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Sustainability at the Heart of Business: Analysis of Electronic and Appliance Products Warranty Available to Buyers in Kenya

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Abstract:

This study analysis was to determine if manufacturers issued a standard warranty on the home appliance and electronic products they sell in Kenya and if the manufactures provided responsible recycling to minimize global e-waste dumping. This comparison is vital because the same products sold to customers in the USA have an existing standard warranty with an option to purchase additional extended warranty via third party companies, and availability of recycling drop-off centers within their respective neighborhoods. A comparison of products manuals specifications available to customers in USA and Kenya were reviewed to determine the offered manufacture warranty and sample participants in Kenya were surveyed to determine their perspective on standard manufacturer warranty, access to the extended warranty, and responsible recycling. The findings confirmed the existence of limitation on standard warranty; no guarantee for products workmanship; manufactures minimally stood behind the quality of their products; and sustainability efforts were minimal to none to combat e-waste dumping.

Keywords: manufacturer and standard warranty, buyer, workmanship, e-waste, sustainability

1. Introduction:

Sustainability is the ability to continuously utilize resources and while reducing, reusing, and recycling to preserve for future generations (Nicolăescu & Zaharia, 2015). Manufacturers must make every effort towards sustainable development by utilizing existing products as means of reusable materials, putting measures in place for recycling, and remaining reputable and sustainable in domestic and global environments (Lawrence & Weber, 2008). Specifically, the magnitude of electronic users in the area of mobile phone users alone entailed 4.43 users in 2015 and projected to reach 4.77 billion in 2017 and 3.17 billion internet users worldwide from: from 2.94 billion in 2014 (Statista, 2016). The demand for home appliances and electronic products usage in domestic and global platforms has increased and the lifespan of the product increasingly diminishing creating an increase of about 23% of electronic waste

products that are sent to developed countries thus contributing to un-sustainable measures (Breivik, Armitage, Wania, & Jones, 2014).

Product warranty is considered an agreement between the customer and manufacturer and a guarantee to the customer that the product they just purchased will be protected from faulty workmanship thus being sustainable (Murthy & Djamaludin, 2002). Specifically, manufacturer warranty is a confirmation by the manufacturer that they will stand behind their products quality and performance for a specified period (Kendall & Russ, 1975). The customer's satisfaction and brand loyalty have a correlation to the reliability and performance of the products they decide to purchase. Prior to making product purchases, the customers in the USA utilize the internet or visit the retailer to do a comparison based on key elements that may include availability of products by manufacturer, warranty term, and prices (Murthy & Djamaludin, 2002; Murthy & Blischke 2006). Additionally, for sustainable efforts the customers may take into consideration their geographical location and ability to receive service on the products they purchase and access to recycling centers for proper disposal (Murthy, Solem, & Roren, 2004). The comparison by customers is critical because the warranty serves as a green light assuring the customers that the manufacturer will be liable for servicing or exchanging the product if the performance is not as specified by the manufacturers (Murthy & Djamaludin, 2002).

The advancement in technology has contributed to manufacturers making complex products that require expert technicians to set up, service, and repair the products (Murthy et al., 2004). To market these new products manufacturers, integrate product warranty as an implication that the manufacturer will be liable to service the products for the specified failures as listed on their warranty card (Murthy et al., 2004). Distinctively, the manufacturers selling their products in the USA have the responsibility of geographically stationing service centers that would provide service for their products in accordance with the products warranty card and also work with local townships in ensuring proper disposal of the products (Murthy et al., 2004). To cover all USA geographical locations, manufacturers employ independent service centers to repair the products within the warranty period and bill the manufacture instead of the customers thus creating sustainable products and customer loyalty (Murthy & Djamaludin, 2002).

The standard warranty term issued by manufacturers is a great entice to customers when purchasing products because the competing brands have closely identical features such as cost, performance features, availability to finance, shape, and size of products thus contributing to sustainability. The following overarching research question guided the case study: What manufacturer warranty term was offered and were sustainability efforts discussed to customers of electronic and appliance products in Kenya? The purpose of this single case study was to explore and determine if products sold to customers in Kenya had an existing standard manufacturer warranty as those sold in the USA and were sustainability efforts integrated to minimize global e-waste dumping. We analyze and compare the product manuals for products sold in USA and Kenya to determine if the products carry any warranty and survey Kenyan customers to gain insight if the products they purchased had any standard warranty term and what efforts were put in place to minimize e-waste dumping.

2. Literature Review

Warranty dates back to pre-industrial revolution as documented by the Babylonian and Assyrian (Murthy & Blischke, 2006). The issuance of warranty by manufacturers has an enormous effect on buyer satisfaction, loyalty, and could impact future revenue to manufacturers because buyers may demand service instead of acquiring new products (Murthy & Blischke, 2006; Wu, 2012). Additionally, the manufacturers use the warranty term as a promotional tool to stand out from fellow competitors documenting what the manufacturer's liability on behalf of the buyer (Aggrawal, Anand, Singh, & Singh, 2014). In simple terms the standard manufacturer warranty is the assurance of the products workmanship; here the customer holds the manufacturer responsible for failures within the warranty period (Murthy & Blischke, 2006). The warranty period starts at the time of purchase and ends at the duration specified on the warranty card (Park, Jung, & Park, 2014). For example, sustainability is directly tied to the warranty card the listing of a warranty term of 12/12 parts and labor; simply means that the manufacturer would guarantee the workmanship of their product for 12 months of both labor and parts with specifications as noted on the warranty card.

The availability of the warranty terms, clarity on the type warranties covered by the manufacturers, and sustainability efforts are what appeals to customers as they make decisions on the products to purchase (Murthy & Blischke 2006). The longer the warranty period offered the higher the cost incurred by the manufacturer especially when the product isn't of good quality; the higher costs are associated with the buyer's warranty claims from the attempted repairs (Murthy & Blischke, 2006; Park et al., 2014). The cost of customer warranty claims varies from each manufacturer and could range from 2% to 15% of their net sales (Murthy & Blischke, 2006). For example, the USA warranty expenses for consumer electronic claims were \$7.5 billion in 2013 (Consumer Electronics Warranty Report, 2014); while consumer appliance makers reserved \$2.2 billion at the end of 2013 an amount that was comparable to the 17 times the money that was spent on buyer's warranty claims per month (Appliance & HVAC Warranty Report, 2014). To minimize manufacturers cost the competitors could conduct analysis of product reliability and warranty coverage issued by other manufacturers to remain competitive, gain buyer loyalty, and increase their customer's market share in sales and revenue (Kaynak, 2003).

The cost of product repairs by manufacturers under the standard warranty is because the customer receives a predetermined value for any failures that may occur to maintain sustainability of the product (Menke, 1969). In other words, the cost of warranty repairs is pre-determined during the manufacture of products and discussed in the following stages (a) design and development; (b) production, (c) marketing; and (d) post-sale buyer support system that addresses buyers complaints and warranty servicing (Murthy & Blischke, 2006). In each stage, the manufacturers integrate the warranty term analysis and decisions in anticipation of future warranty claims and repair times as a sustainability measures' (Chukova & Hayakawa, 2004; Park; 2010). To address the costs associated with the repairs during the specified warranty period, the manufacturers closely monitor and increase their financial reserves in accordance with the amount of money being spent each month/year on customer warranty claims payments to ensure sustainability of consumer products (Chen & Chin, 2013; Consumer Electronics Warranty Report, 2014).

Consumer product manufacture warranty and integration of sustainable efforts are essential practices by majority of manufacturers conducting business in the United States, in simple terms governments have set policies in place to monitor manufactures and ensure integration efforts in sustainability (Visconti et al., 2015). The efforts by manufacturers is important because the amount of diminishing natural resources thus forcing corporations to abide by government regulations to be in good standing, minimize imposed fines, and contribute to sustainability of products and long-term customer loyalty (Gemmell & Marian, 2013). The ability for manufactures to keep in mind the customer's demands, implementing initiatives to provide warranty and offer sustainable measures while standing behind their products for workmanship would contribute to transparency that would bind consumer loyalty (Bilan, 2013)

3. Method / Study Procedures

The purpose of this single case study was to explore and determine if products sold to customers in Kenya had an existing standard manufacturer warranty as those sold in the USA and were sustainability efforts integrated to minimize global e-waste dumping. The analysis of products was conducted by taking the top ranked electronic and appliance products as reported by consumer report in USA and familiar to Kenyan buyers are listed in Appendix A. These products were ranked to have high performance scores after thorough testing on several features in phones that included camera capabilities, running multiple applications, product displays, and features that appeal to a diversity of users (Consumer Report, 2014). The testing also included HD resolution, sound, and picture quality in televisions; megapixel resolutions, swivel, and touch-screen LCD in digital cameras; 10-hour battery life in detachable computers (Consumer Report, 2014).

In respective to the manufacture brands available in Kenya and unavailability of consumer report ranking; the author conducted survey among a 120 sample participants to identify the products that were highly ranked in Kenya. The sample participants were asked what products they would purchase in the categories of electronics and appliances. The survey results from the 120 participants confirmed that the customers in Kenya would purchase the following manufacturer brands: LG, Samsung, Dell, and Bose, Apple, Sony, Panasonic, Canon among others because of their durability and longer sustainability. The author took the five top brands LG, Samsung, Dell, and Bose and Apple as given by Kenyan customers (Appendix A) to analyze and compare the standard warranty terms made available to customers in the USA and in Kenya. The standard warranty of customers in the USA was identified by reviewing of warranty cards and compared to the findings as shared by customers in Kenya on the availability of manufacture warranty periods.

4. Study Finding

The results from the review of consumer and appliance product manuals sold in the USA confirmed that the standard warranty start date began when the customer purchased the unit, received the delivery or got their unit installed and would end as specified in the terms noted on the warranty card. The USA manufacturer's warranty was limited per product categories and differed if the product was for normal household or commercial usage; consumers had the option to select the product based on manufacture offered warranty with examples as listed in the household warranty coverage shown in Appendix B.

The standard warranty card for consumers in the USA included a specification of the on-site and carry-in repairs as listed in Appendix C; for example, the USA warranty card noted that for onsite repairs labor, transport, parts was covered while for carry-in repairs labor and parts were covered.

In addition, some accessories for customers in the USA had limited warranty while other specific parts had additional manufacturer extended warranties on top of the warranty specified in Appendix B or C as listed in Appendix D. In addition, Samsung products sold to USA consumers were reviewed and the findings are presented in Appendix E. The review of the USA manufacturers' product manuals had evidence that some damages were not covered by the standard warranty if they were associated with the buyer's fault, illegal usage, negligence, altered warranty cards, and failure due to non-authorized repairs among others. The warranty cards for USA consumers noted that some manufacturers did not grant the buyer for costs not associated with standard warranty coverage and replacement of units. In contrast, the sample of surveyed participants in Kenya and the review of the products manual specification had evidence that consumers who owned both LG and Samsung units in Kenya didn't enjoy the same warranty specifications privileges as USA consumers and the consumers were not offered manufacture warrant in Kenya.

Some manufacturers such as Dell Inc. warranty their products from the invoice date and would repair or replace the product returned to Dell. The available limited warranty periods offered by Dell customers are listed in Appendix F; specifically they covered hardware products that include parts and components as stated on the customer's invoice for warranty cards found in USA purchased products. In contrast, the sample participants in Kenya shared that no specifications for manufacture warranty for Dell products was made available to Kenyan customers, thus the customers had to repair or dump their electronic devices that no longer function because the store owners wouldn't take the products back and no credit was issued to customers for non working products.

The limited warranty for Bose products as listed in Appendix G and Apple products as listed in Appendix H were also reviewed. Apple listed the availability of warranty to customers and their product specifications were outlined and the evidence from study sample participants confirmed that as customers they were made aware of Apples warranty coverage at the time of purchase. The manuals reviewed for LG, Samsung, Dell, and Bose in the online databases environment specified that the warranty was legally binding with the original end-user or one receiving the product as a gift. In respect to the warranty being transferable among customers for LG, Samsung, Dell, and Bose, the evidence from the online databases and sample participants in confirmed that the warranty would not be extended or transferable to other people and wasn't made available to customers in Kenya. In comparison Apple sample participants in Kenya and evidence from the online resources confirmed that customers were allowed a one-time transfer to one new owner, a process where the original customer would notify via email, fax, sending via post office their notice to transfer to the Agreement Administration.

Sample Participants Findings Discussed in Detail

The reviewed warranty cards and online databases listed that product warranty could vary from country to country. When it came to surveying Kenyan sample participants to determine if the products they

bought carried any standard manufacturer warranty and if sustainability efforts were discussed to minimize global e-waste dumping the results were as follows. Sample participants shared that Warranty terms were not offered or discussed when customers purchased the products from the retailers in Kenya. In the USA as listed in Appendix B through E the warranty cards specifically noted the coverage available to customers. This was not the case to customers of the same manufacturer products in Kenya; the customers shared that during their purchase the retailer did not discuss if the manufacturers offered any warranty or how to sustainably dispose unwanted products. Ninety-eight of the one hundred and twenty buyers that were surveyed confirmed that when they made their purchases the salesperson at the retail store did not mention if warranty was available through manufacturers and did not attempt to sell to them any additional warranty. Twenty-two participants in Kenya shared that they were not aware that the manufacturers provided warranty on the products they purchased but would remember to ask about the warranty the next time they were ready to make another purchase.

The study findings confirmed that once the customers purchased the products from the retail stores in Kenya they were on their own to ensure the initial set up was done and the product was in working condition. The retailer in Kenya did not discuss if support was available to the customers and when some customers inquired they were advised that those services are not rendered to consumers. Kenya sample participant 5, 13, 67, 82, 90, 91, 111, 116, 118, and 120 shared that the retailers were mainly concerned with completing the sale and did not explain how to set up the product despite the complexity of the electronics manufactured with the advancement of today's technology. Additionally, the after-sale customer support for diagnosis, service or replacement of product failures was not available to Kenyan customers. The sample participants shared that once they purchased the products they had no access to any support from the retailer or the manufacturers to address the workmanship of the products. Participants 17, 19, 22, 34, 53, 58, 71, 74, 79, 86, 89, 95, and 98 shared that in their locale there existed no trained technicians to diagnose and repair the products; and those technicians that claimed to know how to repair the units gave up on their first attempt to repair them because of the complexity of today's technology.

Return of products to retailers was forbidden by retailers and those that attempted to return the products were scolded by the retailers. Participants 34, 37, 39, 40, 51, 58, 67, 69, 81, 86, 94, and 113 shared that when they purchased their new products the retailer told them they had confirmed the functionality of their product but did not discuss in detail that customers would not be liable for the workmanship or return of products. The sample participants in Kenyan shared that in an attempt to return the product back to the retailer they were scolded and told that once the products have left the store it become the buyers' responsibility and the retailer is no longer liable to offer any exchanges or refunds. The participants shared that the retailers did not empathize to the customers of the no refund or return policy regardless of the participants struggles to earn enough money to afford the product that were expensive to purchase. Some participants shared they were better off buying the non-branded products for lower amount of money and stomach throwing them away if they didn't work than spending enormous amount of money on brands that manufactures didn't guarantee their workmanship and sustainability.

To address the product quality, the Kenyan customers shared that they relied on word of mouth given by other previous users of the brand of products to purchase and the retailers to purchase from so that they can avoid incurring lose their money. The participants shared their frustrations that the manufacturers and the retailers did not take the time to educate them of the availability of warranty for purchased products; technicians who would address product workmanship, and sustainability efforts to minimize global e-waste dumping. On an ending note of the survey the sample participants 44, 47, 53, 58, 59, 62, 66, 84, 88, and 93 shared that they assumed that the warranty and sustainable efforts were only discussed and made available to buyers in modernized societies, and since Kenya was considered as a third world country they were not subject to share the same privileges as other buyers in Europe or USA.

5. Conclusion/Discussions

The purpose of this single case study was to explore and determine if products sold to customers in Kenya had an existing standard manufacturer warranty as those sold in the USA and were sustainability efforts integrated to minimize global e-waste dumping. Sustainability is an essential part in the maintenance of long-term reputation and customer loyalty thus the manufacturers and retailers must integrate sustainable procedures to minimize e-waste dumping and protect the environment (Lawrence & Weber, 2014). Continuous reputable and sustainable paths are avenue that businesses have to embrace while being mindful of ecological effects the e-waste dumping has on the planet thus creating long-term loyalty and sustainability profitability of the business (Eccles et al., 2012; Lawrence & Weber, 2014).

Sustainability practices are backed up by standard manufacturer warranty that is the assurance of the products workmanship where the buyer holds the manufacturer responsible for failures within the warranty period (Murthy & Blischke, 2006). In recent years, we have experienced advancement in technology and complexity of products sold in Kenya and worldwide that may require onsite repairs or expert technical teams that could offer support the customers. As the study findings confirmed, there is no mention of warranty terms by retailers that sell products in Kenya thus contributing to some Kenyans buyers to wonder if the standard manufacturer warranty was only offered to modernized societies. Are manufactures trying to avoid incurring more costs associated with warranty repair costs thus not mentioning or providing warranty to Kenyan buyers? According to Murthy and Djamaludin (2002) the longer the manufacturer warranty could result in additional costs to the manufacturers in repair cost if the products are of inferior quality. The analysis of products sold in the USA market and data available via the warranty week provided evidence that USA buyers understood the function of the warranty and could get their product repaired or exchange at no additional cost to them under the manufacturer specifications on the warranty cards (Murthy & Djamaludin, 2002; Warranty Week, 2014).

According to Murthy and Djamaludin (2002) the reliability and performance of the products were in the hands of the manufacturers of the product. When the customers in USA purchased electronic and appliance products they had access to repairs or return the product for credit within a specified time frame. In comparison, the study findings confirmed that the warranty terms were not discussed to buyers in Kenya; when buyers purchased the products and walked out the door, the retailer would not

allow for the buyer to return credit or exchange the products. For example, buyer 34 shared that upon arrival at home the microwave oven did not work but was not allowed to return the product for exchange or credit.

In this case study, the purpose was to explore and determine if products sold to buyers in Kenya had an existing standard manufacturer warranty as those sold in the USA. The findings were limited to customers of electronics and appliance products to in Kenya. The customers expressed that the Kenyan government should be alerted to impose regulations on products sold to customers and require manufacturers to offer standard warranty for product workmanship and specify on the warranty cards. The findings also confirmed that Kenyan customers were frustrated with product failures; lack of education by retailers and manufacturers on products sustainability efforts to minimize global e-waste dumping; and the availability of warranty if any when the purchases were made. Should the manufacturers be liable to educate the retailers who can in turn educate customers at the time of purchase on product functionality? If the government was to mandate manufacturers to issue warranty will this help minimize the amount of defective products sold in Kenya and improve customer satisfaction? These are sample questions came to mind while surveying the Kenyan buyers and would help future researchers to explore and offer insight to the Kenyan buyers as they accumulate essential tools necessary for researching reliable manufacturers that stand behind the quality and performance of their products.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Top Ranked Consumer Electronics USA Products by Consumer Report 2014 Familiar to Kenyan Buyers

Consumer Electronics & Appliance Products	Manufacturer
Smartphone	Apple iPhone

	Samsung Galaxy
	LG G3
Television	LG
	Samsung
Computer	Dell XPS
Headphones	Bose
Home Appliance	LG
	Samsung

Appendix B: LG Consumer Appliance Standard Warranty

LG Consumer Appliances	Commercial Usage (Years or as Specified)	Normal Household Usage	Type of Service
Washing Machine	1	1	On-site
Refrigerator	1	1	On-site
Dishwasher	1	1	On-site
Microwave oven	6 Months	1	On-site
Vacuum cleaner	0	1	Carry-In

Appendix C: LG Consumer Electronics Standard Warranty

LG Consumer Electronics: Product (Household Usage)	Warranty Period (Years)	Type of Service
Televisions	1	On-site
HDD Player & Home Theatre Systems	1	On-site
LCD/LED Monitor	1	On-site
Portable Audio System/DVD Player	1	Carry-In

Appendix D: LG Accessories /parts/Others Standard Warranty

LG Accessories /Parts /others	Warranty Period (Years)	Service Type
Accessories (<i>bundled and included in original packaging</i>)	1	Replace
Motor: Washing machine &	10	Replace

Dishwasher		
Compressor (Depending on Model)	5 or 10 years	Replace
Front Load Washing Machine Models	5	Replace
Refrigerator & Dryer	6 Months	Replace

Appendix E: Samsung Consumer Electronics, Appliance & Accessories and Parts Standard Warranty

Samsung Consumer Electronics & Appliances: (Household Usage)	Warranty Period (Years or as Specified)
LCD/LED Television	1
Plasma Television	1
Mobile Phone and Tablet	1
Galaxy Camera	1
Bluetooth Headsets	1
Other accessories	6 Months
Refrigerator	1
Dishwashers	1
Washing Machine	1
Clothes Dryers	1
Microwave Oven	1
Built-in Cooking Appliance	1
Vacuum	1
Accessories /Parts /others	Warranty Period (Years or as Specified)
Refrigerator Compressor (sealed system parts)	5
Digital Inverter Compressor (Refrigerator)	10
Control Board (Washer)	2
Magnetron (Microwave)	10
Other Parts /Accessories	6 Months

Appendix F: Dell Hardware Standard Warranty

Dell-branded Hardware Products: Warranty Availability	Warranty Period (Years or as Specified)
Limited Warranty	90 Day
Limited Warranty	1
Limited Warranty	2

Limited Warranty	3
Limited Warranty	4
Total Satisfaction Return Policy	21 Days of Invoice Date
Total Satisfaction Return Policy	14 days for Reconditioned /Refurbished

Appendix G: Bose Products Standard Warranty

Bose Products	Warranty period
Non-powered speakers consumer electronics	5
VideoWave® entertainment system	2
All other consumer electronics products	1

Appendix H: Apple Hardware Standard Warranty

Apple Hardware Warranty	USA	Kenya
iPod Classic	1	1
MacBookPro	1	1
iPad	1	1
Apple Watch	1	1