

## **An Assessment Factors Influencing Consumption Choices**

**Siyambola Afeez Babatunde<sup>1\*</sup>, Ganiyu, Sulayman Olubunmi<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Industrial Design, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Adeyemi College Of Education, Ondo, Nigeria

**\*Corresponding author**

*Siyambola Afeez  
Babatunde*

**Article History**

*Received: 10.04.2018*

*Accepted: 20.05.2018*

*Published: 30.05.2018*

**DOI:**

10.21276/sjhss.2018.3.5.6



**Abstract:** The study is centred on understanding the underlining factors influencing consumer's choice in purchasing patterns. Contemporary consumers are believed to reflect elements of rationality and irrationality in their consumption preferences. So the study assessed the choice motives which prompt the patronage of some selected household items amongst university students. These items are phones, laptops and consumables. The students were randomly selected on gender basis. Assessed factors include peer influence, trends, affordability, advertorials, needs, lifestyle, health, religion, income and product packaging. Findings revealed that the influence of rationality and irrationality are inherent in consumer behaviours, but personal interest of consumers at a particular point in time takes precedence.

**Keywords:** consumer's choice, irrationality, lifestyle, health.

**INTRODUCTION**

The complexity in consumer's behaviours has prompted researches into unraveling factors primarily responsible for the decision making of consumers in contemporary times. Numerous factors which are categorized by researchers to be either rational or irrational exert powerful influences on choice and consumption. Rationality in consumer behaviours are indication of logical decisions which were preceded by thoughtful insight, evaluative and value oriented. Factors that inform consumer's choice pattern are classified into rational and irrational behaviours.

The concept of rationality used in rational choice theory is differs from the colloquial and most philosophical use of the word. According to investopedia dictionary, rational choice theory assumed that consumers always make prudent and logical decisions that provide them with the greatest benefit or satisfaction which are in their highest self-interest. Rational choice theory adopts a narrower definition of rationality. At its most basic level, a particular behavior is rational if it is goal-oriented, reflective (evaluative), and consistent (across time and different choice situations). One way of thinking holds that the mental process of decision-making is (or should be) rational: a formal process based on optimizing utility [1]. Livet P, posited that rational thinking and decision-making does not leave much room for emotions [2]. Classical rationalistic theory assumes the consumer is able to efficiently assess the characteristics of a product by investing a minimum of resources in order to obtain a maximum result [3]. For instance, a consumer might decide while considering his needs that a new car takes precedence in his priority. It will be in his best interest to channel his savings towards the eventual purchase of the new car. Utility products that make a consumer better off are the basis for the theory of rational choice. Consumer's behaviours are premised on the

circumstances which are either considered to be rational or irrational. Elements of rationality are reflected in consumer's choices, and they usually base them on at least a rough attempt to decide which choice will give them greater satisfaction. I can have either soup or snacks with my dinner. Which one will I enjoy?

Rational decisions are primarily driven by the following factors and conditions.

- **Necessity/need recognition:** Consumer recognizes a problem or need. The need is triggered by internal stimuli when one of the person's normal needs rises to a level high enough to become a drive. Hunger-Food. A need can also be triggered by external stimuli (such as advertisement) i.e., see a commercial for a new pair of shoes, stimulates your recognition that you need a new pair of shoes (wordpress.com). Maslow hierarchy of needs explicitly delve into the fundamental issues that constitute the stages of psychological development which build into the necessity for need. According to Maslow, the motivations for needs in human are hierarchical. These factors are shown in the pyramid below.



Fig-1: Maslow Pyramid (Source: Mcleod S. 2014) [4]

Maslow's theory suggests that the most basic level of needs must be met before the individual will strongly desire (or focus motivation upon) the secondary or higher level needs. Maslow also coined the term "metamotivation" to describe the motivation of people who go beyond the scope of the basic needs and strive for constant betterment [4]. The factors that motivate needs according to Maslow are further discussed below.

- Physiological needs: This is considered to be basic requirement for human survival. The absence of these requirements might put a stalemate into the functionality of human body. Physiological needs are thought to be essential; they should be met first.
- Safety needs: Safety needs take precedence and dominate human behavior. In the absence of physical safety – due to war, natural disaster, family violence, childhood abuse, etc
- Family and Society occupies the third level of human needs. Consumers tend to resonate feelings of belongingness in their choice of needs. According to Maslow, humans need to have a sense of belonging and being loved by their social groups.
- Self-esteem enables human the desire of being valued and appreciated. Consumers often engage in profession, hobby or buying to boost their self esteem
- Self-actualization: This level of need refers to the desire to accomplish potentials by humans. Individuals may perceive or focus on this need very specifically.

**Healthy Living:** Purchasing decisions are sometimes influenced by healthy lifestyle or health conditions of consumers. An individual who doesn't want to add unnecessary weight may decide to take less or avoid cholesterol foods. Also, diabetes patient are conditioned to consume non carbohydrate foods to remain healthy. Certainly, these are sensible choices

**Age:** Age determines the consumer's choices as regards thoughtful consumption patterns. A sixty year old may

not really want to compete with a youth in his thirties when making purchasing decisions.

**Status:** Social status and occupation are reasonable determinant of consumer's consumption patterns.

No matter the tools adopted to justify consumer behaviors' rationality, no one ever seriously believed that all consumers have rational behavior and make rational decisions all the time as consumers [5].

Consumers are presumed to be rational beings with stable preferences. But recent researches have shown that is not always the case. Small changes in things like environment or interest can alter consumers' preferences and mindsets (and ultimately their purchasing behavior) in ways that are both unpredictable and profound. Even, some of the factors that typically influence consumer's behaviours are considered to be irrational sometimes. In reality the theory behind individual's economic decisions is that they make random choices inclined on caprices.

However irrational consumer's behaviors are simply random, reactive, whimsical, stimulated or influence by (unevaluative) inclinations. Consumer's decisions are highly characterized by feelings or emotions such as joy, love, fear, hope, sexuality, fantasy and obsessions for certain possessions. Rather than carefully searching, deliberating and evaluating alternatives before buying, consumers are likely to make many of these purchases on impulse, or a whim, because they are emotionally driven [6]. The consumer whom was thought to be rational is now considered to be driven by something other than rationality. Sarki, I., Bhutto, N., Arshad, I., & Khuhro, R. found out that buying is more emotional rather than rational [7]. Their research also found out that there are different things that effect buying which includes culture and lifestyle as they drive consumers towards the product that they actually buy. It's been proven that most of the times consumers are not very good at expressing what they truly wants when taking decisions. For instance, a restaurant may enjoy more patronage due to the

sensuality of the waitress rather than the quality of its dishes. Often time’s consumers based rationality on their state of mind. Willcox observed that when people think about reasons, they appear to focus on attributes of the stimulus that are easy to verbalize and seem like plausible reasons but may not be important causes of their initial evaluations [8]. When these attributes imply a new evaluation of the stimulus, people change their attitudes and base their choices on these new attitudes.

In essence consumers evaluation instinct seems enliven after making consumption choices, and they come to regret choices based on the new attitudes.” These are reasons why an impulsive buyer will consider returning a product after purchase simply because the decision was driven by sentiments rather than utility. Nearly all consumers’ research puts respondents in a high involvement processing mode and gives them high involvement processing tasks like detail recall, while the nature of much of the media exposure that our brands get is likely to be consumed via low involvement processing mode [8].

The values ascribe to a product at the point of purchase tends to be lower than the value associated with the same product once it is in our possession. Basically, our negative reaction associated with spending money in order to acquire an asset seem to outweigh the positive reaction generated by the proceeds of its sale, and likewise the loss of an asset in our possession in comparison with never having possessed it [9]. Lack of coherence in economic choices

determined by the manner in which consumers process information is not the only source of irrationality in the consumer. Often there is a trade-off between the value of additional information and the cost (time and effort as well as monetary) required to obtain it. Therefore it is necessary to carry out a study to determine the real factors that triggers consumer’s choice and preferences.

**Aim**

The aim of this study is to assess the factors influencing consumption choices in understanding the rationality and irrationality of consumer’s behaviour.

**Objectives**

- To determine the factors influencing consumers choices
- To categorize the factors into rational and irrational influence
- To assess the influence of rationality and irrationality in consumption choices.

**Research Design**

**METHODOLOGY**

The adopted survey research design for this study is survey focused on assessing factors which are influential to consumers when making choices. Shah noted that the prevailing factors influencing consumers behaviours are social, cultural, personal and psychological [10]. These factors were further classified into rationality and irrationality in the table below.

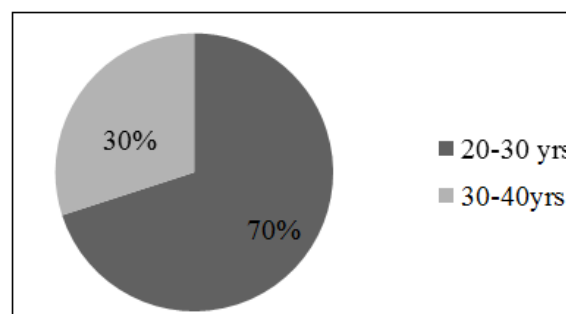
<b>Rationality</b>	<b>Irrationality</b>
Affordability	Trends
Needs	Advertorials
Income	Lifestyle
Health	Packaging & Labeling
	Religion
	Peer Influence

Source: Authors fieldwork (2005)

**Demographics of Respondents**

Both male and female respondents were 75 (50%) each. Therefore, the total numbers of respondents are one hundred and fifty (150). From the

male and female respondents within the age range (20 – 30) yrs were 105 (70%) and 45 (30%) were within the range of (20 – 30). 117 (78%) are fulltime students while 33(22%) are working alongside their studentship.



Source: Authors field work (2015)

**Sample Population**

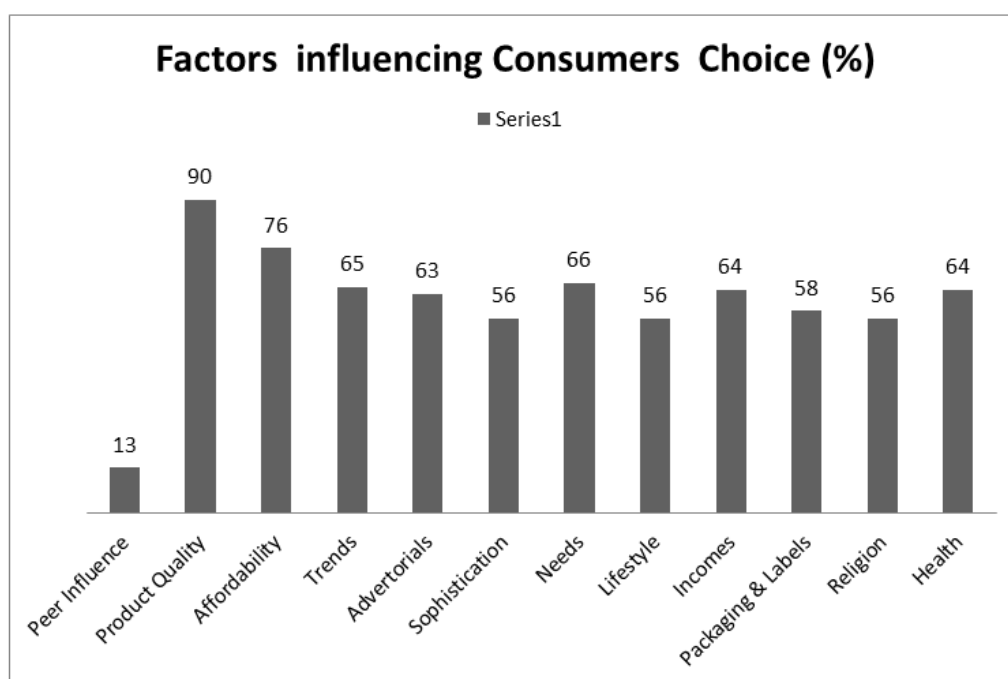
Population for this study comprised of male and female students in Ahmadu Bello University campus. The total of respondents were one hundred and fifty (150), both genders are represented equally. Therefore, male respondents are seventy five; likewise female respondents are seventy five. This is simply because both sexes patronize the selected products equally. Random sampling was adopted in the selection of respondents for the study.

The questions contained in the questionnaire aimed at knowing some of the factors responsible for consumers purchasing decision. These questions are meant to be categorized under rational and irrational behaviors which consumer’s choices are predicated on. The selected items are phone, laptop and consumables. Data was collated and analysed with the Statistical

Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0. This analysis produced the data in a format necessary to provide the descriptive statistics presented below.

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I purchase the phone/Laptop because my colleagues use that same brand	150	1	2	1.74	.443
2. I purchased my phone/laptop due to its unique features.	150	1	2	1.10	.303
3. I purchased the phone/Laptop to keep up with trends	150	1	2	1.28	.454
4. I purchased it due to its affordability	150	1	2	1.20	.404
5. I was influenced by advertorials	150	1	2	1.42	.499
6. I will change the item for a more sophisticated one if opportune	150	1	2	1.44	.501
7. Needs inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.34	.479
8. Lifestyle inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.44	.501
9. Income inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.36	.485
10. Trends inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.40	.495
11. Religion inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.44	.501
12. Price inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.28	.454
13. Packaging and labels inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.42	.499
14. Health inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.36	.485
15. Advertorials inform my choice of consumables	150	1	2	1.32	.471
Valid N (listwise)					



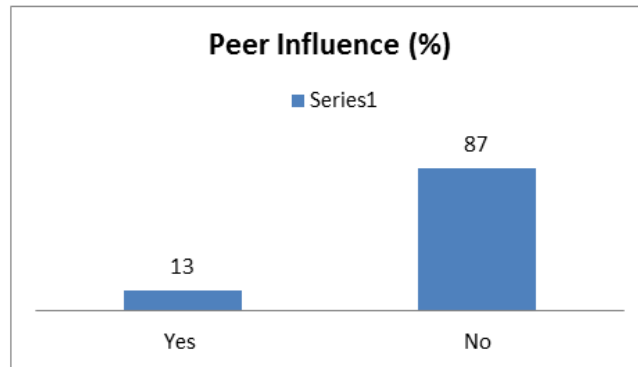
Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**FINDINGS**

**Peer Influence**

Respondents were asked if they purchase the listed products simply because their colleagues use the same brand of product. Most respondents do not agree

that peer pressure influence their choice of brand, 19.5 (13%) marked yes while 130.5 (87%) chose no. This shows consumers are sometimes seldom in taking after their colleagues when making consumption choices.



Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Product Quality**

Most of the respondents indicated that they make their choice basically on the unique features offered

by the products 135 (90%) ticked yes and 15(10%) ticked no. Invariably consumers reflect elements of rationality when making some choices.

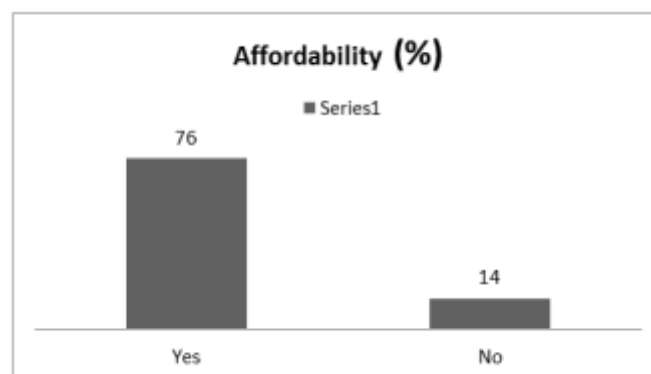


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Affordability**

Affordability of product significantly influences consumption choices. This is evident in the

outcome of this study. 114(76%) selected yes and 21(14%) selected no. Affordability is known to be a rational decision which influences consumer's choices.

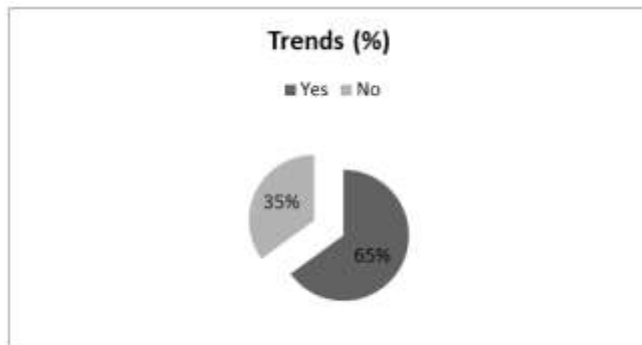


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Trends**

Respondent were asked if their choices are driven by trends. 97.5(65%) ticked yes and 26.3(35%)

ticked no. Obviously, consumers are trend conscious in their choice of product consumption. Indices of trends are reflective of both irrationality and rationality.

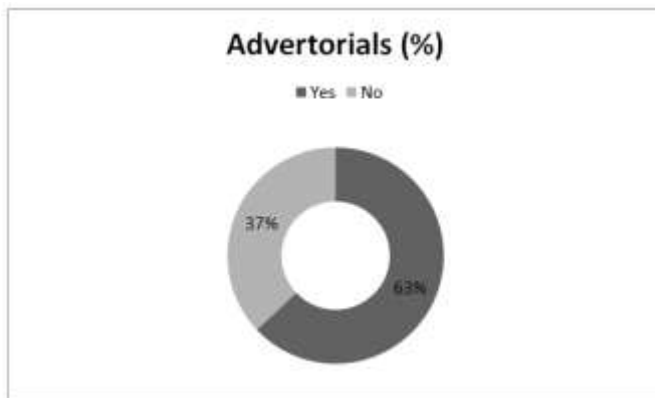


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Advertorials**

Respondents alluded to the fact that advertorials of product plays a vital influence in

consumers choice. When asked if they make their choice on the selected items 94.5 (63%) selected yes and 55.5(37%) selected no.

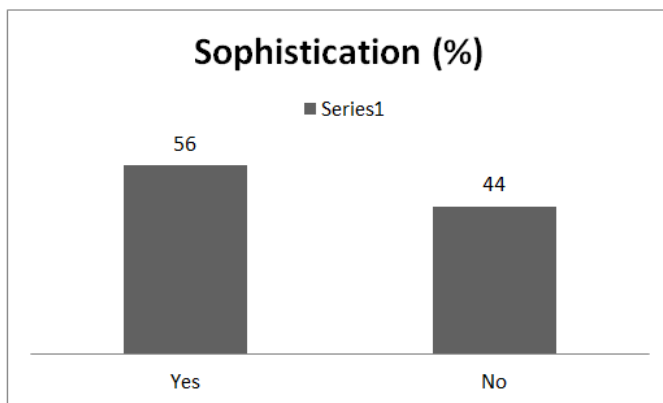


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Sophistication**

A reasonable number of respondents make their patronage based on sophistication resonating in

their choice of consumption. 84(56%) chose yes and 66(44%) chose no when ask to indicate if sophistication matters in their choice.

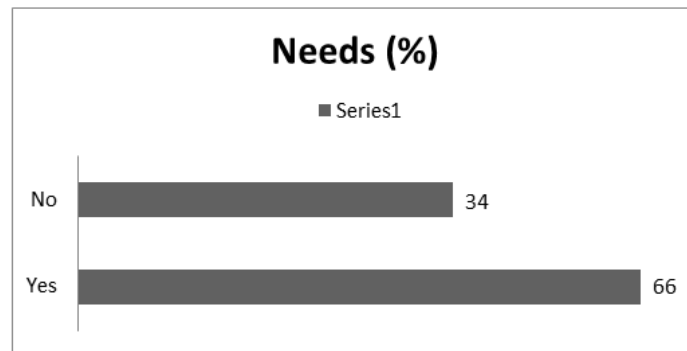


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Needs**

Need is believed to be the fundamental of consumption decision. But 66 (44%) make consumption

choices on some other factors rather than need while 99(66%) consider their need above other factors in making their decisions.

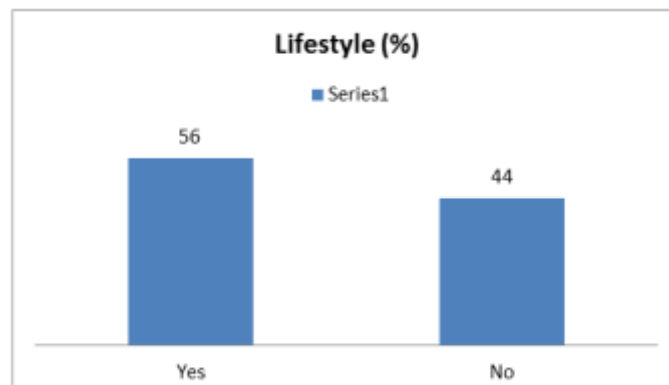


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Lifestyle**

Apparently the lifestyle of consumers reflects in their choice of consumption. When ask if they consider their lifestyle in their choice factor, 84 (56%) chose yes while 66 (44%) chose no. This implies

quite a number of consumers do not consider lifestyle in their choices. The research also confirmed that that more females make choices which tend to enhance their lifestyle, 53 (64%) of the respondents that selected yes are female while 30 (36%) were male.

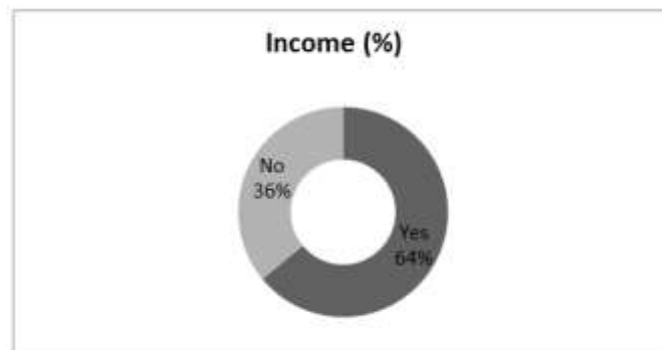


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Income**

Most consumers are trigger in making choices depending on the worth of their income. This is

indicated in the fact that 96(64%) selected yes when ask if income determine their choice and 54(36%) selected no.

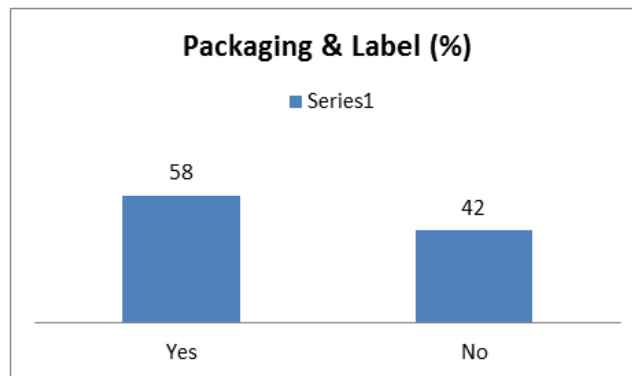


Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Packaging & Labels**

Packaging and labeling is also essential factor which influences consumption choices. Although

some of the respondents do not really factor this into consideration when making choices. 87(58%) chose yes to packaging and labeling while 63(42%) chose no.



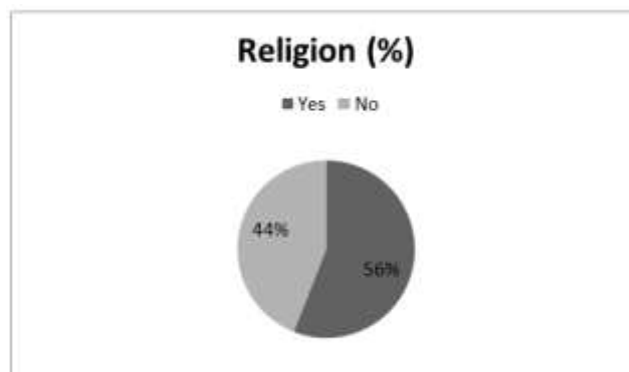
Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)

**Religion**

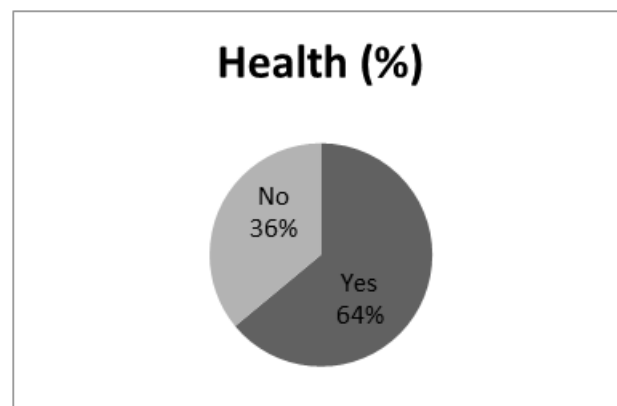
When respondents were asked if religion play a role in their consumption choices 84(56%) selected yes and 66(44%) selected no.

**Health**

96(64%) of the alluded to the fact health consideration is a salient factor consumption choice while 54(36%) chose no. This is an indication that consumers demonstrate reasonable level of rationality when making choices.



Source: Authors fieldwork (2015)



**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In relative, consumption choices oscillate between the corridors of rationality and irrationality. This research has proven that consumer's choices are

motivated by elements of rationality and irrationality. Findings contradicts some assertions which states consumers are significantly irrational in their choice and do not know what they really want. Although, the



sense of rationality in consumer choices are limited and relatively low as compared to irrationality. An assessment of the factors influencing consumer choices should afford marketers to nudge consumers towards more utility buying options, not to hoodwink consumer for the sake of a short-term surge in patronage. Taking advantage of this knowledge of consumer's choice would certainly conflict with sentiments of fairness and trust. It is necessary for brands to factor in consumer's mental and physical state at the point of decision making which could either be rational or irrational in their brand awareness strategies by balancing emotional connections with clear headed decisions.

In conclusion, the study affirms the assertion of Elimimian in Bechara [11]; Damasio, A.R., Tranel, D. & Damasio, H [12] that most abnormal and irrational buying behaviors are considered to be meaningful, because they occur for a reason, and in that sense, they are rational. Rationality or irrationality, it's the consumer's prerogative to determine their consumption choices.

#### REFERENCES

1. Kant, F. (1991). Remarks on the observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime. (J.T. Goldthwait, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (Original work published 1764).
2. Livet, P. (2010). Rational choice, neuroeconomy and mixed emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 365(1538), 259-269.
3. Trevisan, E. (2016). *The Irrational Consumer: Applying Behavioural Economics to Your Business Strategy*. Routledge.
4. McLeod, S. A. (2014). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Retrieved on 2, September 2015 from [www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html)
5. Elimimian, J. U. (2007). Psychoanalysis of ethnic consumers and similarities of consumption. *Innovative Marketing*, 3(3), 40-46.
6. Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (2007). Consumer behavior: Its origins and strategic Applications. *Consumer Behavior. 9th Edition*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc, 2-4.
7. Sarki, I. H., Bhutto, N. A., Arshad, I., & Khuhro, R. A. (2012). Impact of Pakistani university student's cultural values and lifestyles on meaning of brands. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 39(9), 643-654.
8. Matthew Willcox. (2015). Why consumers are not good at telling what they want. Institute of Decision making retrieved from [www.instituteofdecisionmaking.com](http://www.instituteofdecisionmaking.com) on 23, August 2015.
9. Dhar, R. (2012). *The Irrational Consumer: Four Secrets to Engaging Shoppers*. Yale School of Management.
10. Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland Jr, W. P., & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling Internet effects on civic participation. *Communication research*, 32(5), 531-565.
11. Bechara, A., Damasio, H., Tranel, D., & Damasio, A. R. (2004). "Body Psychology and Interpretative Methods", *Psychoanal Quarterly*, 69-188.
12. Tranel, D., & Damasio, H. (1991). Somatic Markers and the Guidance of Behaviour: Theory and Preliminary Testing. *Frontal Lobe Function and Dysfunction*. New York: Oxford University Press.