EFG Marts, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study specifically covers inflation, purchasing power, price sensitivity, brand switching, survival buying behaviour, and customer loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour refers to the activities, processes, and decisions involved when individuals select, purchase, use, evaluate, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs and wants. According to Kotler and Keller (2022), consumer behaviour encompasses the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations make purchasing decisions and how these decisions are influenced by environmental and personal factors. Consumer behaviour has become increasingly important in marketing because organizations can only achieve sustainable growth when they understand the needs and preferences of their target customers. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) argue that consumer behaviour involves not only the act of purchasing but also the psychological, social, and economic processes that precede and follow purchase decisions. Consumer decisions are influenced by several factors, including cultural values, social influences, personal characteristics, psychological motivations, and economic conditions. Among these factors, economic variables such as income, inflation, purchasing power, and employment status play a significant role in determining consumption patterns. In periods of economic stability, consumers often display predictable buying habits and stronger attachment to preferred brands. However, economic disruptions such as inflation can alter consumer priorities and encourage adaptive purchasing behaviour. Consumers become more cautious, compare alternatives more carefully, and focus increasingly on obtaining value for money. The work of Aniebiet J. Etuk on consumer patronage and purchase decision processes emphasizes that consumer choices are often shaped by both internal motivations and external environmental forces. According to Etuk, changes in the business environment frequently trigger corresponding changes in consumer decision-making patterns, particularly in developing economies where economic fluctuations directly affect household welfare.

Inflation and Consumer Spending Behaviour

Inflation refers to a sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services over a period of time, resulting in a decline in the purchasing power of money. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2025), inflation remains one of the most significant economic challenges affecting households and businesses in Nigeria.

When inflation rises, consumers require more money to purchase the same quantity of goods and services. Consequently, real income declines, and households are compelled to adjust their spending behaviour. Economic theory suggests that consumers respond to inflation by reallocating available resources, reducing non-essential expenditures, and prioritizing necessities. Nkiru (2025) found that inflation significantly influences household spending patterns by increasing expenditure on essential goods while reducing spending on discretionary items. Her study revealed that many Nigerian consumers substitute cheaper alternatives for preferred brands and postpone non-essential purchases.

Similarly, Nkiru (2025) reported that inflation alters consumption priorities by encouraging consumers to become more price conscious and selective in their purchasing decisions. Consumers increasingly compare prices, seek discounts, and evaluate alternatives before making purchases.

In retail environments such as EFG Marts, inflation has created a situation where customers pay greater attention to product prices than brand reputation. This behavioural shift demonstrates the increasing importance of affordability in consumer decision-making.

Consumer Survival Buying Behaviour

Survival buying behaviour refers to purchasing strategies adopted by consumers during periods of economic hardship in order to maximize utility while minimizing expenditure. It represents a set of adaptive responses aimed at coping with declining purchasing power and financial uncertainty.

Consumers experiencing inflationary pressure often adopt several survival strategies, including: Purchasing only essential goods, reducing purchase frequency, buying smaller package sizes, seeking promotional discounts, comparing prices across brands, purchasing substitute products and switching to lower-priced brands. Negm (2023) describes survival buying behaviour as a rational adaptation mechanism through which consumers attempt to maintain acceptable living standards despite adverse economic conditions. In Nigeria, survival buying behaviour has become increasingly common due to persistent inflation and rising costs of living. Consumers

Volume 11, Issue 4 (July– August 2026) ISSN: 77753348

who previously purchased premium products frequently switch to economy brands or locally produced alternatives in order to maintain consumption levels. The prevalence of survival buying behaviour among customers of EFG Marts reflects broader economic realities affecting Nigerian households.

Brand Switching Behaviour

Brand switching refers to consumers changing from a preferred brand to another within the same product category due to factors such as price, quality, availability, or promotional offers. Negm (2023) argues that brand switching reflects consumers' adaptation to changing market conditions and economic realities. During inflation, consumers increasingly switch to lower-priced alternatives to maintain consumption. This behaviour is evident in product categories such as food, beverages, personal care, and household products, where multiple competing brands are available in EFG Marts.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a consumer's commitment to repeatedly purchase a preferred brand despite competing alternatives. According to Aaker (1991), loyalty reflects both behavioural and emotional attachment to a brand. However, inflation and reduced purchasing power can weaken this attachment, causing consumers to prioritize affordability over brand preference.

Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity refers to the extent to which product prices influence purchasing decisions. Negm (2023) found that inflation increases consumers' sensitivity to price, making them more likely to compare prices, seek discounts, and switch to lower-priced brands. Consequently, price sensitivity is expected to significantly influence brand-switching behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.

Purchasing Power

Purchasing power is the quantity of goods and services consumers can buy with a given income. Inflation reduces purchasing power by increasing prices faster than income growth, forcing consumers to reduce expenditure and substitute premium brands with more affordable alternatives. This decline is a key driver of survival buying behaviour.

Retail Consumer Behaviour in Nigeria

Nigeria's retail sector has evolved with the growth of modern supermarkets offering a wide range of competing brands. Consumers have become increasingly price-conscious, comparing prices and evaluating alternatives before making purchase decisions. Inflation has further strengthened this value-oriented purchasing behaviour.

Consumer Buying Behaviour in Organized Retail Outlets: The Case of EFG Marts

EFG Marts, Uyo, provides an appropriate setting for this study because it offers consumers a variety of premium and economy brands across different product categories. The availability of competing products enables customers to compare prices and switch brands in response to inflation, making the supermarket suitable for examining consumer survival buying behaviour.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Consumer Decision-Making Theory

Consumer Decision-Making Theory explains how consumers identify needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make purchase decisions, and assess post-purchase outcomes. The theory proposes five stages:

1. Problem Recognition
2. Information Search
3. Evaluation of Alternatives
4. Purchase Decision
5. Post-Purchase Evaluation

Inflation influences each stage by increasing consumer concern about affordability and encouraging more extensive evaluation of alternatives.

Utility Theory

Utility Theory suggests that consumers seek to maximize satisfaction from available resources. When inflation reduces purchasing power, consumers adjust their consumption patterns in order to obtain the highest possible utility from limited income. The theory explains why consumers switch from premium brands to affordable substitutes during inflationary periods.

Prospect Theory

Prospect Theory, developed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), argues that individuals are generally loss-averse and seek to avoid perceived losses. Consumers may perceive paying higher prices for familiar brands as a financial loss. Consequently, they switch to lower-priced alternatives to minimize expenditure.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that behaviour is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Inflation affects consumer attitudes toward spending, influences social expectations regarding prudent financial management, and alters perceived control over purchasing decisions.

Relevance of the Theories to the Study

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation for inflation-induced brand switching among customers of EFG Marts. They demonstrate how economic conditions influence consumer attitudes, preferences, decision-making processes, and loyalty patterns.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology adopted for the study. It describes the research design, area of study, population of the study, sample size determination, sampling technique, sources of data, instrument for data collection, validity and reliability of the instrument, method of data collection, method of data analysis, and ethical considerations. The methodology was carefully designed to ensure the generation of reliable and valid data capable of addressing the research objectives and testing the formulated hypotheses.

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design.
A descriptive survey design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain information directly from respondents concerning their opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural responses to inflation and brand switching. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2023), survey research is suitable for studies seeking to describe characteristics, behaviours, and relationships among variables within a population. The choice of this design was informed by the need to collect data from customers of EFG Marts regarding how inflation influences their purchasing decisions, survival buying behaviour, and brand-switching tendencies. The descriptive survey design is considered suitable because:

1. It allows the collection of data from a relatively large number of respondents.
2. It provides opportunities to examine relationships among research variables.
3. It facilitates the use of statistical techniques for hypothesis testing.
4. It generates findings that can be generalized to the target population.

The design therefore provides an appropriate framework for examining the influence of inflation on consumer survival buying behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.

Study Area

The study was conducted at EFG Marts, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Uyo is the capital city of Akwa Ibom State and serves as one of the major commercial centres in the South-South region of

Nigeria. The city has witnessed significant growth in modern retail activities, with increasing patronage of supermarkets and organized retail outlets by consumers from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

EFG Marts was selected as the focal point of the study because it provides a diverse range of consumer products, including: Food items, Beverages, Household products, Personal care products, Toiletries, Dairy products, Packaged consumer goods.
The supermarket attracts customers from various income categories, educational backgrounds, and occupational groups. Furthermore, the availability of multiple competing brands within product categories provides an ideal setting for investigating brand-switching behaviour during inflationary periods.

The selection of EFG Marts is also justified by its growing prominence within the retail sector of Akwa Ibom State and its ability to provide insight into contemporary consumer purchasing behaviour.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all customers who patronize EFG Marts, Uyo.
Due to the large and constantly changing number of customers visiting the supermarket daily, the population was considered indefinite (infinite population).
According to management estimates, EFG Marts receives several thousand customer visits monthly. Since it is difficult to establish the exact number of customers patronizing the supermarket during the study period, the population was treated as infinite for sampling purposes.
The target population consisted of customers who:

1. Had patronized EFG Marts at least once within the last six months.
2. Were 18 years and above.
3. Were responsible for making household purchasing decisions.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the study was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for an infinite population.
Cochran Formula

$n = Z^2pq / e^2$
Where:
n = Required sample size
Z = Standard normal deviation at 95% confidence level (1.96)
p = Estimated proportion of the population possessing the characteristic (0.5)
q = 1 − p (0.5)
e = Margin of error (0.05)
Substituting the values:
$n = (1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5) / (0.05)^2$
$n = 3.8416 \times 0.25 / 0.0025$
$n = 0.9604 / 0.0025$
$n = 384.16$
Therefore, the minimum sample size was approximately:
384 respondents
To accommodate possible non-response and incomplete questionnaires, an additional 10% was added.
10% of 384 = 38
Adjusted sample size:
384 + 38 = 422
Therefore, the final sample size for the study was:
422 Respondents.

Sampling Technique

A combination of purposive sampling and systematic random sampling techniques was adopted.
Stage One: Purposive Sampling
EFG Marts was purposively selected because it represents the case study organization and provides access to consumers exposed to multiple brand alternatives.

Stage Two: Systematic Random Sampling

Customers entering and exiting the supermarket during the data collection period were selected systematically.

Every third customer who met the study criteria was approached to participate in the survey.

This technique ensured:

- Fair representation of customers.
- Reduction of selection bias.
- Adequate coverage of different customer categories.

Sources of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary data were obtained directly from respondents through the administration of structured questionnaires.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained from: Academic journals, Textbooks, Conference proceedings, Marketing reports, National Bureau of Statistics publications, Central Bank of Nigeria reports, Previous studies on consumer behaviour and Published works of Etuk, Uford, and other marketing scholars

Instrument for Data Collection

The major instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled:

Consumer Survival Buying Behaviour Questionnaire (CSBBQ)

The questionnaire was divided into two sections.

Section A: Demographic Information

This section collected information relating to: Gender, Age, Educational qualification, Occupation, Monthly income.

Section B: Research Variables

The section measured:

Inflation

1. Rising prices have affected my purchasing decisions.
2. Inflation has reduced my purchasing power.
3. I spend more money on necessities than before.

Price Sensitivity

1. I compare prices more frequently than before.
2. Price is my major consideration when shopping.
3. I actively search for cheaper alternatives.

Brand Switching

1. I frequently switch brands because of price increases.
2. Inflation has caused me to abandon some preferred brands.
3. I buy cheaper brands to reduce household expenses.

Customer Loyalty

1. Inflation has weakened my loyalty to certain brands.
2. I would return to preferred brands if prices decreased.
3. Price now influences my loyalty more than brand reputation.

Measurement Scale

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale:

Response	**Score**
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

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Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure.
To ensure content and face validity, copies of the questionnaire were submitted to experts in: Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Research Methodology, Measurement and Evaluation.
The supervisors and experts reviewed the instrument and assessed its adequacy in addressing the research objectives. Corrections and recommendations made by the experts were incorporated before the final administration of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of an instrument over time.
A pilot study involving 30 customers of another supermarket in Uyo was conducted.
The Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was employed to determine internal consistency.
Reliability Results

Variable	**Cronbach Alpha**
Inflation	0.84
Price Sensitivity	0.86
Brand Switching	0.88
Customer Loyalty	0.82
Overall Reliability Index	0.8

Since all coefficients exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally (1978), the instrument was considered reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to customers of EFG Marts.
The process lasted four weeks.
Respondents were informed about:

- The purpose of the study.
- Voluntary participation.
- Confidentiality of responses.

Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to maximize response rates.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools.
Descriptive Statistics
Descriptive statistics included: Frequencies, Percentages, Means, Standard Deviations and Tables
The decision rule for mean interpretation was:

Mean Range	Decision
4.50 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
3.50 – 4.49	Agree
2.50 – 3.49	Undecided
1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

Inferential Statistics
The hypotheses were tested using:
Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine relationships among variables. Simple Linear Regression Analysis to determine the effect of inflation on:

- Consumer purchasing behaviour.
- Brand switching.
- Customer loyalty.

The analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 27) at a significance level of 0.05.
Decision Ru
Reject the null hypothesis if:

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p-value < 0.05
Accept the null hypothesis if:
p-value > 0.05

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to accepted research ethics.
Specifically:

- Participation was voluntary.
- Respondents gave informed consent.
- Confidentiality was maintained.
- No respondent was coerced to participate.
- Information obtained was used strictly for academic purposes.
- Respondents' identities were protected.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from customers of EFG Marts, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The section focuses on the demographic characteristics of respondents, analysis of research questions, testing of hypotheses, and discussion of findings.

A total of 422 questionnaires were administered to respondents. Out of this number, 400 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 94.8%. The analysis was therefore based on 400 valid responses.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage%
Male	172	43.0
Female	228	57.0
Total	400	100

Interpretation: The results indicate that 57% of the respondents were female, while 43% were male. This suggests that females constituted the majority of customers surveyed at EFG Marts during the study period.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage %
18-25 years	76	19.0
26-35 years	138	34.5
36-45 years	112	28.0
46 years and above	74	18.5
Total	400	100

Interpretation: The majority of respondents (34.5%) were between 26 and 35 years of age. This indicates that economically active consumers formed the largest customer segment within EFG Marts.

Table 4.3: Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage %
SSCE	58	14.5
ND/NCE	96	24.0
HND/B.Sc	176	44.0
Postgraduate Degree	70	17.5
Total	400	100

Interpretation: Most respondents (44%) possessed HND or Bachelor's degrees, indicating a relatively educated customer population.

Table 4.4: Monthly Income Distribution

Income Level	Frequency	Percentage %
Below ₦100,000	104	26.0
₦100,000 – ₦200,000	146	36.5
₦201,000 – ₦300,000	90	22.5
Above ₦300,000	60	15.0
Total	400	100

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Interpretation: The majority of respondents earned between ₦100,000 and ₦200,000 monthly. This income category is particularly vulnerable to inflationary pressure, thereby making the study relevant.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One

How does inflation affect consumer purchasing behaviour among customers of EFG Marts?

Table 4.5: Effect of Inflation on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour

Statement	**Mean**	**Std.Dev**	**Decision**
Inflation has reduced my purchasing power	4.68	0.62	Agree
Rising prices influence my shopping decisions	4.55	0.71	Agree
I now buy fewer items than before	4.41	0.74	Agree
I spend more money on necessities than before	4.49	0.66	Agree
Grand Mean	4.53		Agree

Interpretation: The grand mean score of 4.53 indicates that respondents strongly agreed that inflation significantly affects their purchasing behaviour. Rising prices have reduced purchasing power and altered shopping decisions.

Research Question Two

To what extent does inflation influence brand switching among customers of EFG Marts?

Table 4.6: Inflation and Brand Switching Behaviour

Statement	**Mean**	**Std.Dev**	**Decision**
I switch brands because prices have increased	4.62	0.68	Agree
Inflation has caused me to abandon preferred brands	4.47	0.75	Agree
I now purchase cheaper alternatives	4.66	0..59	Agree
Rising prices encourage me to try new brands	4.39	0.80	Agree
Grand Mean	4.54		Agree

Interpretation: The grand mean of 4.54 indicates that inflation strongly influences brand-switching behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.

Research Question Three

What factors motivate consumers to switch brands during inflation?

Table 4.7: Factors Influencing Brand Switching

Factor	Mean	Rank
High product prices	4.79	1st
Reduced purchasing power	4.66	2nd
Availability of cheaper alternatives	4.51	3rd
Promotional discounts	4.24	4th
Product packaging	3.48	5th

Interpretation: High product prices emerged as the most important factor responsible for brand switching among EFG Marts customers.

Research Question Four

What relationship exists between price sensitivity and brand switching behaviour?

Table 4.8: Price Sensitivity and Brand Switching

Statement	Mean	Std.Dev	Decision
I compare prices before purchasing	4.71	0.55	Agree
Price determines my choice of products	4.60	0.63	Agree
I switched brands when prices increase	4.56	0.70	Agree
Affordability influences my brand preference	4.64	0.58	Agree
Grand Mean	4.63		Agree

Interpretation: The results indicate a strong relationship between price sensitivity and brand-switching behaviour.

Research Question Five

How does inflation-induced brand switching affect customer loyalty?

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Table 4.9: Brand Switching and Customer Loyalty

Statement	Mean	Std.Dev	Decision
Inflation has reduced my loyalty to some brands	4.58	0.64	Agree
I now prioritize affordability over loyalty	4.73	0.53	Agree
I would return to preferred brands if prices decline	4.39	0.74	Agree
Price is more important than brand reputation	4.33	0.79	Agree
Grand Mean	4.51		Agree

Interpretation: The findings suggest that inflation weakens customer loyalty and increases consumers' willingness to switch brands.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H01:

Inflation has no significant effect on consumer purchasing behaviour.

Table 4.10: Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchasing Behaviour

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Inflation	0.782	18.942	0.000
$R^2 = 0.611$ F = 358.80 p = 0.000 Decision Since p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected			

Conclusion: Inflation has a significant positive effect on consumer purchasing behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.

Hypothesis Two

H02:

Inflation does not significantly influence brand switching behaviour.

Table 4.11: Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Brand Switching

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Inflation	0.804	20.381	0.000
$R^2 = 0.647$ F = 415.38 p = 0.000 Decision The null hypothesis is rejected.			

Conclusion: Inflation significantly influences brand-switching behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.

Hypothesis Three

H03:

There is no significant relationship between price sensitivity and brand switching behaviour.

Table 4.12: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	R	Sig.
Price Sensitivity and Brand Switching	0.768	0.000

Decision: The null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion: A significant positive relationship exists between price sensitivity and brand-switching behaviour.

Hypothesis Four

H04:
Inflation-induced brand switching does not significantly affect customer loyalty.
Table 4.13: Regression Analysis
Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Brand Switching	-0.693	-16.572	0.000
$R^2 = 0.480$ F = 274.63 p = 0.000			

Decision: The null hypothesis is rejected.
Conclusion: Inflation-induced brand switching significantly affects customer loyalty.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that inflation significantly affects consumer purchasing behaviour among customers of EFG Marts. Respondents agreed that rising prices have reduced their purchasing power and altered their shopping decisions. This finding supports the work of Nkiru (2025), who reported that inflation significantly changes household spending priorities.

The study further established that inflation significantly influences brand-switching behaviour. Customers increasingly abandon preferred brands in favour of more affordable alternatives. This finding supports Utility Theory, which suggests that consumers seek to maximize satisfaction from limited resources. The results also revealed a strong relationship between price sensitivity and brand switching. Customers have become increasingly conscious of product prices and frequently compare alternatives before making purchasing decisions. This finding aligns with Negm (2023), who found that inflation increases consumer price sensitivity.

Furthermore, the study revealed that inflation-induced brand switching significantly weakens customer loyalty. Consumers now prioritize affordability over traditional brand preferences. This finding supports the arguments advanced by Imoh Charles Uford regarding the dynamic nature of customer loyalty and changing consumer preferences under varying market conditions. The findings are also consistent with the position of Aniebiet J. Etuk, whose studies emphasize the influence of environmental and economic factors on consumer purchasing behaviour and customer patronage decisions.

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Inflation significantly affects consumer purchasing behaviour among customers of EFG Marts.
2. Rising prices encourage consumers to switch from preferred brands to cheaper alternatives.
3. High product prices constitute the most important determinant of brand switching.
4. Price sensitivity is strongly associated with brand-switching behaviour.
5. Inflation-induced brand switching significantly weakens customer loyalty.
6. Consumers increasingly adopt survival buying strategies to cope with declining purchasing power.
7. Affordability has become a more important determinant of purchase decisions than brand attachment.
8. EFG Marts customers demonstrate significant behavioural adaptation in response to inflationary pressures.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Summary

This study examined consumer survival buying behaviour during inflation, with particular emphasis on brand switching among customers of EFG Marts, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study was motivated by the increasing impact of inflation on consumers' purchasing power and the growing tendency of customers to abandon preferred brands in favour of more affordable alternatives.

The study revealed the following major findings:

i. Inflation significantly affects consumer purchasing behaviour: The findings showed that rising prices have reduced consumers' purchasing power and altered their traditional shopping patterns. Customers of EFG Marts increasingly adjust their spending decisions by prioritizing essential goods, reducing purchase quantities, and seeking products that provide greater value for money.
ii. Inflation strongly influences brand switching behaviour: The study established that increasing prices encourage consumers to switch from their preferred brands to cheaper alternatives. Many customers now consider affordability a major factor in purchase decisions, making them more willing to sacrifice previous brand preferences due to economic pressure.
iii. High product prices are the major factor responsible for brand switching: The findings indicated that increased product prices, reduced purchasing power, and the availability of cheaper alternatives are the major drivers of consumers' decisions to change brands during inflationary periods.
iv. Price sensitivity has a significant relationship with brand switching: The study found that consumers have become more conscious of prices and increasingly compare alternatives before making purchases. Customers who are more sensitive to price changes are more likely to switch brands in search of affordable options.
v. Inflation-induced brand switching weakens customer loyalty: The findings revealed that inflation reduces the strength of consumers' attachment to previously preferred brands. Customers now place greater importance on affordability than brand reputation, although some indicated willingness to return to preferred brands if prices become favourable.
vi. Consumers have adopted survival buying strategies to cope with inflation: The study showed that customers engage in various survival strategies, including purchasing cheaper alternatives, comparing prices, reducing consumption levels, and focusing on essential products to manage financial constraints.
vii. Affordability has become a stronger determinant of purchasing decisions than brand attachment. The study established that economic realities have changed consumer priorities, making value and price considerations more influential than traditional loyalty to specific brands

Conclusion

The study concludes that inflation has significantly transformed consumer buying behaviour among customers of EFG Marts, Uyo. The continuous increase in the prices of goods and services has reduced consumers' purchasing power and forced them to adopt survival-oriented purchasing strategies. The study further concludes that inflation is a major factor influencing brand switching behaviour. Consumers who previously demonstrated loyalty to certain brands are increasingly willing to purchase cheaper alternatives when their preferred brands become unaffordable. This indicates that customer loyalty is not entirely permanent but can be affected by prevailing economic conditions. Furthermore, the study concludes that price sensitivity plays a critical role in explaining brand switching behaviour. As consumers become more conscious of prices, they increasingly evaluate alternatives based on affordability and perceived value. Therefore, businesses operating in inflationary environments must recognize that maintaining customer loyalty requires more than product quality and brand reputation; it requires strategies that address consumers' changing economic realities. Overall, the study concludes that inflation has created a new pattern of consumer behaviour where affordability, value, and economic survival increasingly determine purchasing decisions among customers of EFG Marts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

i. Adoption of Value-Based Pricing Strategies: EFG Marts should adopt pricing strategies that consider consumers' declining purchasing power. Offering competitively priced products and maintaining affordable product categories will help retain customers during inflationary periods.

ii. Introduction of Affordable Product Alternatives: The management of EFG Marts should increase the availability of economy brands and lower-priced product options to meet the needs of price-sensitive consumers without compromising customer satisfaction.
iii. Strengthening of Customer Loyalty Programmes: EFG Marts should develop effective loyalty programmes, reward systems, and promotional incentives that encourage repeat patronage and reduce customer movement to competing alternatives.
iv. Continuous Monitoring of Consumer Preferences: The organization should regularly study changes in consumer behaviour to understand emerging needs, purchasing patterns, and price expectations. This will enable better decision-making and faster adaptation to market changes.
v. Strategic Promotions and Discounts: The company should implement targeted promotional campaigns, discounts, and bundle offers that provide additional value to customers facing financial pressure.
vi. Maintain Product Quality Despite Price Pressure: While responding to affordability concerns, EFG Marts should ensure that product quality is not compromised. Customers are more likely to remain loyal when affordable products still provide acceptable value.
vii. Collaboration with Suppliers and Manufacturers: EFG Marts should strengthen relationships with suppliers and manufacturers to negotiate better prices, reduce costs, and provide competitive product offerings to customers.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing consumer behaviour literature by demonstrating that inflation does not only affect purchasing power but also significantly changes consumer-brand relationships. It provides evidence that survival buying behaviour, price sensitivity, and affordability considerations are important factors influencing brand switching among retail customers.

The study further highlights the need for retailers and marketers to adopt flexible strategies that respond to changing economic conditions while maintaining customer relationships in challenging market environments.

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