academicJournals

African Journal of Business Management

Full Length Research Paper

Assessing the role of branding in the marketing of pharmaceutical products in Ghana: A case of three pharmaceutical companies

Peter Anabila[1] and Dadson Awunyo-Vitor[2]*

[1]Department of Marketing, Central Business School, Central University College, Dansoman Accra, Ghana.
[2]Department of Agricultural Economics, Agribusiness and Extension, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi-Ghana.

The importance of branding as a tool for differentiation in the highly competitive pharmaceutical industry in Ghana has come to the fore due to competition and the influx of fake drugs. The purpose of this study was to assess the perception of managers about the strategic role branding plays in the marketing of pharmaceutical products in Ghana. Sixty respondents were sampled from three pharmaceutical companies. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistic using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The findings of the study indicate respondents perceive that branding plays a significant role in the sale of pharmaceutical products, helps consumers to easily identify with the brand and helps pharmaceutical companies in communicating tangible differences of their brands to differentiate them from competing brands. The study further revealed that there exists a significant relationship between perceived roles of branding and marketing of pharmaceutical products. Finally, the study clearly shows that the major challenge confronting pharmaceutical companies in Ghana is the sale of imitated pharmaceutical products on the market. The study recommends that management of pharmaceutical companies seek government support in terms of stricter enforcement of laws governing imitation of pharmaceutical products and also improve upon their quality and packaging.

Key words: Branding; consumer decision making, pharmaceutical industry, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Business organisations the world over whether service or manufacturing, have by and large, recognised the critical role branding plays in business progress. In contemporary marketing practice, branding has become an effective weapon marketers use to bolsters their competitive advantage and thereby enhance the achievement of their predetermined objectives. Branding has been used for decades as a means of differentiating one

manufacturer's products from those of other manufacturers. A good understanding of consumer-based brand equity is crucially important in understanding branding and the advantages it offers. Branding helps organisations to attain brand equity. Brand equity is the differential positive effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of a brand. A brand with a high brand equity index is often described as a strong brand. According to Kumar and Meenakshi (2006), brand equity consists of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other proprietary brand assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships.

Pharmaceutical branding is an important way to create awareness and generate interest and increased confidence among potential customers. Since branding essentially helps in differentiation of a product by setting it apart from others, it has becomes a critical element in the organisation's positioning strategy. Positioning is the way by which marketers attempt to create a distinct image or impression in the mind of the customers or prospects (Kotler and Keller, 2009). The pharmaceuticals industry in Ghana is one of the sectors of the economy harnessing the power branding to attain competitive advantage in the marketing of its products. The case for branding in the pharmaceutical sector is partly accentuated by the sensitive nature of pharmaceutical products and the need for brand credibility to obviate perceived risk and to guarantee product quality. Over the years, there has been a steady growth of the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana of which most of the major players produce their own drugs and augment their production with imports from their international partners. This has culminated in mounting competition and in some cases unfair competition owing to the influx of fake drugs in the market. Pharmaceutical products manufactured by pharmaceutical companies in Ghana are normally distributed through pharmaceutical wholesalers, pharmacies, licensed chemical stores, hospital, clinics and even street vendors thus, making strict quality control a serious challenge.

According to Schuiling and Moss (2004), a brand is a name that will register the product in the consumers mind as a set of tangible and intangible benefits. As a marketing tool, branding is not just a case of placing a symbol or name onto products to identify the manufacturer, a brand is a set of attributes that have a meaning, an image and produce associations with the product when a person is considering that brand (Pickton and Broderick, 2005). Berkowitz et al. (1998) identify branding as important not only for manufacturers but also for retailers and consumers. Retailers, value branding because consumers shop at stores that carry their favourite brands. Some retailers have created their own private brands to further promote customer loyalty.

The main purpose of branding is product identification, building of trust and credibility thereby increasing profitability through the general acceptability of the product. Branding is important to both customers and marketers. From consumers standpoint, branding simplifies product choice. Without brands, consumers would have to bear the onerous task of having to evaluate the non-branded products in a product category whenever they went shopping. They could never be sure they were purchasing the specific desired products. Branding also ensures precision in product selection and choice which is an added value to the consumer in his product search and evaluation. Organisations with strong brands have the luxury of charging premium price even in the face of mounting competition. Branding also serve as entry barrier thus insulating firms against competitive forces. In the wake the rising spate of imitation, a strong brand can act as legal devise that provides legal protection against counterfeiting.

Given the growing understanding of branding as a tool for creating competitive advantage through the provision of tangible and intangible benefits, no savvy marketing organisation can be expected to overlook the benefits of branding. Branding identifies the firm that manufactures the product thus reduces the risk of post purchase dissatisfaction. Branding is vital as it helps to target new market segments using brand extension strategy. By simply extending the brand, different markets can be reached. Branding also helps when introducing new product lines. Customers are more willing to adopt new products that carry known brands. Finally, branding enhances the reputation of company. Branding therefore plays a major role in the performance of any organisation whether small or large, service or manufacturing, for-profit or not-for-profit. The pharmaceutical industry has not been particularly effective in leveraging the power of their brands relative to their counterparts in consumer goods markets. This is primarily because pharmaceutical products have always competed against each other based on functional attributes (clinical and product related features). However with patent expiry, this has become a difficult situation as generics create competition in the market. Additionally, with improvements in healthcare delivery system, it has become possible for more and more drugs to be purchased over the counter thereby increasing consumer power in the healthcare delivery system.

Pharmaceutical branding currently trails fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) due to the multiplicity and diversity of techniques employed by the FMCG counterparts. In the FMCG industry, the role of brands as a source of competitive advantage has been well developed as organisations incorporate brand thinking early in the product development process while galvanising all departments towards developing a consistent brand image (Schuiling and Moss, 2003). Coca Cola, Pepsi, Budweiser, Nescafe, which are leading FMCG brands, have created a distinct identity for themselves through leveraging a unique and consistent branding appeal. The

power of branding in some instances has been so compelling that the Nescafe brand for example, is often used as a generic that is synonymous with coffee. This is the hallmark of an effective corporate brand strategy. The pharmaceutical companies, in the past, have focused on developing 'products' rather than brands. The traditional sources of value creation have been through extensive research and development (R&D). Brand managers in pharmaceutical companies usually take the help of expensive clinical data to demonstrate how their products differ from their competitors. This difference is often used as the basis for differentiation as it is easy to sell a "tangible" functional difference.

In recent times, the issue of fake drugs has come up as a topical issue due to the preponderance of fake drugs in the Ghanaian market thereby raising serious concern about quality issues to key stakeholders such as the health ministry, the government and the general public. Whilst ensuring superior quality of pharmaceutical products is fundamental to winning user confidence, an equally important, if not more important is the assurance or guarantee that a strong brand promises. Positive brand associations act as a promise from the brand owner to the customer (Light, 1997). Organisations that have thriving brands have a coherent, company-wide understanding of the unique benefits of their brand (Kotler and Keller, 2009). The difference between a branded product and its non-branded counterpart is that the brand communicates added values. To thrive, managers need to ensure that the bundle of values they offer to consumers are relevant, superior to competitors' and have enduring brand values.

Against the backdrop of the fact that there is keen competition, most of which is unfair due to the prevalence of fake drugs, the issue of branding goes deep down to the very core issues of survival and effective competition by firms in the marketplace. Most organisations in the pharmaceutical sector in Ghana have branding strategies in place but the question is what roles do these strategies play in the effective marketing of pharmaceutical products. The objective of the study therefore, is to examine the perceived role of branding in marketing of pharmaceutical products using three pharmaceutical companies in Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding has existed for centuries as way to distinguish the goods of one producer from those of another. A brand is created by developing a distinctive name, packaging and design, and arousing expectation about the offering (Kumar and Meenakshi, 2006). According to America marketing association, a brand is a name, term, symbol, design or combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition.

Although, firms provide the impetus for brand creation through marketing programmes and other activities, ultimately a brand resides in the minds of the consumer. It is a perceptual entity rooted in reality but reflecting the perceptions and idiosyncrasies of consumers (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Branding helps to shape consumer perception about the product or service. Today, a firm's real value lies outside the business itself, it resides in the minds of potential buyers (Kapferer, 1992). Keller (2002), states that organisations have come to the realisation that one of their most valuable assets is the brand associated with their products or services. Brand image, identity and positioning are very important components of branding.

According to Gardner and Levy (1995), a brand is a bundle of intrinsic and extrinsic offerings blending both functional and psychological difference. This view was reaffirmed by Schuiling and Moss (2004), who saw a brand as a name that will register the product in the consumers mind as a set of tangible and intangible benefits. A product of its own delivers tangible benefit, whereas a brand offers additional value which is both the tangible and the intangible benefits. For example, Mercedes Benz is registered in the mind of consumer as a brand offering a set of tangible benefit (solidity, reliability and of German quality) and intangible benefit (success, status) (Moss, 2004). Kotler and Amstrong (2010), define a product as anything that can be offered to a market for use or consumption that might satisfy a need or want. It may be a physical good, service, retail store, person, organisation, place or idea (Keller, 2003). Levitt (2005) asserted that a brand is a product, but one that adds other dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need. It therefore stands to reason that a brand's prominence or relative dominance is a vital exponent in the determination a firm's market position relative to other competing brands.

The pharmaceutical industry has come late to branding. During the 1980s and 1990s, the pharmaceutical industry enjoyed success over an extended period, achieving double digit growth consistently. The success of the industry depended on strong R&D, use of patent, and a powerful sales force. However, with growth in the industry slowing down, firms have been searching for new ways to maintain their brand positions (Schuiling and Moss, 2004). Consequently, pharmaceutical companies have had to embrace marketing and branding strategies to a greater extent than they have been in the past (Blackett, 2005).

For decades, pharmaceutical companies' brands strategy was to discover a brand that was needed, introduce it to Doctors via a sales representative, and watch the prescriptions get filled. With several factors causing change in the pharmaceutical industry in the way in which medications are marketed, it has become crucially important for these companies to brand their products.

This is critical in view of the fact that more and more drugs are progressively sold over the counter (kapoor and Esptein, 2004). It is evident that the competitive environment is becoming more intense in the pharmaceutical industry. As a result, Schuiling and Moss (2004) consider that branding can represent a new competitive lever that can project a firm in the marketplace. With retail brands now competing with generic drugs (including private labels), alternative and complementary treatments, pharmaceutical companies cannot overlook or downplay the immense power branding.

Counterfeiting and branding in the pharmaceutical sector

The incidence of fake and substandard drugs has become a serious menace confronting global health care delivery. According to Gautam et al. (2009), the preponderance of spurious and counterfeit drugs is a modern day menace which has assumed alarming dimension internationally, especially in less developed countries. According to them, the market of counterfeit drugs is a well organised white colour crime. It is the major cause of needless morbidity, mortality and loss of public confidence in drugs and public health in general. Counterfeit drugs are products intentionally manufactured to resemble a brand name pharmaceutical. They may contain no active ingredients or contain ingredients inconsistent with the package description. Fake drugs are more common in countries without sound regulation and weak quality control standards. WHO (2006) outlines factors responsible for the rising wave of counterfeiting as consisting of the following: lack of political will, lack or inadequate legislation prohibiting counterfeiting of drugs, absences or weak national drug regulatory authority, shortage or erratic supply of drugs, high cost of medicines, inefficient co-operation among stakeholders, trade involving several intermediaries, corruption and conflict of interest.

The prevalence of counterfeit drugs continues to spiral, for example, it has been estimated that up to 15% of all sold drugs are counterfeit, and in some parts of Africa and Asia the figure exceeds 50% (Robert et.al., 2007). Bate and Boateng (2007), posit that in poor countries essential and life saving drugs used to treat infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria are often the drugs under intense threat of piracy. Recent developments in the pharmaceutical industry involving the importation of fake drugs from India by a pharmaceutical company in Ghana resulted in the ban of that company by the Ghana Food and Drugs Authority. In other to maintain competitive advantage in the industry, pharmaceutical companies have had to identify winning marketing strategies that provide competitive advantage on a sustainable basis. Schuiling and Moss (2004), propose that brand logic be leveraged. Pharmaceutical companies will not be able to rely exclusively on the three traditional success

factors. These include strong R&D, aggressive defence of patent, and use of powerful sales force. These factors have been conducive to annual sales growth of 10% since the 1980s. Although these growths were sufficient in the past, with constant change in the pharmaceutical industry, one can no longer be sure that these traditional factors alone will continue to work well in the future. Therefore, branding strategy is employed to provide greater marketing leverage.

Benefits of branding in the pharmaceutical industry

Pharmaceutical branding is to create awareness among potential customers about the benefit of drugs and medicines. The marketing process and brand give the public ready knowledge of what the product is about and creates a point of identifying the brand amongst many other similar products in the markets (Blackett, 2005). In addition, the entire branding process has value for a company as it helps the business focus on, enhance and be consistent with its message. Moreover, it allows a company to continually test the message and see if it is being received in the right way (Malone, 2004)

Brand building during the period of a new drug under patent can help prolong the commercial life of the product once its monopoly status lapses (Blackett, 2005). Advertising and promotion are crucial in the early stages of a new pharmaceutical brand's life. It is imperative that reminders be made to buyers of the product's efficacy, now proven through several years' performance in other to maximise return on investment before the patent expires, imitation are introduced, and prices drop (Blackett, 2005). Creating brands will enable the pharmaceutical companies to differentiate their products from those of competitors using both intangible and tangible benefits. Each brand needs to be given a "reason for being", considering the vast amount of competitors and low number of really distinctive products. Branding can help to sustain brand against generic products after the expiration of the patent. A strong brand will benefit from high consumer loyalty, allowing strong sales even after the patent has expired. For example, during the 1980's, a product whose patent expired was still able to obtain 60% of its sales turnover one year later. However, in the 1990's that number dropped to 40%, and that of Prozac dropped even more? Furthermore, brands will have a stronger influence on the behaviour and attitude of patient and doctors (Schuiling and Moss, 2004).

Pharmaceutical brands engender trust, which is one of the most powerful emotions. As opposed to the effectiveness of cola drinks, relief from pain or illness is a far higher state of need than the alleviation of thirst. Hence trust in pharmaceutical brands is a vital component and once gained can be leveraged successfully through the brand. This trust builds up when the brand also provides emotional justification. Companies must create the need

Table 1. Population representation.

Participant Firms	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aryton Drugs Manufacturing	20	36.4
Ernest Chemist	19	34.5
Danadams Pharmaceutical	16	29.1
Total	55	100.0

Table2. Respondents by years with institution.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 to 5	25	45.5
6 to 10	20	36.4
11 to15	10	18.2
Total	55	100.0

for the consumer to be loyal by addressing their emotional needs. Also, it is important to decide how to communicate these benefits in a coherent way to the target customers (Schuiling and Moss, 2004). This can be achieved through advertising, design, packaging, pharmacist recommendation, family recommendation, website, doctor prescription, and so on.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in Accra Metropolitan Assembly of Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The target population of the study comprised pharmaceutical companies operating within Greater Accra Region. Two stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. At the first stage three (3) pharmaceutical companies (Aryton drugs, Danadams pharmaceuticals and Ernest chemist) were surveyed using purposive sampling procedure. At the second stage convenience sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the respondents from each of the sampled companies for the study because it is deemed more appropriate than other techniques based on the objective of the study.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the respondents. Questionnaire and interview guides were used to collect data. Interview guides were used to collect data from sales executive of the pharmaceutical companies while questionnaires were used to collect data from sampled staff and sales managers. Data collected were checked for clarity, organised and analysed in line with the research objectives. Also chi-square test was carried out to test the following hypothesis.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the perception of the respondents on the role of branding on consumer behaviour.
H_1 : There exist significant relationship between the perception of the respondents on the role of branding on consumer behaviour

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1, depicts the population representation of the study. Out of the sixty (60) respondents, 20 of the respondents representing 36.36% were from Aryton Drugs Manufacturing, 19 (34.55%) were from Ernest Chemist and 16 (19.09%) were from Danadams Pharmaceutical. The results show that 4 respondents from Danadams and 1 respondent form Ernest Chemist did not complete the questionnaire. However, the number of respondents who answered the questionnaire was representative enough to provide relevant information for the study.

Background information of respondents

Number of Years Respondents Have Worked with their Respective Companies. As shown on Table 2, majority of the respondents representing 45.45% have worked between 1 to 5 years, 36.36% have worked between 6 to10 years and 18.18% worked between 11 to 15 years. This conveys a sense of respondents who have the requisite experience to respond adequately to the questions on hand.

Perceived role of branding on consumer purchase decision

Table 3, indicates the views of respondents on the role branding plays on consumer purchase response decision. Majority of respondents representing 27.3% stated that the major role played by branding on consumer purchase decision is simplifying product selection and choice while the least representing 9.09% believed that branding contributes to consumer loyalty. A cross tabulation was carried out to test if there is a significant relationship between perceived role of branding and consumer purchase decision (Table 4). The Chi-Square test result gave a value is 81.796 and a P-value of 0.00010. Based on the results the study failed to accept the null hypothesis that there is no significance relationship between the respondent's perception of branding on the purchase decision of consumers and sales. Thus, there exist significant relationship between the perception of the respondents on the role of branding and purchase decision of consumers and sales of pharmaceutical product. This implies that companies would continue to strive to brand their products as they perceive that it influence purchase decision of their customers.

ROLE OF BRANDING IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

The role of branding in pharmaceutical marketing is presented as follows.

Branding and sales improvement

Table 5, depicts the level of agreement of respondents

Table 3. Branding on consumer purchase decision.

Perceived role of branding	Frequency(Agree)	Percentage (%)
Identification	25	45.5
Differentiation	10	18.2
Loyalty	5	9.1
Selection and Positioning	15	27.3
Total	55	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2012

Table 4. Cross tabulation between perceived role of branding on marketing of pharmaceutical products.

Perceived role of branding on pharmaceutical products	Frequency		Chi-Square
	Yes	No	
Does branding influence Identification	45	5	81.796***
Does branding help in product Differentiation	50	5	
Does branding influence customer Loyalty	40	15	
Does branding influence Selection and Positioning of product	35	15	

*** Significant at 1%
Source: Field Data, 2012

regarding the significant role branding plays in the sale of pharmaceutical products. The results indicate that 36.36% strongly agree and 63.64% agree that branding plays significant role in the sale of pharmaceutical products. This means there is clear agreement regarding respondents' view that brands improve sales.

Consumer identification with brand

Regarding consumer identification with brands, 54.55% of the respondents agreed that consumers easily identify with the brand, 36.36% strongly agree with the assertion but 9.09% remain neutral, an indication that majority of the respondents believed that consumers identify with the brand.

Brand loyalty and sales of pharmaceutical products

Table 5 shows the role branding plays in the sale of pharmaceutical products. While 9.09% strongly agreed that brand loyalty plays a significant role in the sale of pharmaceutical products, 53.64% agreed, and 27.27% were not sure about the statement. This is a clear indication that branding loyalty is important in the sale pharmaceutical products.

Branding as an awareness creation tool

Majority (72.73%) of the respondents agreed that branding creates awareness and 9.09% strongly agreed. However, 9.09% were not sure, whiles 9.09% disagreed

with the statement. These results clearly show that pharmaceutical companies could create awareness for their products through branding as depicted on Table 5.

Brand name and the selection of pharmaceutical products

From table 5, majority (72.73%) of the respondents agreed brand name is important, 9.09 also strongly agreed that brand name is important but 9.09% were not sure if brand is important in the selection of pharmaceutical products while 9.09 disagreed. This is an indication that pharmaceutical companies must ensure that their names are conspicuously written on the products to attract customers to buy.

Brand names and communication of product value

Respondents were also asked to state their level of agreement as to whether brand names communicate product value. From Table 5, majority, representing 54.55% agreed that brand names communicate product value while 18.18% strongly agreed. However, 18.18% disagreed whiles 9.09% were not sure. This demonstrates that consumers largely perceive brands names as key determinants of product quality.

Branding as a tool for communicating tangible differences

On whether pharmaceutical companies use branding to

Table 5. Role of branding in Ghana's pharmaceutical sector.

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
1.Branding improves Sales	20 (36.36%)	35 (63.64%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.36	0.49
2. Consumer identify with brand	20 (36.36%)	30 (54.55%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.27	0.62
3.Brand loyaltyincrease sales	5 (9.09%)	35 (53.64%)	15 (27.27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.81	0.58
4. Branding creates awareness	5 (9.09%)	40 (72.73%)	5 (9.09%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	3.82	0.72
5.Brand name influence product choice	5 (9.09%)	40 (72.73%)	10 (18.18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.91	0.52
6.Branding communicate Tangible differences	20 (18.18%)	30 (54.55%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (18.18%)	0 (0%)	4.27	0.62
7.Branding influence product differentiation	5 (9.09%)	45 (81.82%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.00	0.40
8.Branding guarantees quality	5 (9.09%)	25 (45.45%)	20 (36.36%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	3.55	0.79
9.Branding influence product image	15 (27.27%)	35 (63.64%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.18	0.58
10.Branding can serve as status symbol	10 (18.18%)	25 (45.45%)	15 (27.27%)	5 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	3.73	0.87
11.Branding improves corporate image	10 (18.18%)	25 (45.45)	20 (36.36%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.82	0.72

Note: SD = Standard Deviation

communicate tangibledifferences, 54.55% agreed, 18.18% strongly agreed but 9.09% were neutral about the statement. Majority of the pharmaceutical companies use branding as a tool to communicate tangible diffe-rences. This means 72.73% agree that branding com-municate tangible product differences while 18.18 dis-agreed. This means that branding is a vital communi-cation tool since it helps to effectively communicate tangible differences as depicted in Table 5.

Branding as tool for differentiating pharmaceutical products

Table 5 shows respondents' level of agreement with the view that branding serves as tool for product differen-tiation. 81.82% of the respondents agreed, 9.09% strongly agreed and 9.09% were not sure whether pharmaceutical companies use branding to differentiate their products. This is a clear indication that pharmaceutical companies use branding to differentiate their products from those of their competitors since majority representing 90.91 affirmed the statement.

Branding as quality guarantee

Table 5 shows the responses to the statement "Branding

serves as a guarantee or assurance of quality". According to the result, 45.45% agreed, 9.09% strongly agreed and 36.36% were neutral. However, 9.09% disagreed. The result shows that most of the pharmaceutical companies use branding as a guarantee or assurance of quality.

Branding and product image

With regards to image, 63.64% of the respondents agreed that branding enhances product image, 27.27% strongly agreed but 9.09% were not sure if branding enhances the image of a product. The result therefore indicates that majority of the pharmaceutical companies and their staff believed that branding enhances product image.

Branding as a status symbol

Table 5 presents responses regarding whether branding serves as a status symbol. Most of the respondents (45.45%) agreed that branding serves as a status symbol, 18.18% strongly agreed while 27.27% were neutral. However, 9.09% disagreed with the statement. This shows that pharmaceutical companies use branding to convey prestige value to the users of their products.

Branding improves corporate image

On the question of the role of branding in improving corporate image, 45.45% of the respondents agreed that branding helps to improve corporate image, 18.18% strongly agreed with the statement but 36.36% were not sure if branding could improve the corporate image of the firm. The result indicates that most of the respondents believed that branding enhances corporate image as shown on Table 5. When asked to list the nature of branding challenges in the pharmaceutical industry, majority of the respondents mentioned imitation as the major challenge facing the industry. Another challenge mentioned was weak enforcement of regulations from the Food and Drugs Authority which is aimed at protecting consumers of pharmaceutical products. Others included the inability to maintain patents and successfully fighting generic products.

To a large extent the brand name can be said to contribute effectively in the marketing of pharmaceutical products because the respondents stated that brand name influences consumers purchase decision in a number of ways including identification of products, selection and positioning as well as differentiation. Again, as much as 82% of the respondents believed that brand name is important in the selection of pharmaceutical products. This is an indication that brand name is directly related to consumer purchase decision. These findings are consistent with Schuiling and Moss (2004) assertion that brand names influence the decision of doctors and patients. The findings of the study confirm that pharmaceutical companies use branding in differentiating their products from competing ones. This is because 91% of the respondents agreed that branding is used to differentiate their products from competing ones though brand elements such as name, symbol, colour, logos etc.

The study also revealed numerous benefits of branding to pharmaceutical companies in Ghana. According to the study the selected companies benefit from increased sales and identification of the companies' products. The results also show that branding enhances the image of the companies' products and above all, branding helps in communicating tangible difference of the selected companies' products. These findings agree with the views of Kapfefer (2001) who argued that a product gives a certain efficacy while a brand gives more trust. He added that brands add value to the product, which helps to differentiate it from competition. It is also obvious that the marketing process and branding give the public ready knowledge of what the product is about and creates a point of identifying the brand amongst many other similar products in the markets (Blackett, 2005). Evidently, the three pharmaceutical companies have challenges with their branding efforts since majority of respondents stated so. Major challenges identified by respondents were patent rights sustainability and imitation. The importance of branding in identifying and differentiating products has

been well articulated in the literature. Apart from its primary role of identifying and differentiating competing products, branding also enhances corporate image and can be a source of competitive advantage. The purpose of this study was to find out the strategic role branding plays in the marketing of pharmaceutical products in Ghana.

The study revealed that branding plays a significant role in the sale of pharmaceutical products. The study also found that, branding helps consumers to easily identify themselves with the brand. The study further revealed that branding helps pharmaceutical companies in communicating tangible difference of their products, enhances the image of the product and the company. Another significant revelation from the study was that, pharmaceutical companies use branding to differentiate their brands from those of competing brands. Finally the study clearly shows that the major challenge confronting pharmaceutical companies in Ghana were sustainability patent and the sale of imitated products on the market.

CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives and findings of the study, the following conclusions could be drawn. Brand names contribute significantly to consumer purchase decision especially in the area of product identification, selection and positioning and product differentiation. Furthermore, pharmaceutical companies use branding to differentiate their products from competing brands through brand names, packaging, symbol, trademark and logos among others. Based on the findings, it can also be concluded that there are many benefits of branding in the pharmaceutical industry. Notable among them; branding helps in the sale of pharmaceutical products; it helps manufacturers to differentiate their product from competing brands, helps in enhancing the image of the products and also helps in identification of competing brands by consumers. The major branding challenges confronting pharmaceutical companies are how to sustain the patent right in an environment where imitated products are prevalent resulting in unfair competition. In conclusion, the three pharmaceutical companies use branding effectively in the marketing of their products.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that one major challenge confronting pharmaceutical companies is imitation or counterfeiting. The pharmaceutical companies should come together and lobby the government for strict enforcement of legislations that would impose serious sanctions to deter offenders from engaging in the manufacturing of imitated products. By so doing, the original manufacturers would be able to recoup the cost of research and development

as well as operational cost and make profit. Additionally, the study indicates that the most significant benefit of branding in the pharmaceutical industry is identification of products by consumers. Pharmaceutical companies should consider using packaging and names that would attract consumers to easily identify with the brand for patronage.

IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The study considered only three pharmaceutical companies in the study. Future studies should include more companies to make the findings more representative of the industry. Furthermore, the study took into consideration the views of the manufacturers and sales representatives without the consumers. Future studies could broaden the scope by collecting data from consumers so as to increase the validity of the findings.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are especially indebted to the management of the three pharmaceutical companies used for the study, namely; Aryton drugs, Danadams pharmaceuticals and Ernest chemist for the information they provided with regard to branding of their products. They are also grateful to Angelina Opoku –Adjei of Central Business School, Central University College, Accra, Ghana for assisting in data collection. Finally, the authors would like to thank the respondents without whose co-operation this study could not have been possible.

REFERENCES

Bate R, Boateng K (2007). Bad medicine in the market. Am. Enterprise Inst. Public Policy Res. 43:13-21.

Blackett K, Tom F (2005). Branding in the pharmaceutical industry packing packaging.

Gautam CS, Utreja A, Singal GL (2009). Spurious and counterfeit drugs: A growing industry in the developing world. Postgraduate Med. J. 85(1003):251-256.

Gardner BB, Levy SI (1955). The product and the brand. Harvard Bus. Rev. 33:33-39.

Kapferer JN (2004). The new strategic brand management (3rd ed.). London: Kogan Page.

Kapoor G, Epstein B (2004). Storms ahead: Can big pharma be saved? Brandweek 45:28-29.

Keller KL (2003). Strategic brand management: Building, measuring and managing brand equity. New Jersey, USA: Pearson Education International. http://books.google.com.ng/books/about/Strategic_Brand_Manageme nt.html?id=lJaXQgAACAAJ&redir_esc=y

Kotler P (2002). Marketing Management (11th ed.). Prentice Hall Inc.

Kotler P, Amstrong G (2010). Principles of marketing (13th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.

Kotler P, Keller KL (2009). Marketing management (13th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey,USA: Pearson, Prentice Hall.

Kumar A, Meenakshi N (2006). Marketing management. New Delhi, India: Vikas Publishing House.

Light L (1997). Brand loyalty management: The basis for profitable growth. Direct Market. 59(11):36-44.

Malone P (2004). Building an emotional connection: A five step branding process. Med. Market. Media 39(5):52.

Pickton D, Broderick A (2005). Integrated marketing communications (2nd ed.). England: Pearson,Prentice Hall.

Robert J, Price J, Malkin C (2007). Power of personality traits, socio-economic status and cognitive ability for predicting important life outcomes. Perspect. Psychol. Sci. 2(4):313-345.

Schuiling I, Moss G (2003). A brand logic for pharma: A possible strategy based on FMCG experience. Int. J. Med. Market. 4(1):55-62.

Schuiling I, Moss G (2004). How different are branding strategies in the pharmaceutical industry and the fast moving consumer goods sector? J. Brand Manage. 11(5):366-380.

WHO (2006). Counterfeit medicines. Fact sheet p.275. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/fact_sheet/2006/FS_275.pdf