

MARKETING OF HERBAL DRUGS IN NIGERIA: A SURVEY OF ILORIN METROPOLIS

R. A. GBADEYAN UIL AND G. K.A. ADEPOJU

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ABSTRACT

Herbal Remedies now provide a good source of revenue to the Traditional Medicine Practitioners both in local and international market. This has consequently led to the growing influx in the number of these traditional medical practitioners in Nigeria. The aim of this paper is to examine the marketing strategies used for selling the Herbal product and some criticism against these methods and alternative medical practice in Nigeria. Questionnaires were distributed to fifty (50) respondents selected randomly at Ilorin where the research work was done. The respondents were asked questions about the efficacy of the Herbal drugs in treatment of ailments, marketing strategies used to sell the drugs to customers, complaints about the use of these drugs etc. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also had with twenty (20) Herbal Medical Practitioners to enable the researchers know the common and peculiar problems confronting them. The statistical techniques used for data analysis are the phi-coefficient (ϕ) and simple linear correlation. The study reveals that females especially ladies and married women patronize the alternative medicine practitioners more than their males counterparts; and correlation exist between advertising expenditures and sales revenue from Herbal drugs. The paper recommends that effort should be made by this Herbal Practitioners to provide better health care services to the people and also stop the "spurious" claims made in form of advertisement, both in print and electronic media about the efficacy of these Herbal drugs.

KEYWORDS: herbal drugs; traditional medical practitioners; ailments; healthcare services; alternative medical practice; marketing strategies.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing popularity of Herbal drugs in recent time as a result of many Nigerians patronizing the herbal market. Traditional medicine practitioners are now becoming more recognized just like their counterpart, the conventional medical doctors. In Nigeria today, traditional medicine occupies a prominent position in the delivery of health care most especially amongst the majority of the people in the rural areas as well as a substantial proportion of the urban dwellers (Yusuf, 1994).

Traditional Medicine Practise dated as old as men's creation. In the past, it enjoys wider acceptability among the people than modern or conventional medicine, due

to the inaccessibility of people to modern medicine, people consult the Traditional Healers as their first choice of health care (Maclean 1971). However, as a result of the civilization and improve medical care delivery system there is changes in the status quo. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (1976) defined Traditional Medicine as "the totality of all knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disequilibrium and which rely exclusively on past experiences and observations handed down from generation to generation, whether verbally or in writing".

Medicine exists in every society and helps to improve its health status and quality of life (Jegade 1998). Yusuf (1994) gave

R. A. Gbadeyan UIL, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, P.M.B. 1515, Ilorin, Nigeria.

G. K. A. Adepoju, Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacy Administration, Faculty of Pharmacy, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Sagamu Campus, Ogun State, Nigeria.

four categories of Traditional Medicine Practitioners:

- Herbalist, who use plants
- Spiritualist whose use of plants is very limited but based their treatment primarily on metaphysical diagnosis
- Spiritualist who use incantations and rites and
- Diviners who practice divination.

In the traditional societies, it has been argued that, people depend mostly on traditional healing processes. Most Nigerians have preference for the services of traditional healers (Erinoso, 1981). However, Omorodion (1993) noted that this trend is changing due to the influences of Christianity and Western education. Jegede (1998) remarked that Christian Missionaries condemn traditional healing as dealing with the devil. Bourdillion (1991) gave some of the basis for such condemnation which amongst other include the experiences of medical missionaries who have come across cases in which traditional healers did more harm than good to their patients. On the other hand, unlike Christianity, Islam encourages the use of traditional medicine (See Abdalla 1979; Nadel 1954, Last 1976).

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are various works on traditional medical practices amongst which include the following: the importance of traditional medicine in meeting the health needs of Nigerian (see Emmanuel, 1973; Ademuwagun, 1969, Akinkugbe 1979, Sofowora, 1982); the traditional medicine and health care delivery system in Nigeria (See Yusuf 1994); location of traditional healers in general hospitals (Jegede, 1983); training of Community Health Workers in promoting the health needs of the people in rural areas (Okorosobo, 1990); people shuttling between orthodox, traditional and spiritual healing service (Lambo 1969, Obermeyer 1993); and the possible merger of Ethno and Biomedical practices (Raheem 1999).

However, there is no serious work on the Marketing of the herbal drugs. Available literatures have indicated that Traditional medical practices have proved to be

effective in the cure of ailments and diseases (Jegede 1998). This is in respect of those diseases like High blood pressure, mental disorder, epilepsy, paralysis, tuberculosis, yellow fever, venereal diseases, cancer, diabetes, leprosy, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) etc. There is also cure for such illnesses and phenomenon that defy modern or conventional treatment like bedwetting, early death in children (**Abiku**), stealing, poor memory, business failure, infertility, marriage problems, bad luck, broken bone etc. (See Raheem 1999).

Traditional or alternative medicine practice has become very popular in some countries amongst which include India and Nigeria. The herbal drugs serve as one of the major sources of revenues to these countries, in terms of the amount realised from its export. The practice has also provides employment opportunities for some of the fresh graduates being turned into the labour market. Millionaires have also emerged amongst these practitioners; thus opening new avenues for Nigerians to make their money (Tell, 2003 and 2004). There is also growing market for the herbal drugs and remedies. The production of these drugs have become more modernized and complex. They are now in tablets, caplets, capsules and syrup; thus gaining more recognition and acceptability amongst growing customers and clients. This trend has therefore provoke the need for the study of how these herbal drugs are being marketed to the people.

Four methods of marketing strategies are being employed and they are briefly discussed as follows:

Personal Selling:

Most of these alternative medicine practitioners sell their products or herbal drugs through this method. This may be either by themselves or sales representatives. The drugs are sold to the customers in vehicle, bus stop, public place or in a trade fair for traditional medicine where people come to buy these drugs. The customers have privilege of having interactive session with the herbal practitioners and in the process obtained useful and other relevant

information about the drug use. The method happens to be the most popular of all that are used by the Practitioners. Most industrial companies today rely on sales force to locate prospects and grow the business (Kotler, 2001).

Direct Mail

This method is not a very popular one that is being used by the Herbal Practitioners. Only few practitioners used this method for the marketing of their drugs. This is for the customers that are urban dwellers and are mostly educated. Majority of customers prefer the personal selling alternative because of the advantage of face to face communication and getting immediate feed back to their response. The advantage of this method is that it can be personalized (Kotler, 2001).

Radio Advertising

This is also becoming another popular means of communicating products to a large number of customers notwithstanding whether they are either rural or urban dwellers. Most of the messages about the product are done in dialect or vernacular thus enabling the targeted customer to be reached as easy as possible. This medium has greater reach than other media; as a result of the large number of people that can afford buying radio and at the same time tune in to receive the message. It is usually about fifteen minutes to thirty minutes sponsored programme with advert message put in between the programme. There have been reduction in the number of Radio or Newspaper advertisement because of the actions of government agency as a result of spurious claims made by some of these practitioners, for example, the use of a drug to cure up to ten unrelated ailments (Tribune, 2003).

Television Advertising

This unlike Radio advertising, combines both sound and visual effects. Customers reach is not up to the one covered by Radio advertising

because fewer people have Television Set in their homes and majority of these people stay in the urban areas. Television marketing can also be in form of informercials where the products story and benefit are shared with million additional prospects (Kotler, 2001).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSES

Primary and secondary data are both used in the conduct of this research work. The primary data is in the form of interview and Focus Group Discussion. The secondary data used are mainly recent works on the subject matter, this include journal articles, magazines, reports, newspapers, and textbooks.

Personal interview is granted to fifty (50) respondents, who are selected randomly at Ilorin where the research work is done. These respondents were asked some questions which include the herbal drugs efficacy in the treatment of ailments, the marketing strategies used to sell these drugs, some complain about the use of the herbal drugs and suggestions that could bring about better quality of the drugs. This is made easier through the used of interview guide which enable researcher to draw the respondents attention to all questions that are considered important for the study. Five (5) likert scale type of questions were also asked to make a quantitative interpretation of the responses from the raw data possible.

Focus group discussion were held with twenty herbal medical practitioners, in various locations in Ilorin at different or separate session. The purpose of this is to elicit useful information that will assist the research in having knowledge about the common problem confronting these herbal practitioners and also the peculiar problems confronting them.

The statistical techniques used for data analysis are the phi correlation – coefficient and the simple linear correlation. The Phi coefficient (ϕ) is an appropriate measure of association in which both variables under study are nominally scaled; correlation analysis on the other hand is the measurement of the degree to which

changes in one intervally scaled variable (dependent one) are associated with changes in another intervally scaled variable (Luck and Rubin, 1989).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the course of the conduct of the research, an attempt was made to determine the types of medical treatment used on gender. It was revealed from the data analysed that thirty (30) respondents out of the total number of fifty (50) respondents granted interview used traditional method compared with the twenty (20) respondents that preferred the modern method.

The phi-coefficient (ϕ) was used to determine the association between the gender and the method of treatment used and it gives (ϕ) of 62.9%. When we squared phi the result was $\phi^2 = 0.396$. This indicated that 39.6% of the variation in the types of treatment used is explained by the variation in gender (See Table 1 in the Appendix for detail computation).

In practical terms, most of the people that patronize these alternative medicine practitioners are the females most especially ladies and the married women. The few ones that preferred the western method of treatment are doing so partly because of the bitter experience they might have had in the course of patronising the traditional healers.

Table 2 in the Appendix provides data on Advertising expenditures and sales revenue from a sample of twenty (20) herbal medical practitioners contacted for study, between the month of January to October 2006.

The data were used to test the following hypothesis.

- Ho: There is no correlation between advertising expenditures and sales revenue from herbal drugs.
- Hi: There is correlation between the Advertising expenditures and sales revenue from herbal drugs.

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) gives value of 0.67. This is a moderate to strong relationship. The coefficient of determination, which is the square of the coefficient of correlation, or $r^2 = 0.45$. This

means that nearly 45% of the variation in sales revenue may be explained in terms of advertising expenditure.

In going further, we can determine the significance of the coefficient of correlation.

The formula for testing significance of the relationship is

$$T = \frac{r \sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r}}$$

Assuming a 95% confidence level, the critical value of $t = 2.306$ at 8 degrees of freedom. The computed t value is 3.29. Therefore, the computed t value (3.29) is greater than the critical t value (2.306). It thus falls in the rejection area of the t distribution, hence we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. (See Table 2 in Appendix for detail computation).

The findings indicate that 90% of the consumer that patronise the traditional healers (i.e. 27) had strong belief in the efficacy of herbal drugs. This is in respect of those deadly ailments like hypertension, diabetics, acquired immunodeficiency syndromes and other non deadly but chronic like insanity infertility etc. They believe that the modern medical treatment does not offer solution to these ailments, but the traditional method offers permanent solution.

From the focus group discussion, most traditional healers complained about the Federal Government's lack of incentive and encouragement to them. They want Federal Government support, both in cash and kind, most especially in cases where they make new discovery. The traditional healers also complained about the stringent National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) registration procedures and appeal to the Federal Government to allow them have a recognized body that will regulate and control their activities.

Herbal remedies despite the popularity it is enjoying as indicated by the findings also expose the health of the people to risk due to the use of the remedies inappropriately. There are also complaints of mixing remedies with conventional medicines, taking poor quality

supplements, remedies containing steroids and toxic heavy metals, spurious claims of remedies curing various unrelated ailments amongst other (Guardian 2003, Tribune 2003).

POLICY OPTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, some measures have been taken to address the problems identified in the study.

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) had introduced guidelines that could make possible the exercise of some control over the indiscriminate marketing of herbal medicine in Nigeria. The herbal products whether locally made or imported must be analysed for toxicity and safety, and registered before being sold in the Nigerian market. The agency had also succeeded in reducing the number of newspaper and radio advertisements. More stringent controls must be exercised in this respect. There have been reduction in the number of radio and newspaper advertisement because of the actions of government as a result of spurious claims made by some of these practitioners for example, the use of a drug to cure up to ten (10) unrelated ailments (Tribune, 2003).

In respect of advertisement to the general public on the use of drugs there are certain prohibitions by both the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Pharmacists Council of Nigeria. The World Health Organisation (1988) prohibits the prescription or promotion of drugs for certain serious conditions that can be treated only by qualified health practitioners, for which certain countries have established lists. It also prohibits drug advertisements directed at children.

In Nigeria there are two Acts which regulate Advertisements of drugs and appliances as related to treatment of certain diseases. They are:

- 1) The poison and Pharmacy Act and

- 2) The Food and Drugs Act 1974 as amended.

Section 2 of Food and Drugs Act and Poisons and Pharmacy Act contain list of diseases to which the provisions of these Decree refer (Egboh, 1980).

Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (1982) in its code of ethics stated that pharmacists should not advertise the dispensing of medicines and display material either on the premises, in the press or elsewhere in connection with sale to the public of medicines or medical appliances which is undignified in style or which contain any wording, design or illustration reflecting unfavourably on pharmacists collectively or upon any group of pharmacists. All these Acts are made to regulate the advertisement of both conventional and herbal drugs. The health practitioners both the traditional and the conventional are expected to take note and comply with these regulations.

There is also the need for possible integration of both the traditional and modern medical practices as suggested by many writers in their works (see Yusuf 1994, Raheem 2001).

The quality of traditional healers services should be improved through more training and establishment of traditional health institutions along with the medical schools. This is done in some countries like China where they even have University for herbal medicines training and research works.

CONCLUSIONS

The time has come for more government support towards making traditional medicine practice to be given more recognition. The Herbal Practitioners should be integrated along with their conventional counterpart in the formulation of their health policy, but the practice must conform to the same stringent rules and regulations governing orthodox medical practice.

APPENDIX
TABLE 1: TYPES OF MEDICAL TREATMENT USED ON GENDER BASIS
TYPE OF MEDICAL TREATMENT USED

GENDER	ORTHODOX	TRADITIONAL	TOTAL
Male	16(a)	5(b)	21 (a+b)
Female	4 (c)	25(d)	29 (c+d)
TOTAL	20(a+c)	30 (b+d)	50

Source : Authors Fieldwork, 2006

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \frac{ad - bc}{\sqrt{(a+b)(c+d)(a+c)(b+d)}} \\
 &= \frac{16(25) - 5(4)}{\sqrt{(21)(29)(20)(30)}} \\
 &= \frac{400 - 20}{\sqrt{365400}} = \frac{380}{604.48} \\
 &= 0.6286 \\
 &= 0.629
 \end{aligned}$$

TABLE 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN ADVERTISING EXPENDITURES AND SALES REVENUE FROM HERBAL DRUGS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY TO OCTOBER 2006

ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE IN THOUSANDS	SALES REVENUE IN MILLIONS	XY	X ²	Y ²
515	40	20600	265225	1600
405	35	14175	164025	1225
334	10	3340	111556	100
650	15	9750	422500	225
120	5	600	14400	25
950	50	47500	902500	2500
710	42	29820	504100	1764
990	30	29700	980100	900
210	17	3570	44100	289
750	28	21000	562500	784
5634	272	180055	3971006	9412

Source : Author's Fieldwork, 2006

$$r = \frac{n\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{n\sum X^2 - \Sigma(X^2)\}(n\sum Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2)}}$$

$$= \frac{10(180,055) - (5634)(272)}{\sqrt{\{10(3971006) - (5634)^2\} \{10(941^2) - (272)^2\}}}$$

r = 067

Significance of Correlation

Formula for testing significance of the relationship for simple correlation is

$$T = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

$$\rightarrow t = \frac{0.67\sqrt{(10-2)}}{\sqrt{1-0.67^2}} = \frac{0.67\sqrt{8}}{\sqrt{0.33}}$$

$$t = \frac{1.89}{0.574} = 3.29$$

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