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Mobilization of the Sales of Products in Ghana through Effective Packaging

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Abstract:

The poor packaging of some products in Ghana negatively affects their massive sales. This is largely seen in the poor standard of layout, design/illustration, lettering style selection, selection of colours and printing. The study was carried out to investigate into the factors that cause the low packaging standards of some products in Ghana. The study was driven in the concurrent triangulation design of the mixed method research design with questionnaire and direct observations being the main data collecting instruments for the research. Descriptive and case study research methods were adopted for the study. A total sample of 300 respondents constituting of package designers, manufacturers of products, shop attendants and clients some of whom were purposively sampled and others randomly sampled were engaged in the study. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS while the qualitative data was analyzed via thematic analysis. The analysis of the findings of the study revealed that effective packaging via the use of appropriate lettering style, colours, layout, illustrations and printing quality makes up the 'silent salesman' that maximize the sales of many products in Ghana. The study concludes that effective packaging can be a powerful tool to persuade consumers and lead to an increase in the sales and profits of products in Ghana. The study tasks managers of companies and graphic designers who produce packaging for products to pay close attention to the package design of their products since it is the vital fulcrum that maximizes the sales of products.

Keywords: Package design, products, sales, visual communication

1. Introduction

Good package designs have the potentials of relaying the messages purposed for clients in a clear and comprehensive manner. Designers formulate product packaging by using various design elements (e.g. texts, images, colours, trademarks, shapes, size and textures), making the products easy to recognize for consumers. Therefore, comprehensibility is the basic requirement for all package designs (Chen, 2005). Smith and Taylor (2004) contend that good and effective packaging ingrains the products they house everlastingly in the minds of consumers. For many consumers in low involvement, the package is the product, particularly because impressions formed during initial contact can have lasting impact (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999). As a result, package designers must always make it their prime objective to craftily design their packages so that they can stand out even when displayed on the shop shelves together with other competing products (Twede, 2005).

Effective packaging raises the visual appeal of products by heightening the promotion and advertising qualities of the product which positively affects and increases the sales of the products. This raises the profit margins of producers, which is the ultimate target of all manufacturers (Silayoi & Speece, 2007). Also, when packaging is properly done, the products speak for themselves because it is a silent salesman that advertises products in a less expensive manner (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). A product may be of good quality, but may not be able to penetrate into the competitive market because its poor packaging alone may discourage people from patronizing the product. Preliminary research conducted by the researchers on some packages within the Kumasi metropolis in Ghana shows that they are poorly designed, and as such negatively affects the sales of the products they house. The study was therefore carried out to investigate into factors that influence the effective designing of packaging in Ghana while assessing the impact that effective packaging has on the sales of products made by manufacturers. The study ultimately aimed at suggesting pragmatic ways of correcting the discrepancies in the designing of packages to aid in boosting the sales of products in Ghana.

1.1. The Concept of Package Design

In today's dynamic and highly competitive business environment where every organization is striving for a more advance and a glamorize avenue for attracting more customers and meeting consumer purchase desires, packaging stands as a the major salvation. This is also supported by Alvarez and Casielles (2005), who postulate that organizations' intentions are developing brands in order to attract and retain the consumers. No wonder Keller (2008) laments that as a result of this intention of organizations, consumers of today are exposed to more than 20,000 product choices within a 30-minute shopping session all in an attempt to bombard them with too many marketing stimuli, clues in order to be attracted by the different products. Even though many scholars such as Gonzalez, Thorhsbury and Twede, 2007; Wells, Farley and Armstrong (2007) opine that packaging helps to protect, promotes, help consumers use the product and finally, facilitates recycling and reduces environmental damage, its primary target is to sustain the image of the product in consumer's mind. Packaging serves as a marketing communication tool as has already been investigated by Gonzalez, Thorhsbury and Twede (2007), Smith and Taylor (2004), Underwood, Klein and Burkes (2001) and many other scholars. Gonzalez et al. (2007) suggested that the package of a product may be the only means of communication between a product and the final consumer in the store. So, failing to pay attention to the design of the packaging can decrease the chances of the consumers' choice for the product and consequently a reduction in sales. This is also supported by Silayoi and Speece (2007) who say that in cases when the consumer is undecided, the package becomes very important in the buying choice because it communicates to the consumer during the decision making time. The design of the package is incredibly the most important element because it has such a huge impact on a consumer's decision making (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008).

Marketers and designers can provoke different behaviours from consumers based on the designs of their packages as the first step to enter the market is crushed if the packaging is ugly (Soroka, 2002). This is obvious since most consumers judge a product by its packaging before buying (Twede, 2005). So, it is logical to say attractive packaging is a crucial tool for increasing customer base with especially first time buyers. This reinforces Pilditch (1957) assertion that the good design of a package makes it a silent salesman. Lewis (1991) reiterates further that a good packaging is far more than a salesman; rather, it is a flag of recognition and a symbol of value for the producers and the product.

1.2. The Concept and Relationship between Products, Its Packaging and Sale

The definition of a product varies from author to author. However, it can simply be described as an item offered for sale either in the form of a service or an item. It can be physical or in virtual or cyber form. Hitesh (2016) posit that an organization's view of a product depends upon its perspective. For instance, a production-oriented organization look at a product basically as a manifestation of resources used to produce it and the marketing oriented organization views a product from the target consumer's perspective as a bundle of benefits, that is to say, functional as well as emotional benefits. In marketing, a product is anything that can be offered to a market that might satisfy a want or need. However, since the quality or function of a product cannot be easily detected by merely looking at it, there is the need for packaging. Packaging of consumer products is extremely important at the point of sale. After all, it is the first thing seen before anyone makes purchase choices and it is widely recognized that over 50% of purchasing decisions are made at the shelf, or point of purchase (Frontiers, 1996).

On many occasions, the outlook of a package helps consumers to predict the status of the product (Smith & Taylor, 2004). Sometimes packaging is so important that it cost more than the product itself in order to lure the consumers to buy it. A product's package can be the selling point for many consumers by delivering a sense of quality while also reflecting the product's brand image, especially in retail sales, where the right packaging design can attract the consumer's eye and make the product stand out next to a rack of the competitor's product. However, in spite of promoting sales through the good outlook of a package, the choice of material for the package is of great concern due to the growing consciousness on both social and environmental protection. This is evident because in recent times, people are becoming more concerned towards green purchasing which is essentially the act of buying environmental friendly products.

1.3. Visual Communication and Effective Packaging

Visual communication could be described as the branch of art where information is passed from one person to another through the use of visible items such as alphabets, numbers, symbols, colours, images and gestures. The course of transmitting the information in Visual communication is never complete unless the recipient is able to understand and provide a feedback. In addition, any image that is used to communicate an idea can be included in the field of visual communications.

Visual communication is the transmission of information and ideas using symbols and imagery. Recently, visual communication has a high rate of patronage simply because it is very effective for illiterate receivers, used with oral communication to make communication more meaningful and easy to explain, makes presentation simple through the use of graphs, pictures and diagrams, prevents wastage of time and helps in quick decision making. In spite of the numerous advantages of using visual communication, it has been found to be costly. However, it plays an important role in the packaging of a product because it tells the consumer the information about the product as well as the quality of product. Rettie and Brewer (2000) state that approximately 70 percent of all purchase decisions of goods is made at the point of purchase due to the design on the package. According to this we can conclude that the visual communication available on the package is the only marketing communication the consumer may receive while evaluating the product. In addition, Silayoi and Speece (2007) say that in cases when the consumer is undecided, the package becomes important in the buying choice because it communicates to the consumer during the decision-making time through the words, pictures, colours and numbers found on it.

2. Methodology

The researchers employed the mixed method approach for the data collection and analysis. Creswell (2009) contends that the mixed method approach seeks for both quantitative and qualitative data to provide answers for a research problem. It heightens the understanding of the phenomena from multiple data which give a wider perspective of the problem, hence the choice. This study was conducted with the consumers of packaging within the Kumasi metropolis for the purposes of obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data on what constituted a good or bad package and how they either maximize or minimize the sales of products.

The researchers used purposive sampling method for the study. This aided in the selection of only package designers from the Kumasi Metropolis who were seen as the best sample to answer the research questions laid out in the study (Kumekpor, 2002). The population was expected to involve all categories of stakeholder- consumers, product manufacturers, package designers, sellers, etc. These sections of the population were selected because the researchers felt that they are well versed in helping realize the objectives of the study. There are 2,035,064 populations in the Kumasi metropolis. The metropolis is made up of 972,258 males and 1,062,806 females. A total sample size of 300 respondents was selected for the study.

Questionnaire and direct observation served as the main data collection instruments for the study. The researchers used questionnaires because they are very cost effective when compared to face to face interviews. This is especially true of the studies involving large sample size and large geographic areas. Furthermore, they are easy to analyze. Data entry and tabulation of all surveys can be easily done with many computer software packages. The questionnaire proved to be the most common research instrument, appropriate enough to help the researchers to ask questions and obtain data with ease. In addition, the direct observations of the designs used by the package designers deepened the comprehension of the lapses in the visual communication aspects of the package as well as reasons why they encountered such challenges so as to give feasible recommendations to arrest them.

The survey was conducted during morning and afternoons when it was assumed that the response rate would be higher. To prevent misunderstandings the researchers informed the participants about the purpose of the survey. The Likert scale was used in the questionnaire to scale the responses in the survey research. It is a widely-used approach to scaling responses in survey research, such that response is often used interchangeably with a rating scale.

Some of the survey questions existed as category questions and others numeric rating questions. The scale was constructed in a way that numbers were used as keys for the responses:

- 1----Strongly agree
- 2----Agree
- 3----Normal
- 4----Disagree
- 5----Strongly disagree

The scale from 1 to 5 is used in order to make the participants to take a stand regarding the questions asked. Analyzing the data involved reducing and arranging the data, synthesizing searching for significant patterns and discovering what was important. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) has noted three steps involved in analyzing data: organizing, interpreting and summarizing data. Statistical tools such as tables, bar graphs and pie chart were used. The analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

3. Results and Discussions

This section presents analysis, results and discussions on the importance of effective packaging of locally made products in influencing their sales. The results of data have been presented in the form of tables for easy and clearer presentation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MALE	217	71.3	71.3	71.3
	FEMALE	86	28.7	28.7	28.7
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1: Sex

Table 1 shows the results of the gender of the respondents. 71.3% of the respondents were males and 28.7% of the respondents were females. This implies that, at the time the research was conducted within the Kumasi metropolis majority of males expressed much interest in the research. This was probably due to the fact that most of the package designers, dealers and manufacturers were males and as such they paid much attention to the outlook of the packages of products.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	40-60	46	15.3	15.3	15.3
	30-39	162	54.0	54.0	54.0
	18-29	92	30.7	30.7	30.7
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Age of respondents

Table 2 shows the results of the ages of the respondents. Age ranges from 30-39 was represented by 54%, followed by age range of 18-29 of 30.7%, while the age range from 40-50 had 15.3% respectively. With the results shown, it can be said that age range from 18 to 39 have much interest in the design and the appearance of packages and those factors influence their purchasing decisions. The table also shows that the elderly members of the society are not very much attracted to buy products as a result of the nature of their design. This is probably because they may be used to the purchase particular brands irrespective of their package designs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SECONDARY/ TECHNICAL	92	31.3	31.3	31.3
	TERTIARY	164	54.7	54.7	54.7
	MASTERS/ OTHERS	42	14.0	14.0	14.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Educational status

Table 3 shows the results of the educational status of the respondents. From the results provided, it can be seen that those with tertiary level of education are mostly the working-class people who have enough money to spend on packaged products. They also expressed much interest in the appearance and design qualities of packages of products. It can be said that those with tertiary level of education have a greater preference for products with nicely designed packages.

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Consumers' Responses on Packaging

The questionnaires adopted for the purpose of this study consist of 20 questions. The questionnaires were in two folds. The first ten questions were related to the design qualities of a package that makes them effective or ineffective for products while the other ten questions were to ascertain the views of respondents on whether package designs influence the sales of products. The focus of this analysis was to educate people about the importance of effective packaging for maximizing product sales.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY AGREE	4	1.3	1.3	1.3
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	34	11.3	11.3	11.3
	NEUTRAL	38	12.7	12.7	12.7
	AGREE	124	41.3	41.3	41.3
	STRONGLY AGREE	100	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4: Legible Typeface on a Package ensures Readability

Table 4 shows the results of the respondents as to whether a legible typeface selection of a package ensures readability. The results showed that there were 33.3% of the respondents who strongly agreed and 41.3% agreed. 12.7% were undecided, 1.3% and 11.3% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. This clearly shows that the legibility of a typeface on a package is one of the most important features that influence consumers purchasing decision. It makes the identification of a package easy since the brand name as well as the instructions offered to clients is easily digested by them even from a far distance on the shelf of a shop. It can be said that the majority of consumers prefer legible typeface on a package and it is clear that legible typeface on a package enhances readability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	0.7	0.7	0.7
	DISAGREE	30	10.0	10.0	10.0
	NEUTRAL	58	19.3	19.3	19.3
	AGREE	112	37.3	37.3	37.3
	STRONGLY AGREE	98	32.7	32.7	32.7
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5: A Good Layout on Packages enhances the Aesthetic appeal of Packages and promote the Sales of Products

As it is shown in Table 5, the majority of the respondents of 70% responded positively that they prefer a good layout on packaging. This is probably due to the fact that good layout enhances the visual appeal and reduces overcrowding of text, illustration, barcode, etc. on a package. When elements of design on a package are well arranged, they enhance the beauty of the product making it attractive for consumers to patronize. Hence, good layout does not only enhance the visual appeal, but also helps to identify the manufacturers' name, the origin of the product and some vital information that will be of relevance to the consumer when he wants to repurchase the product in future.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	0.7	0.7	0.7
	DISAGREE	36	12.0	12.0	12.0
	NEUTRAL	54	18.0	18.0	18.0
	AGREE	112	37.3	37.3	37.3
	STRONGLY AGREE	96	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6: Effective Packaging Influences Consumer Buying Decision

In Table 6, respondents were asked if effective packaging influences consumer buying decision or not. From the analysis, the majority of the respondents responded positively that they were mostly influenced and attracted to effective packaging especially when they are purchasing products. Some clients are fascinated whenever they see very attractive packages and sometimes forgo popular brand names of the product that they intend buying. This clearly shows that effective packaging silently markets a product and boosts its sales as Judd, Aalders and Melis (1989) as well as Silayoi and Speece (2004) argued. Therefore, effective packaging does not struggle to sell hence it sells itself without competing with any product. Effective packaging does not only influence the buying decision of consumers, but also serves as a tool for promoting sales.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	0.7	0.7	0.7
	DISAGREE	40	13.3	13.3	13.3
	NEUTRAL	68	22.7	22.7	22.7
	AGREE	96	28.7	28.7	28.7
	STRONGLY AGREE	104	34.7	34.7	34.7
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 7: Attractive Colours on Packages Attracts Consumers' Attention

Table 7 shows the response of the respondents when they were asked to answer if attractive colours on packages attracts consumers' attention. A greater percentage of the participants agreed that colours that were attractive on packages readily drew them to the products they contained. This indicates that the choice of colours on a package is a very important element as it can attract consumers' attention to a product. However, it is also very crucial to know your target market so as to help you choose colours that best attract them. Hence the use of dull colours on a package is not ideal when one wants to attract consumers' attention. To attract a large market share, locally manufactured packages should use colours that can easily attract consumers to their product on the shelf in order to promote sales.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	10	3.3	3.3	3.3
	DISAGREE	52	17.3	17.3	17.3
	NEUTRAL	68	22.7	22.7	22.7
	AGREE	76	25.3	25.3	25.3
	STRONGLY AGREE	94	31.3	31.3	31.3
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 8: Product packaging is often the most important feature in attracting potential customers to your product

In Table 8, respondents were asked as to whether a product's packaging is often the most important feature in attracting potential customers to your product. The majority of the respondents agreed that product packaging is the most important feature in attracting potential consumers to a product. This implies that a product's packaging adds value to it while promoting its sales. For example, some products in the Kumasi metropolis may be very good in terms of performance and quality, but the sales of the products dwindle because of poor or ineffective packages as shown in the views of the respondents. Therefore, for a product to maximize its returns, its packaging design and general outlook must be of prime importance to manufacturers if they aim at winning large market shares.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	0.7	0.7	0.7
	DISAGREE	54	18.0	18.0	18.0
	NEUTRAL	72	24.0	24.0	24.0
	AGREE	90	30.0	30.0	30.0
	STRONGLY AGREE	82	27.3	27.3	27.3
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 9: Illustrations and Text on a Package Should Communicate a Product's Contents

In Table 9, respondents were asked to answer if Illustrations and text on a package should communicate product's content. Over 27.3% strongly agree, 30% agree and 24% felt undecided about it. 18% agree and almost 1% strongly agreed that Illustrations and text on a package should communicate a product's contents. Communicating product content is very important in packaging. This implies that in order to know what a particular package contains within the shortest possible time; its illustrations and text should be clear enough to reliably inform clients what that package contains. Therefore, illustrations and text should communicate what is exactly in the package rather than trying to deceive consumers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	0.7	0.7	0.7
	DISAGREE	36	12.0	12.0	12.0
	NEUTRAL	54	18.0	18.0	18.0
	AGREE	112	37.3	37.3	37.3
	STRONGLY AGREE	96	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 10: Effective Package adds Value to a Product

Table 10 is represented by the following percentages respectively: 21.3% strongly agreed, 31.3% agreed, 29.3% neutral, and with 17.3% disagreed and 0.7% strongly disagreed. The results provided show that effective package adds value to a product and it is one the most important ways of promoting sales when the package of a product is effective. Adding value propels the consumer to pay more for the product. When packaging is effective, a sense of value is attached to the product and is transformed into a brand which makes people willing to pay more for a product.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	10	3.3	3.3	3.3
	DISAGREE	10	3.3	3.3	3.3
	NEUTRAL	86	28.7	28.7	28.7
	AGREE	100	33.3	33.3	33.3
	STRONGLY AGREE	94	31.3	31.3	31.3
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 11: Packages which are attractive are more persuasive

In Table 11, respondents were asked if the packaging does not persuade them to buy a product. 31.6% of the respondent strongly agree and 33.3% agreeing. 28.7% felt undecided about it. With 3.3% disagreeing and 9% strongly agree. The majority of the respondents agreed that packages which are attractive persuade them to buy a product. Some packages which are accompanied with good illustrations, photographs, legible typefaces and with some kind of discount tag allowed in a package are often persuasive hence it evokes the consumers' emotions to buy a product. The specific message that the product conveys is about convenience and ease of use. So, these results suggest that consumers give the package that are persuasive more consideration.

5. Conclusion

This research paper investigated into the role of effective packaging on sales volume. The result of this study revealed that packaging has a significant effect on sales turnover. Analysis of the research showed that, effective packaging, competent labour and good layout of the packaging and visual communication are the influential factors that help minimize printing defects in some packages in Ghana. On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that effective packaging can be a powerful tool to persuade consumers and lead to an increase of sales and profits as well as motivate most of those who don't have the experience of the product to try it at least once. These recommendations are put forward by the researchers to combat the defects of packages in Ghana:

1. Local product manufacturers have to be educated, through seminars and workshops organized by the Department of Communication Design in the K.N.U.S.T., Institute of Packaging Ghana (IOPG) and other stakeholders, to educate them on ways of producing effective and attractive packages for products.
2. Local product packaging design must be based on promotional concepts that add value to the product's image and worth to compete well in all markets. The packaging planner, the product manufacturer and packaging designers could come together to develop the promotional concept for the product packaging at the development stage since this would improve the efficacy of the product.
3. The local packaging ancillary organizations could use some of their capacity building programs to address the issues of poor packaging and to encourage participants to also improve on their product packaging. Institutions of higher learning in charge of communication design must develop strategies which would help them to compliment each other's effort in helping to solve the issue of poor packaging of products in Ghana.
4. The tertiary institutions in Ghana offering courses in packaging design need to train more packaging design professionals to meet the needed manpower requirements in the local packaging industry and to bring innovative packaging designs for locally packaged products.
5. Local manufacturers need to properly sort out their packages that are delivered to them and also need to sort out all the filled packages ready for delivery to ensure that those without blemish are sent to the market.

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