



The Impact of Physicians Word of Mouth Advertisements on Consumer Behaviour towards Over-The-Counter Medicine

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Abstract: *This study determines and establishes the effect of physicians' prescription on patients' behaviour towards over-the-counter medicine (OTC) in Nigeria. Survey method of design was adopted for the work. The primary source of data was utilized with questionnaire being the main instrument to sift data from the randomly selected consumers that patronize three major pharmacies in Ibadan metropolis. The population of the study comprised of the consumers that patronize Kunle-Ara, Midas, and Pharmadex Pharmacies in Ibadan between certain selected times. The population was 9339 from which a sample of 477 respondents were drawn and used for the study. The hypothesis formulated was tested using regression analysis. The result showed that physicians' prescription on patients' positively affected their buying behaviour towards over-the-counter medicine (OTC). In line with the finding, the study recommended that pharmaceutical companies should conduct a market research on the different markets to ensure that the advertising initiatives being implemented suits the targeted markets to improve product purchases.*

Keywords: *Over-The-Counter Medicine, Buying Behaviour, HealthCare System; Word Of Mouth Advertisements*

INTRODUCTION

According to Chaar (2017), Over-the-counter drugs are the drugs, which are sold to consumers directly without prescription from physicians unlike prescription drugs, which are sold to consumers by physicians consent with prescription. In many countries regulatory agency selects a drug to ensure that Over-the-counter drugs contain ingredients that are safe and effective. Instead of final product Over-the-counter drugs are regulated according to active pharmaceutical ingredient. Over-the-counter drugs are available in general stores, supermarkets in many countries. In U.S as of 2011 about one-third of older adults reported use

of Over-the-counter drugs. It has reached to 81% by 2018 as first line treatment for minor illnesses. The regulation of Over-the-counter drugs is overseen by Food and Drug Administration (FDA). FDA put the requirement that every Over-the-counter drug should be labeled with set of facts which includes the following: active ingredients; inactive ingredients; indications; purpose; safety warnings; directions for use. With Over-the-counter most courts have decided that labeling is enough and manufacturers need not find a way to advice consumers. A license is not required if sold by shop other than chemist shop in terms of rule 123, for sale of drugs listed in schedule K of D & C act Rules, 1945. Schedule K drugs include- drugs not intended for medicinal use, quinine and other anti-malarial drugs, magnesium sulfate, insecticides, disinfectants and aspirin tablets, paracetamol, analgesic balms, antacids, inhalers for treating cold and nasal congestion, ointments for external use, absorbent cotton, bangles, adhesive plaster, liquid paraffin.

According to Gurbani, (2011) Consumer behaviour is the study of how individual customers, groups or associations select, purchase, use and dispose ideas, products and services in order to fulfill their needs and wants. There is diversity among consumers as well as marketers. Behaviour is a mirror in which everyone shows his or her image. Consumer behaviour inspects how emotions, attitudes and preferences influence purchasing behaviour. Characteristics such as demographics, personality, lifestyle and behavioral variables such as usage rates, usage occasion, loyal and brand advocacy of individual customers affect people's wants and consumption. All aspects of consumer behaviour are concerned from pre purchase activities through post-purchase consumption, evaluation and disposal activities. It is considered about all people included either directly or indirectly, in acquiring choices and utilization activities including brand influencers and opinion leaders. Even for the experts in the field, research shows that consumer behavior is difficult to predict. However, new research strategies such as ethnography and consumer neuroscience are revealing new insight into how customers make decision. Customer relationship management (CRM) databases have turned into a benefit for the analysis of customer behavior. Databases additionally did market segmentation, particularly behavioral segmentation, for example, creating loyalty segments, which can be utilized to grow tightly targeted, customized marketing strategies on a one-to-one basis.

The role of advertising in determining consumer behavior and brand preference has been undermined by many firms in Nigeria over the years. Some firms spend huge amounts of money advertising their products and still claim about indifference in their sales volume. The misconception seems to be based on entirely understandable initiative reaction: how can advertisers claim that advertising does not increase consumption and sales and still spend so much money on it. According to Ambler (2010), advertising has major influences on consumption volume of consumers, as well as sales volume. Adverts may not necessarily bring about huge volumes of sales in the short-run, but certainly increased sales and profits in the long run if done properly. Even if some marketers believe that accurate knowledge about consumers, how they buy, why they buy, and where they buy- is unnecessary as it was possible to manipulate hapless buyers into parting with their money in return for products that they do

not want. However, models about advertising as a strong force have survived despite various empirical studies showing that the view of advertising as a strong persuasive force was largely unfounded. Hence, this study evaluates the impact of advertisement on consumer buying behavior of over the counter (OTC) medicines in Oyo state. The study specifically examines the effects of prescription from physicians' drugs on consumer preference.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Conceptual Framework

2.1 Concept of Advertisement

According to Webstar (2016), Advertising is used for communicating, exchanging/delivering business information to the present and prospective customers. It usually provides information about the advertising firm, its product qualities, place of availability of its products, etc. Advertisement is indispensable for both the sellers and the buyers. However, it is more important for the sellers. In the modern age of large scale production, producers cannot think of pushing sale of their products without advertising them. Advertisement supplements personal selling to a great extent. Advertising has acquired great importance in the modern world where tough competition in the market and fast changes in technology. According to Gardner (2018), Advertising is the means of mass selling that has grown up parallel with and has been made necessary to mass production". Advertising is used for communicating business information to the present and prospective customers. It usually provides information about the advertising firm, its product qualities, place of availability of its products, etc. Advertisement is indispensable for both the sellers and the buyers. However, it is more important for the sellers. In the modern age of large scale production, producers cannot think of pushing sale of their products without advertising them. Advertisement supplements personal selling to a great extent. Advertising has acquired great importance in the modern world where tough competition in the market and fast changes in technology, we find fashion and taste in the customers.

Pharmaceutical Advertisement For Over the Counter (OTC) Medicine or Direct Consumer Advertising

According to Hutchison (2014), Prescription drugs are the drugs which are required to be dispensed under the supervision of a physician. On the other hand, over the counter drugs can be sold directly to the consumers/patients without any doctor's prescription. The traditional pharmaceutical media for exposing and raising the product message of prescription drugs are professional journals, magazines or newspapers, direct mail, convention or hospital displays and service items such as educational films, medical illustrations and photographs, office supplies, text books, and exhibitions etc. pharmaceutical advertisement for direct consumer is normally done by print media advertising. The print media consists of newspapers, magazines, journals, handbills, etc. No newspaper or journal today can survive without advertising revenue. Print media advertising, even today, is the most popular form; and revenue Derived by mass media from advertising has, therefore, been progressively increasing year after year. Print media appeals only to the sense of sight, i.e. eyes. Printed advertisements have the advantage

of being directly in front of the consumer who elects to read them. By reading an advertisement the consumers becomes better informed and are more likely to follow-up on the product.

Strategies for New and Switched OTC Pharmaceutical Products

According to Hutchison and Barrier (2014), Over The Rights Counter marketing strategies are most important and unavoidable aspect of any pharmaceutical organization especially what happens when a pharmaceutical products losses the patent protection, it is important to consider whether radical change is really necessary. It may be that the pharmaceutical product is operating in a niche category that is too small to attract challenging generic competition, at least in the short term. It could also be that the awareness and image of the brand is so strong in patients and doctors minds that it would retain most of its equity even after the loss of patent protection. In most cases however, the entry of generic competitors radically alters the competitive setting and calls for appropriate radical responses, the few major strategies available to pharmaceutical brands facing competition from OTC and generic products are briefly reviewed. Marketing strategies available for a prescription drug facing competition from existing generic product involve a trade-off between brand building and price competition. A company can also resort to no marketing oriented strategies such as legal efforts to extend patent protection or tactical alliances with generic makers and can simultaneously implement different strategies, thereby creating a hybrid model. It is nevertheless useful to review each strategy independently, starting from the most common to the least common. Some of the strategies are discussed here

- i) Low Price strategy: This strategy has the lowest potential for brand building. On the other hand, narrowing the price gap with revival addresses the main problem created by the expiry of the patent; that the equity of the brand can no longer sustain a large price differential with what is, essentially, the same product.
- ii) Innovation strategy sort of introducing a completely new molecule, pharmaceutical companies can innovate by launching new forms and dosages or by demonstrating effectiveness for new indications. They can also innovate by offering better services for doctors and better communication on the illness and on the brand through higher promotion by the medical representatives. Compared with the 'Milk and Divest strategy, this option also entails low price competition, but can improve the equity of the off-patent brand by offering additional patent protection. On the other hand, innovations require years of research before being authorized and, in some countries, do not necessarily extend the duration of the patent. Provide more value for the money introducing new and improved flavors, packaging, or delivery systems (e.g. easy to swallow pills, or patches) can lead to additional emotional or functional consumer benefits. The resulting differentiation enhances the awareness and image of the brand and hence increases its equity. Because these innovations typically do not extend patent life however, it is more difficult to pass the costs on to the

- consumer when facing generic competition and hence, this strategy's lead is one step ahead towards price competition.
- iii) Invest in generics: - Pharmaceutical companies can try to fight at both ends of the market by introducing their own generic. This will reduce the profitability of generic9 makers and may discourage them from entering the category. On the other hand, pharmaceutical companies have realized that producing and marketing generics requires different skills to their traditional business and that it is difficult to be a strong player in both business models. Finally it is inevitable that the competition from generics will erode the profitability of the original brand and pharmaceutical companies should not put up a fight and the continuous investments in brand building, coupled with price cuts and at the end consumers, marketers both are happy.

Consumer Behavior and Characteristics

According to Hodges (2015), Consumer buying behaviour is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society. According to Hoek (2018), Marketing success or failure of a company depends on target consumers' individual and group reactions expressed in the form of buying patterns. Since customer is the reason why any organization exists, it is necessary to understand the customer and study the pattern of his buying behaviour.

According to Srivastava (2017), Consumer buying behaviour is all psychological, social and physical behaviour of potential customers as they become aware of, evaluate, purchase, consume and tell other people about products and services.

- i. Bargaining – A trend of bargaining is often found in the behaviour of buyers. They prefer buying goods by reducing the price as told by the seller. Indian buyers too do not frame uniform price policy. The trend of bargaining is still in vogue in the Indian markets.
- ii. Quality vs. Price – Buyers focus on price instead of the variety of the goods. They therefore, prefer high price goods. A little bit change has come now because the consumers have now begun purchase of quality goods on higher price.
- iii. Brand or Trademark Consciousness – It is the characteristic of the behaviour of buyer that he appears now aware of the brand of items and considers these goods authentic and of higher quality.
- iv. Changing Consumption Patterns – Owing to widespread education, increase in income and standard of living as also desire of more comforts, the pattern of consumption is now being changed. The low income group and high income group are increasingly buying fridge, tape recorder, cooler, sewing machines etc.

Theoretical Framework

This work anchored on Shifting Loyalties Theory and the Mediation of Reality

Shifting Loyalties Theory

Ads play upon and reflect conflicted, ever-changing loyalties. While ads try to cultivate a strong sense of brand loyalty, ads also urge consumers to change loyalties, to try something new, to disavow an old loyalty in favor of a new product. In the study, Advertising in the 60s (Ghia, 2014), media historian Hazel W. Warlaumont argues that ads changed from the 1950s to the 60s. The look and message of many ads appeared to embrace the antiauthoritarian hippie counter-culture, all the while being designed and distributed by giant corporations promoting the status quo and capitalist interests. Warlaumont argues that advertisers co-opted the anti-establishment's "ideals, leaders, icons and goals into the existing structure." Warlaumont's argument inverts the concept of detournement, developed by activist Guy Debord and others in the 1960s. Debord was a leader of the radical collective, Situations International and author of *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967. Detournement refers to an artist's reuse of familiar images, by shifting contexts to create a new work with a different often contrary message. Detournement has an element of 'anti-art' using blatant theft and sabotage of existing elements, turning the original message against itself. The idea leads to later strategy of culture jamming. Both strategies are conceived as a method of resistance to the glossier elements of Capitalist culture and raise awareness of corporate ploys and their social effects. An example of an ad using elements of detournement is the print ad below sponsored by the World Wildlife Federation. The "turned" element here is the portrayal of a toxic industrial can both a kind of giant urban monument and has the polluted life water of the city. The image redirects the price we might take in the magnitude of our industrial complexes into a fear that we are poisoning the very environments that are essential to our existence.

The Mediation of Reality

Ads only work in conjunction with other media and environments in which they are embedded and cannot be understood apart from other media and environments. Marshal McLuhan noted that it is not the content of ads that makes them so persuasive. Rather it is the way they use media to fuse together a world of actions and a world of fictions. McLuhan writes: "When the motives came, the entire Pattern of American life went on the screen as a non-stop ad. Whatever any actor or actress wore or used or ate was such an ad as had never been dreamed of... The result was that all ads in magazines and the press had to look like scenes from movies." In the image: *A Guide to Pseudo events in America*, 1962, historian Daniel J. Borstin describes how news and advertising have blended together to such an extent in popular media that they create an impression in which truthful reporting becomes ambiguous and the difference between serious newsworthy event and a fabricated news event, such as a publicity stunt, is indistinguishable. But Borstin does more than just describe how ads disguise themselves as news. He sketches the origins of celebrity culture, as fame and overblown public exposure become coveted ideals not just among a small set of people but among the general population of image and media consumers. However the ability to generate publicity and

controversy, to saturate and bombard, to get people noticing, talking, arguing is something products as well as people. We have celebrity brands. Advertising thrives in a celebrity culture and is integral part of it Publicznego (2012).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a “survey method” and design. This is so because survey research focuses on the people, the vital facts of people and their beliefs, opinion, attitudes, motivation and behaviour. The area of this study was Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The population consists of conveniently selected consumers that patronize three reputed pharmacies in Ibadan metropolis which are KUNLE ARA, UCH/MOKOLA; MIDAS, ELEYELE; and PHARMADEX, DUGBE. The selected respondents were conveniently selected between August 15th and Sept., 31st, 2021. The total population of consumers picked between the dates is 9339. Having defined the population, the researcher estimated the sample size with Trek (2004) formula. Final sample size of 477 was drawn. The non-probability *convenience* sampling was used as the sampling technique for this study. Data for this study were collected mainly from primary source. Data were gathered from the primary source through questionnaire that was self-administered. In order to ensure that the research instrument was valid, the researcher ensured that the instrument measured the concepts it was supposed to measure. The questionnaire was vetted by experts in the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria. A pilot survey was used to test 30 respondents and their responses, comments and preliminary analysis were used to modify and fine-tune the instrument. To ensure reliability of the data, the researcher administered the questionnaire in batches that yielded nearly equivalent responses. The outcome of the test-retest was determined using Cronbach Alpha and the result was 0.812 which signifies that instrument was highly reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents various data gathered and the analytical techniques used. Of the four hundred and seventy-seven (477) questionnaires administered, four hundred and thirty five (435) representing 91.2% were returned and found good for the data analysis. The collected data was presented using mean and standard deviations. The 5 Likert type questionnaires rating of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) were assigned numbers 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The formulated hypothesis was tested using Regression Analysis at a significance level of 0.05 (5%). The decision rule was based on the sample mean greater than 3 for agreed and otherwise for disagreement.

Table 1: The effects of Prescription from Physicians Drugs on Consumer Preference

Items	Mean	SD
- Q1 Patient counseling affect the choice of pharmaceuticals products	2.61	1.214
Location of pharmacy and promotional events influenced the OTC product buying	3.59	1.208
-Q3 Psychological factors of buyers affects the choice of pharmaceuticals products	3.58	1.070
-Q4 Physician traits and Hospital staff experience affects the choice of pharmaceuticals OTC purchase from the patients	3.68	1.023
Average	3.91	.542

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

With respect to the effects of prescription from physicians drugs on consumer preference, the mean for respondents response to the question was 3.91 (SD=.542) indicating that the respondents rate high on the effects of prescription from physicians drugs on consumer preference. Specifically, the mean score for Q1 was 2.61. The model one which indicated that the effects of prescription from physicians drugs on consumer preference was also significant with $F(1, 434) = 449.185, p < 0.001$ as shown in Table 2. Also the model one explains 0.556 or 55.6% of the moderation between prescription from physicians and consumers preference. The model reports the following: $R = 0.746, R^2 = 0.556, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.555$ as Table 4 reports.

Table 2a: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	25.588	1	25.588	449.185	.000 ^b
	Residual	20.450	434	.057		
	Total	46.038	435			

a. Dependent Variable: consumers preference

b. Predictors: (Constant), prescription from physicians

Source: Author computation

Table 2b: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.746 ^a	.556	.555	.239

a. Predictors: (Constant), prescription from physicians

b. Dependent Variable: consumers preference

The significant level was found to be 0.00, and because of this we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate that states that *prescription from Physicians drugs have positive effects on Consumer Preference for OTC*. The finding is in line with the work of Srivastava and Sadhana, (2017), though it negates the submissions of Calisir (2003).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this paper was to examine The word of mouth advertisement and consumer buying behaviour of over the counter (OTC) medicines in Oyo State. The paper explains that the various factors such as demographic, geographical, behavioral, psychographic and miscellaneous affects buying behaviour of the consumers towards the OTC products. The demographic factors include age, income, gender, education status, occupation, etc. The geographical factors include responses from various consumers that how quality, influences, corporate image, etc affect this type of buying behaviour. The behavioral factors give an insight of the preference, buying decision of the consumers and the repeat purchase behaviour in future. The psychographic factors include motivation, perception, learning, belief and attitude as well as lifestyle, interests and activities which trigger consumers to buy OTC. The importance of patient counseling has also been mentioned in the study. Various other major factors such as location of pharmacy and impact of promotional events or offers in influencing the OTC product buying behaviour has impact on buying behaviors towards OTC.

This study have established that the reliability of pharmaceutical advertising was low and therefore recommends that the management of pharmaceutical companies using internet advertising should provide unique experience to its customers based on customer analysis to deliver a personalized experience to the customers. The study also found that advertising was effective in reach and creation of awareness and recommends that the pharmaceutical companies should invest more in advertising to increase their market share and provide product information. Finally, the study determined that there was a positive relationship between advertising and consumer purchase decision and further recommends that pharmaceutical companies should conduct a market research on the different markets to ensure that the advertising initiatives being implemented suits the targeted markets to improve product purchases.

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