

IMPACT OF STRATEGIC BRAND COMMUNICATION ON MARKET PENETRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INFANT FOOD AND TODDLER (IFT) PRODUCTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

For companies to grow and survive, they need to maintain their current customers and also reach out to new customers. One of the ways of achieving this is through brand communication which comprises advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, direct marketing and sponsorship. In order to protect and promote breast feeding, the World Health Organization (WHO) code does not approve the advertisement of breast-milk substitutes. Consequently, this study examines the impact of other brand communication tools on market penetration and development of Infant Food and Toddler (IFT) products in Nigeria. This is based on Ansoff growth strategies for increasing market share of existing products. The study employed cross-sectional research design using survey technique. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Two hundred and two (202) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from respondents selected from five health care centres in Lagos State using convenience sampling. The results indicated that out of the six brand communication tools investigated, five which include sales promotion (0.474), personal selling (0.270), sponsorship (0.240), public relation (0.057) and publicity (-0.059) have significant impact on market penetration of IFT products while four which include personal selling (0.479), public relation (0.268), sales promotion (0.242) and publicity (0.065) have significant impact on market development. This implies that sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and publicity significantly influence market penetration and development of IFT products in Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended that Dairy firms should employ integrated marketing communication in their marketing strategy.

Keywords: brand, communication, market penetration, product development, dairy

Introduction

Branding is one of the strategic marketing activities of business organizations. To build sustainable brands, there is need for consistent brand communication (Keller, 2008). It is important for companies to consistently inform the market about the brand, its features, utility and availability. Marketing strategy

through the communication of superior benefits being offered is a key tool in the development of strategic competitive advantage because brand communication is integral to the relationship that companies develop with their customers. Delgado-Ballester, Navarro and Sicilia (2012) noted that to build brand equity different brands require different ways of communication. The Infant Food and Toddler (IFT) product category is unique in brand communication because it is regulated by international legislations. WHO code does not approve the advertisement of infant milk due to the need to protect and promote breast feeding (WHO, 1981; 2008). The report on infant nutrition to the World Health Assembly in 1992 considered the health implications of direct advertisement of infant milk to the general public (Piwoz & Huffman, 2015). It was noted that infant formula should be used with care because of the hazards associated with using breast-milk substitutes. Medical advice and supervision of health officers is very important. The report also noted that direct advertisement is inappropriate because it competes unfairly with normal, healthy breastfeeding, which is not subject to advertising.

Due to the regulation, dairy companies have to find ways around the code by which they could communicate their brands without violating the WHO code. This has led to the use of other communication tools such as personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, direct marketing and sponsorship. The challenge therefore, is to identify the brand communication tools that could motivate current users to be brand loyal and also to attract prospective customers to buy. Therefore, the aim of the study is to examine the impact of various brand communication tools (personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, direct marketing and sponsorship) on market penetration and development of IFT Products in Nigeria Dairy Industry.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Brand Communications do not have significant impact on market penetration of IFT products in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Brand communications do not have significant impact on market development of IFT products in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theories of Communication

Communication plays a vital role in the fulfillment of marketing objectives. Understanding communication is essential since it is one of the basic processes through which organizations accomplish their set objectives. Arens (1999) described communication as the act of sending information from the mind of one person to the mind of another person. Similarly, Churchill and Peter (1998) described communication as the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver, such that both understand it the same way. Blythe (2006) in turn, defined communication as the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people. These descriptions emphasize the fact that effective communication involves a sender and a receiver and the transmission of a message from one person to another including the sharing of meaning between parties purported to be communicating. The theory of communication guiding this study is the ACT Theory of Communication.

Adaptive Concept of Thought (ACT) Theory of Communication

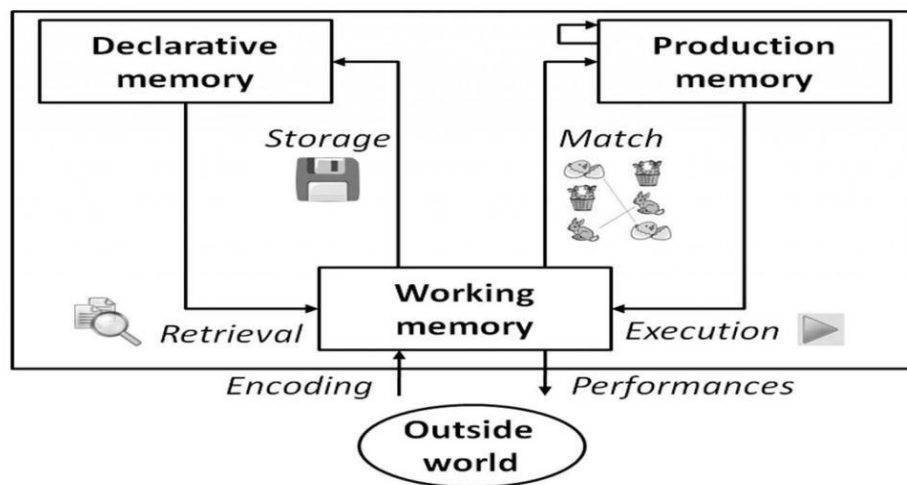
The Adaptive Concept of Thought (ACT) theory of communication is a general theory of cognition developed by John Anderson. Cognition is the process of understanding or acquiring knowledge and information through thought, experiences and other senses. The architecture is made up of the framework which shows the processes and ways of acquiring knowledge and information (Anderson, 1983). This theory provides a framework of the processes that take place in the mind of individuals. The theory works

on psychological assumptions of human nature which are derived from numerous scientific experiences and experiments.

The main focus of ACT theory is module and there are two types of modules:

Perceptual-Motor module: This takes care of the inferences or interactions with real or outer world. This part acts as a gate to bring in the necessary information and data.

Memory module: As indicated in figure 1 below, memory module contains three kinds of modules which include declarative memory, procedural (production) memory and working memory. Declarative memory consists of information and facts, procedural memory represents information in the form of productions; each production has a set of conditions and actions based in declarative memory while working memory is part of the long-term memory which is more highly activated.



ACT* THEORY

Figure 1: ACT Model

The model shows how declarative memory and procedural (production) memory works when information is communicated to perform certain tasks. Each and every human task can be produced into a model by this theory. In this study, the model consists of the processes and influences on consumer choice behaviour of IFT products.

Theory of Market Development

Every company wants to grow its business but it is often difficult to determine the best way to grow. According to Igor Ansoff there are four growth strategies that companies can choose from when determining the best growth strategy for a business. He developed a matrix which was first published in a 1957 Harvard Business Review article, Strategies for Diversification and subsequently developed in his book, Corporate Strategy, published in 1965. He suggested that companies' ability to grow their businesses depends on how they market new or existing products in new or existing markets. He outlined four distinct strategies:

Market Penetration – selling more of the same product to more of the same customers

Market Development – selling more of the same product to different customers

Product Development – selling new products to the same customers

Diversification – selling new products to different customers

Using Ansoff's matrix, companies can evaluate each of the growth strategies in turn to assess which is likely to result in the best possible return.

| | Existing Product | New Products |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Existing Market | Market Penetration strategy | Product development strategy |
| New Markets | Market development strategy | Diversification strategy |

Figure 2: Ansoff Matrix

Market Penetration

Market penetration involves selling more of the existing product to the existing market. This can be achieved through brand communication. It is also possible to win business from competitors through competitive pricing or other offers. Businesses can also boost sales by providing additional incentives to sales staff through commissions or other reward schemes like customer loyalty schemes.

Market Development

Market development involves selling the existing product in new markets. It is the most appropriate where the core competence of the business is the product. One of the ways of achieving this is to move online and use the internet to promote and sell products. New geographical markets can also be developed by setting up shops or offices in the target areas.

Product Development

Product development entails selling new products to the existing market. It is appropriate where the strength of the business lies in its relationship with customers. This can be achieved by adding complementary services or commencing activities to back up the supply chain or any other activity that can increase the scale of business.

Diversification

Diversification is the selling of new products in a new market. The most common way for a business to diversify is to develop new products that take advantage of its core competencies. Alternatively, a business can diversify by acquiring another business that operates in a separate market.

Infant Food and Toddler Product Market

The two main ways a mother may decide to feed her baby are breastfeeding and formula feeding. It is recognized that breast milk is the best food for the baby and authorities have indicated that both types of infant feeding have advantages and disadvantages (ACC/SCN, 2000; Homeier, Barbara & Neil, 2005; Piwoz & Huffman, 2015). Nigeria is a lucrative market for dairy products. Its growing population, increasing urbanization, increasing working class women and rising per capita income are expected to stimulate rising demand for dairy products. Meanwhile, domestic production remains insufficient due to increasing production/processing costs. Nigeria has a fast-growing, young population and at the same time, the middle class is expanding rapidly and urbanization is on the increase. All these factors contribute to an increased need and opportunity to provide safe, affordable nutrition to young children. In the IFT industry, the key element that drives strategy and tactics is brand loyalty. Mothers hardly switch away from a satisfying infant

nutrition brand and they prefer to stick to a satisfying brand even when they have another baby. The Nigeria IFT market is segmented into four:

- Infant formula: 0-6 months
- Follow-on formula: 6-12 months
- Cereals: from 6 months upwards
- Growing-up milk: 1 year- 3 years

Major players in each segment and products are:

- **Infant Formula** – Friesland Campina: Friso, Pfizer: SMA, Bonna, Abbot: Isomil and Similac, Danone: Cow & Gate, Promasidor: Cowbell, Thrive: Thrive Infant formular, Nestle: NAN, Lactogen
- **Growing up milk** - Peak 123, SMA Progress, NAN 3, Nido 123
- **Cereals** - Nestle Nutrend, Nestle Cerelac, Heinz, Friesland Campina Friso

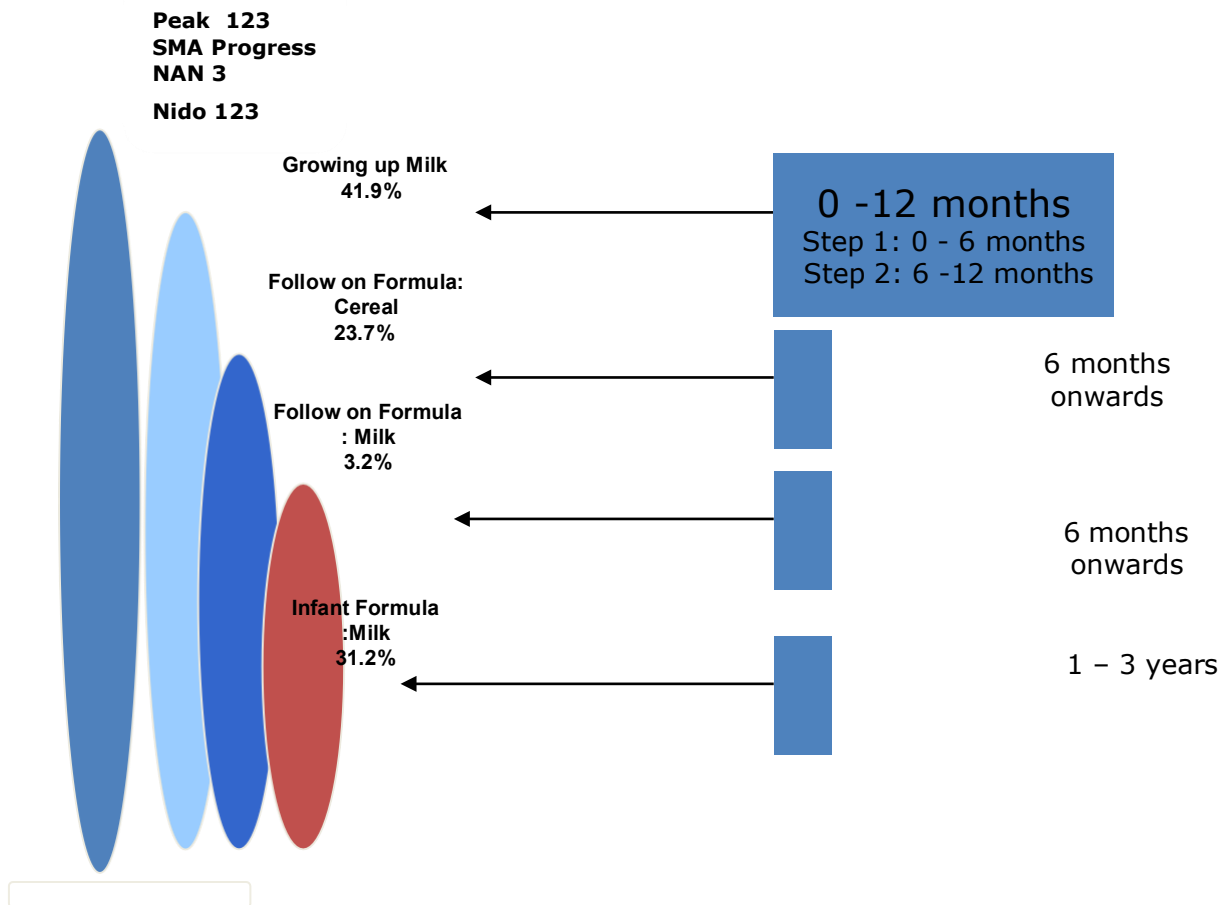


Figure 3: Breakdown of Nigeria IFT Market

Brand Choice Drivers in IFT

The decision of what infant feeding practice to adopt is influenced by a wide range of factors. In all cultures, there are a number of factors that affect women's decisions on how to feed their children (Matusiak, 2005). This is depicted in figure 4 below:

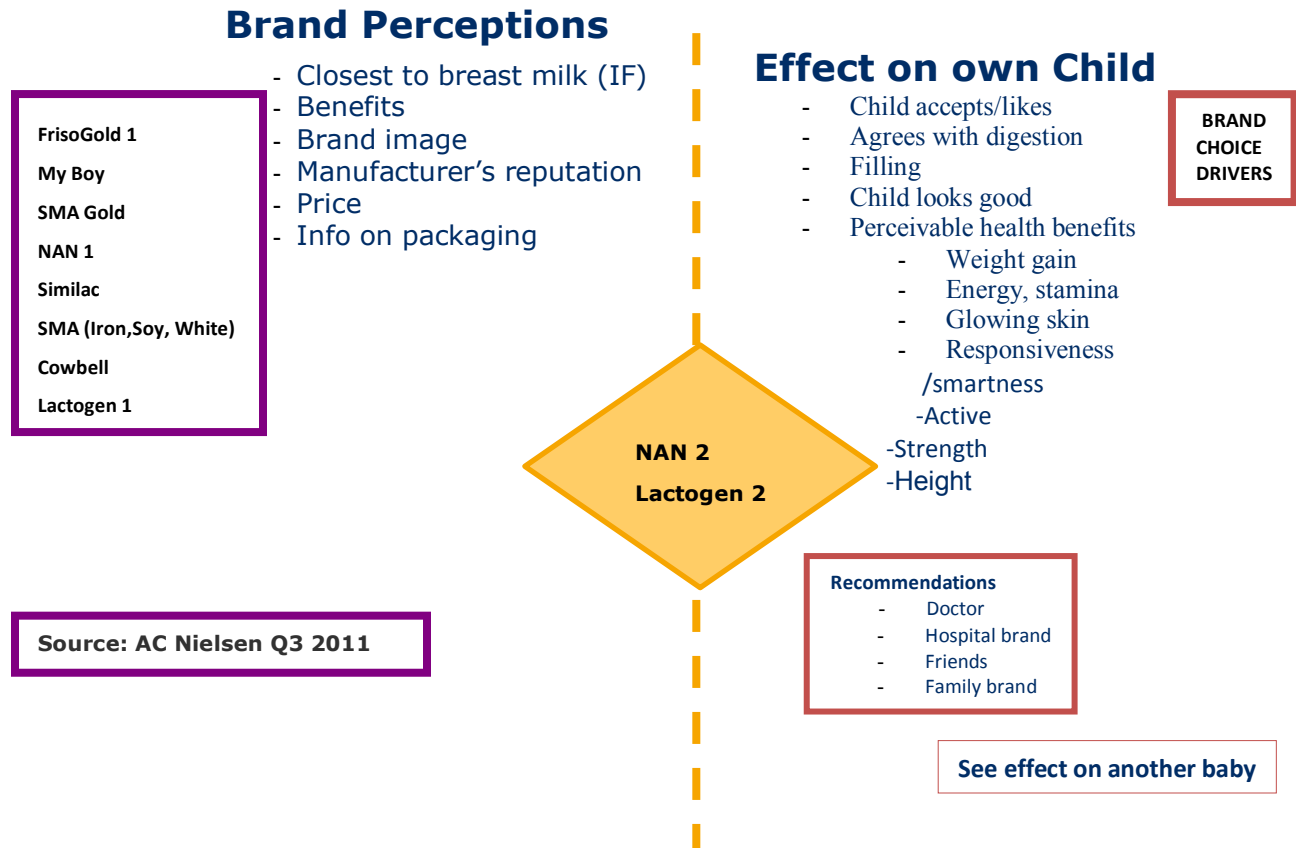


Figure 4: Brand Choice Drivers in IFT

Several factors have profound impact on infant feeding practices (Arora, McJunkin, Wehrer & Kuhn, 2000). For example, having been breast fed as an infant or having a sibling who was breast fed establish breastfeeding as a norm for an individual and her household (Ford & Labbok, 1990; Meyerink & Marquis, 2002). The role of health officers has also been recognised (Black, Blair, Jones & DuRant, 1990). That is why they are important in the communication of brands to mothers. Word-of-mouth among users is also another factor that can positively or negatively influence consumer choice behaviour. Other important factors include brand perceptions by customers in terms of closeness to breast milk, benefits, brand image, manufacturer's reputation, price and information on packaging; mother's experience in terms of taste, smell, thickness, lightness, creaminess and ability to dissolve easily; effect on previous child with respect to if the child accepts the product and perceived health benefits to the child. In all these influences on IFT brand choice, there is need for information to be communicated.

Brand Communication

Branding is increasingly being used as a strategy for managing markets (Nijssen, 1999; Davis, 2002). The authors noted that the most powerful corporations in the world have all had success related to their strong brands through effective communication or promotion. The communication mix consists of

advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, publicity and direct-marketing tools that a company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships (Dawar 2004). Due to the WHO code, advertising is not considered as part of the brand communication for IFT brands. The Code is a global recommendation that breast feeding must be actively protected and promoted in all countries.

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and control (NAFDAC) being a member does not allow advertisement of IFT Foods in Nigeria. As such, medical marketing, retail marketing and consumer marketing which form the three pillars of the IFT marketing strategy are carried out with care. The role of Medical Marketing is to create awareness for brands among health officers and to partner with them to educate users of IFT brands. Retail marketing has to do with marketing to intermediaries while consumer marketing is the direct marketing to consumers. The major communication tools usually employed include:

Personal selling is the personal presentation by a company's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders, 2008). Due to the role of health officers in advising mothers and the influence of intermediaries, some IFT companies have resorted to personal selling to Health officers and intermediaries as a tool to penetrate the market. Due to its personal dialogue, it can create a dominating position in the minds of the intermediaries who will in turn influence customers buying behaviour. In this study, personal selling is conceptualized in terms of the influence of health officers and intermediaries on choice behaviour of existing and potential customers of IFT products.

Sales promotion on the other hand is a short-term incentive to encourage the purchase of a product. Infant formula manufacturers use various methods which include offering premiums to customers, providing educative materials to health officers. At times, mothers in the hospital are provided with packages that include coupons for free or discounted complimentary products.

Public relations refer to communication that companies carry out to improve or maintain favourable relations with members of the public, other organizations or industries (George, 2008). It relates to everything that contributes to a company's image.

Publicity

Publicity is a non-personal communication regarding a company's products which is not directly paid for or under an identified sponsor (George, 2008). It usually comes in the form of news story, word-of-mouth, editorial or announcement (Belch & Belch, 2004). Publicity through word of mouth can create strong and positive or negative brand images and beliefs. It has a very strong non-linear effect on consumer choice and it is impossible to control. Mohr (2001) suggested the use of viral marketing to rapidly spread word of mouth. It is an important source of consumer information for IFT products primarily because its information is considered to be more credible.

Direct marketing involves making direct connections with carefully targeted individual consumers to obtain an immediate response and to cultivate lasting customer relationships by using direct mail, telephone, e-mail and the Internet (Kotler et al., 2008). In recent times, companies use websites and social media as direct marketing tools to reach customers (Piwoz & Huffman, 2015).

Sponsorship is the provision of financial support by a company to other organizations or individuals in order to gain prestige and status (George, 2008). A company may sponsor TV programme, sports, cultural event or an individual with the purpose of communicating with the target market.

The integration of the various communication tools is referred to as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). It calls for recognizing all contact points (brand contact) where the customer may

encounter the company and its brands. It involves identifying the target market and shaping a well-coordinated communication program to obtain the desired audience response as marketers are moving toward viewing communications as managing customer relationship over time. Most companies use a combination of the communication tools to communicate with their target market in order to differentiate their products, remind, reassure, inform and persuade their market and potential markets (Reid et al., 2005).

Methodology

Population and Sample

The population for the study comprises all nursing mothers in Lagos state. The selection of respondents for the study was from the nursing mothers who attended post natal clinic at various health care centres during the period of the study. Five health care facilities were visited due to time factor and costs. Convenience sampling was employed in selecting the respondents, that is, it was based on the ease of access to the health care centres and the nursing mothers.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using questionnaire. The questionnaire was pilot tested using thirty nursing mothers who visited Alimosho General Hospital for BCG immunization and were to return for polio immunization after 3 weeks. Piloting the questionnaire helped to identify ambiguities in the questions and to identify the range of possible responses for each question. Face and content validity were determined by subjecting the questionnaire to expert opinion.

The test-retest reliability was assessed by asking the nursing mothers to complete the questionnaire on two separate occasions approximately 3 weeks apart. The two sets of responses were compared statistically using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient and the correlation coefficient of 0.832 indicates that the instrument is reliable as there is a strong relationship between the two responses. Two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were finally administered. A total of two hundred and two (202) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. The respondents filled the questionnaire while waiting to be attended to.

Results

Socio-Demographic Distribution of Respondents

The age distributions of the respondents are: below 30 years (28.0%), 31-50 years (50.5%), 50 years and above (21.5%). 1.0% are educated up to Ph.D level, 6.5 % have Masters, 49.5% have B.Sc, 25.5% have Diploma while 17.5% indicated others. Majority of them (64.0%) are civil servants, (10.5%) private employees, (2.5%) traders, (1.5%) full-time housewives while (21.5%) indicated others. Their annual income level are below N100, 000 (46.5%), N100, 001-N300,000 (38.5%), N300, 001-N500,000 (10.5%) while N500,001 and above (4.5%).

Infant Formula that Respondents buy regularly

Table 1: Infant Formula and Frequency

| Response Variables | | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Friso | 72 | 35.6 |
| | SMA | 48 | 23.7 |
| | NAN | 47 | 23.3 |
| | Bonna | 9 | 4.5 |
| | Isomil | 10 | 5.0 |
| | Similac | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Cow and Gate | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Thrive | 6 | 3.0 |
| | Betasma | 3 | 1.4 |
| | My Boy | 4 | 2.0 |
| | Lactogen | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Total | | 202 |

Table 1 shows that out of the 202 respondents, over 50% of them regularly buy Friso, SMA and NAN while Lactogen, Cow and Gate and Similac are the least purchased. This indicates that Friso, SMA and NAN are the most widely purchased IFT products in Nigeria.

Analysis on Brand Communication

Hypothesis ONE: Brand Communications do not have significant impact on market penetration of IFT products in Nigeria.

Table 2: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .949 ^a | .902 | .898 | .21138 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sponsorship, Publicity, Public Relation, Direct Marketing, Personal Selling, Sales Promotion

Table 2 above shows the model summary of the regression on market penetration. The table reports the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R-square value of 0.902 shows that the independent variables explain 90.2% of the variation in market penetration of IFT products.

Table 3: ANOVA

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 78.956 | 6 | 13.159 | 294.501 | .000 ^a |
| | Residual | 8.624 | 193 | .045 | | |
| | Total | 87.580 | 199 | | | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sponsorship, Publicity, Public Relation, Direct Marketing, Personal Selling, Sales Promotion

b. Dependent Variable: Market Penetration

Table 3 above is the ANOVA table which tests for the significance or otherwise of the fitness of the regression model. From the table, the model is significant ($F=294.501$, p value= 0.000).

Table 4: Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|--------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 0.957 | 0.140 | | 6.857 | 0.000 |
| | Personal Selling | 0.270 | 0.055 | 0.203 | 4.935 | 0.000 |
| | Sales Promotion | 0.474 | 0.050 | 0.494 | 9.545 | 0.000 |
| | Public Relation | 0.057 | 0.024 | 0.063 | 2.379 | 0.018 |
| | Publicity | -0.059 | 0.029 | -0.062 | -2.005 | 0.046 |
| | Direct Marketing | 0.027 | 0.035 | 0.030 | 0.777 | 0.438 |
| | Sponsorship | 0.240 | 0.056 | 0.283 | 4.297 | 0.000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Market Penetration

Table 4 shows the coefficients of the predictor of the dependent variable. The result shows that sales promotion (0.474), personal selling (0.270), sponsorship (0.240), public relation (0.057) and publicity (-0.059) have significant impact on market penetration of IFT products. Only the impact of direct marketing (0.027) is not significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that brand communication have significant impact on market penetration of IFT products in Nigeria Dairy industry. This implies that as brand competition in Nigeria intensifies, one important key to survival and success is to invest in brand building by imbuing brands with an emotion laden personality consumers can relate to and that is meaningfully different from that of competitive offerings.

Hypothesis Two: Brand communications do not have significant impact on market development of IFT products in Nigeria.

Table 5: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .975 ^a | .950 | .949 | .16474 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal Selling, Public Relation, Publicity, Sales Promotion, Sponsorship, Direct Marketing

Table 5 above shows the model summary of the regression on market development. The model summary table reports the strength of the relationship between the model and the dependent variable. The R-square value from the summary table is 0.95. The R-square which measures the variability in market development as explained by brand communication is 95%.

Table 6: ANOVA

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 100.557 | 6 | 16.760 | 617.569 | .000 ^a |
| | Residual | 5.238 | 193 | .027 | | |
| | Total | 105.795 | 199 | | | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal Selling, Public Relation, Publicity, Sales Promotion, Sponsorship, Direct Marketing

b. Dependent Variable: Market Development

Table 6 above is the ANOVA table which tests for the significance or otherwise of the fitness of the regression model. From the table, the model is significant (F=617.569, p value =0.000).

Table 7: Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 0.495 | 0.120 | | 4.115 | 0.000 |
| Personal Selling | 0.479 | 0.042 | 0.515 | 11.332 | 0.000 |
| Sales Promotion | 0.242 | 0.047 | 0.229 | 5.154 | 0.000 |
| Public Relation | 0.268 | 0.056 | 0.244 | 4.792 | 0.000 |
| Publicity | 0.065 | 0.019 | 0.062 | 3.396 | 0.001 |
| Direct Marketing | 0.003 | 0.019 | 0.003 | 0.179 | 0.858 |
| Sponsorship | 0.014 | 0.045 | 0.010 | 0.323 | 0.747 |

a. Dependent Variable: Market Development

Table 7 presents the regression analysis of the impact of brand communication on market development of IFT products. The result indicated that personal selling (0.479), public relation (0.268), sales promotion (0.242) and publicity (0.065) have significant impact on market development but direct marketing (0.003) and sponsorship (0.014) are not significant. Since most of the brand communication tools are significant, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between brand communication and market development in the IFT category of Nigeria Dairy Industry.

Conclusion

For any business to grow, communication is very important as it gives visibility to the business and its products. Moreover, it is one of the factors that make companies stand out amidst competitors. The study attempted to examine the impact of brand communication on market penetration and development of IFT products in Nigeria Dairy Industry. Interestingly, the study established that brand communication has significant influence on market penetration and development of IFT products. Brand communication in the dairy industry especially the IFT category needs to be managed in relation to the interplay between factors that affect health care practitioners' recommendation and those that affect the final consumers of the product. Based on the study, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and publicity significantly influence market penetration and development of IFT products in Nigeria. This means that in the IFT industry, a combination of communication tools will provide better results than employing just one of the tools. Therefore, the study recommends that Dairy firms should employ integrated marketing communication in their marketing strategy. It is also recommended that IFT companies should embark on brand development strategy such as intensive brand distribution and trade promotion in order to outsmart competition.

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