

DOES SALES PROMOTION INFLUENCE BUYER BEHAVIOUR? A STUDY OF PZ CUSSONS LIMITED

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Abstract

Sales promotion is a collection of incentive tools designed to stimulate sales of particular products or services in the short-term. The objectives of the study were to identify the Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion mechanisms adopted and to determine how the sales promotion mechanisms affected the behaviour of young consumers. Apart from adult buyers, young consumers who are Senior High School (SHS) students in Ghana, often buy personal care products especially soap personally for their use at school. Thus, the study focused on SHS students in the Ho Municipality of the Volta Region, Ghana. Data were collected with a questionnaire administered to a sample of 152 students who represented young consumers in the Ho Municipality of the Volta Region, Ghana. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. It was found that, PZ Cussons' Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion mechanisms adopted included token of prizes such as T-shirts, shopping baskets, pieces of GTP wax cloth and the ultimate prize was a two-bedroom self-contained house. The study shows that the sales promotion has influenced many young consumers to purchase the product. Thus, it is important that the company regularly organizes sales promotion to improve its sales. A major contribution of the study is that it has established that a lot of young consumers, who are mainly boarding students in some part of Ghana, make purchase decisions regarding purchase of laundry soaps for their use at school. The study shows that boarding students constitute a very important market segment of the personal care product market in Ghana. Hence, personal care product marketers in Ghana should consider young consumers as part of their target markets and offer sales promotion packages that will be attractive to young consumers.

Keywords: Buyer behavior; sales promotion; PZ Cussons; Ho Municipality.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a competitive marketing environment, communication is one of the ways to reach the company's customers. It also serves as a tool to reach out to customers as well as to achieve the organization's objectives. The purpose of marketing communications however is to enable companies to achieve their strategic marketing objectives some of which are to introduce new products, to induce present customers to buy more, to combat competition and to increase retail inventory for higher sales. Companies worldwide use variety of marketing communications tools to achieve these objectives and some of these include personal selling, advertising, public relations and sales promotion.

In times past, companies focused mainly on advertising to reach out to their loyal and prospective customers. Research has however noted that, advertising when coordinated with sales promotion and other marketing tools like direct marketing, public relations and personal selling can have a synergistic effect [1]. Consequently, many companies or businesses have resorted to sales promotions to enable them achieve their objectives and satisfy the changing needs of customers. Sales promotion activities refer to promotional activities other than advertising, publicity and personal selling that stimulate interest, trial or

purchase by the final customers or others in the channel. Sales promotion may be aimed at consumers, intermediaries or the firm's own employees [2]. Sales promotions are short-term schemes aimed at complementing other promotional tools.

The objectives of sales promotion are to stimulate short-term demand, to create loyal customers and to encourage brand switching from competitors. Sales promotions are achieved through informing and persuading customers or consumers of an existing or new product. The immense role sales promotion plays in the selling of products could be one of the most important reasons why businesses continue to use this tool to promote their products. The use of sales promotion techniques has been on the increase by most Ghanaian businesses in recent years. Following the economic recovery programme, structural adjustment programme and the subsequent trade liberalization, many companies in Ghana have had to face competition from overseas companies that are aggressive in promoting their products. This situation has led to the need for adoption of sales promotion by local companies. PZ Cussons Limited is one of the companies in Ghana that uses sales promotion. PZ Cussons Limited was established in Sierra-Leon in 1879 by George Paterson and George Zochonis. Later, the company expanded into other countries in Africa. In 1969, a manufacturing base was established in Tema, Ghana. PZ Cussons deals in hair care products, beverages, soaps, detergents, sanitary pads and pharmaceutical products. PZ Cussons introduced the duck bar soap in 1997.

The intense competition from imported products and dwindling sales as well as increase in competition among firms calls for use of sales promotion. To stay competitive, businesses are resorting to marketing tools to increase sales immediately, stabilize fluctuating sales pattern, attract new customers, build goodwill, provide punch to the company's advertising effort and counter competitors' marketing efforts to retain and entice new customers. Globally, transformation from the sellers' market to the buyers' market is taking place and competing firms position their offerings strategically in order to attract consumers.

Generally, companies adopt sales promotions in order to increase the level of sales but whether PZ Cussons' sales promotion really induces consumers and increases the level of the company's sales still remain unanswered. The sales promotion situation of PZ Cussons especially, its soap product line is still on the increase. However, the question is does these aggressive sales promotion influence buyer behaviour of young consumers who constitute a market segment? The general objective of the study was to assess the effect of sales promotion on young consumers' purchase behaviour using PZ Cussons' Se m'anyhia duck soap sales promotion as a case. The specific objectives of the study were: (1) to identify the Se m'anyhia duck soap sales promotion mechanisms used by PZ Cussons Limited, (2) to determine the effect of the Se m'anyhia duck soap sales promotion on the purchase behaviour of young consumers in the Ho Municipality and (3) to find out the effect of the Se m'anyhia sales promotion on the PZ Cussons' sales in the Ho Municipality.

Se m'anyhia is an expression in Akan, a Ghanaian language, which means "if I had not seen it." The Se m'anyhia duck bar soap sales promotion was carried out as an effort to change the brand from "add colour to your life" to Se m'anyhia. This was done to create a new identity for the brand and also to increase sales. Students, mothers, housewives and people in the laundry industry were the targets for the sales promotion.

A study of the reactions of young consumers such as students to sales promotion is significant as little is known about this phenomenon in Ghana. Senior High School (SHS)

students who are in the boarding schools constitute a significant market segment for laundry soaps in Ghana because they often buy laundry soaps for their use at school. Though young consumers also make some purchase decisions concerning some fast moving consumer goods, there was a literature gap on the purchase behaviour of young consumers regarding sales promotion of fast moving consumer goods in Ghana. This study therefore contributes some knowledge to consumer behaviour in response to sales promotion among young consumers in the personal care market in Ghana.

Promotion is an element of the marketing mix (also known as the 4Ps) within whose confines marketing organizations operate. The 4Ps are product, price, place and promotion. For the purpose of this study, the discussions focus on sales promotion which is an element of promotion. According to [3] promotion is defined as communicating information between a seller and potential buyers or others in the channel to influence attitudes and behaviour. It is the marketing manager's responsibility to communicate with customers in a manner, which will satisfy their needs. How well messages are delivered depends on the blend of the various promotional mix elements.

There are a variety of promotional elements from which the marketing manager chooses what suits the organization's customers depending on the prevailing situations. It must however be noted that promotional mix elements have their own strengths and weaknesses. Managers therefore, look for the best combination that will yield the most desired results.

There have been various definitions of sales promotion. Belch and Belch [4] define sales promotion as direct inducement that offers that extra value or incentive for the product to sales force, distributors, or the ultimate consumers with primary objective of creating an immediate sale. Belch and Belch [4] also defines sales promotion as the marketing activities other than personal selling, advertising and publicity that stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness. Kotler [5] defines sales promotion as a collection of incentive tools, mostly short-term designed to stimulate quicker and or greater purchase of particular products by consumers or traders.

Sales promotion must be coordinated with other promotional mix elements such as advertising and personal selling to have a real impact on sales [6]. Perreault and McCarthy [3] further remarked that money spent on advertising and personal selling helps the firm more over the long-term and that sales promotions do not help develop close relationships with customers, instead, it erodes brand loyalty.

Joncos [7] asserts that sales promotion fuels flames of competitive retaliation far more than other marketing activities. The long-term effect of such retaliation is sometimes the elimination of all profit from total market categories. The advantage of running an extra promotion or offering higher incentives is usually short lived. Competitors retaliate with more aggressive sales promotion and that often neutralizes whatever incremental sales were generated by the company that initially used sales promotion.

Jones [8] contends that sales promotions devalue the image of the promoted brand in the customer's eyes. On some occasions, sales promotions have had unfavorable influence on consumers' brand perception. Pickton and Broderick [6] noted that too much sales promotion causes the brand to have high volume but low profitability. Quelch [9] argues that consumer goods and services marketers have increased their sales promotion expenditures significantly in recent years. Schneider and Currim [10] claim that customers' tendency to patronize a product depends on the out-store sales promotion and in-store sales promotion. Out-store sales promotion and in-store sales promotion can generate additional sales by

motivating consumers not to be moved by other advertising efforts.

Esfahani and Jafarzadeh [11] found that there is no meaningful relationship between impulsive buyer behaviour and sales promotion. In spite of studies showing that sales promotion is not effective and that it is a waste of the firms' resources and erodes brand loyalty, others hold contrary views that it increases sales and induces the consumers to do impulse buying.

Sales promotion can be categorized into three types namely consumer-oriented sales promotion (pulling strategy), trade-oriented sales promotion (push strategy) and sales force sales promotion [12]. Consumer-oriented sales promotion aims at stimulating customer demands for the firm's offering by getting customers to ask intermediaries for the products through the channels of distribution. It also encourages consumers to make immediate purchases of a particular brand as well as increase its usage, thus stimulating short-term sales. Consumer-oriented sales promotion usually takes the form of using coupons, samples, rebates or refunds, sweep-stakes, contests and point of purchase advertising.

Trade-oriented sales promotional tools are primarily defensive tactics designed to protect shelf space against competitors. They are targeted at attracting marketing intermediaries such as wholesalers, distributors and retailers. Trade-oriented sales promotion focuses on the short-term arrangements that will improve intermediaries' purchases. The goal of this

strategy is to push products through the channels of distribution by aggressively selling and promoting the items to the resellers or traders. This is done through the use of special point of purchase displays, discount, dealer premiums etc. Sales force sales promotion aims at developing incentives and motivation schemes for a company's sales force. The method often keeps every member of the sales force focused on the company's targets.

Sales promotion influences buying decisions of customers. The buying decision process comprises five stages consumers go through in making purchases. The stages are need recognition, identification of alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and related decisions and post-purchase behaviour. Buying decisions are either high-involvement or low-involvement. Low-involvement decisions include fewer stages while a high-involvement consists of all the five stages. Low involvement situations occur when there is a brand and store loyalty and impulse buying.

Need recognition is when the consumer tries to identify and recognize his or her needs. The consumer then moves on to identify alternative products and brands and collects information about them. Evaluation of alternatives involves weighing the pros and cons of the alternatives identified. Purchase and related decision refers to the stage where the consumer decides to buy a product and makes decisions related to the purchase. During the post-purchase behaviour stage, the consumer seeks reassurance that the choice made was correct [12].

The dynamic nature of the consumer market is reflected in the distribution and the demographic characteristics of consumers. Demographics are the vital statistics which describe a population. They are useful to marketers because they are related to the behaviour of consumers and are relatively easy to gather. The demographic characteristics are consumers' age, gender, family, life-cycle, income, ethnicity and other characteristics such as education, occupation, religion and nationality.

2. METHODOLOGY

The target population of the study comprised young consumers in the Ho Municipality of the Volta Region, Ghana who buy personal care products like laundry soaps for their own use. However, the accessible population was made of the Senior High School (SHS) students in the Ho Municipality of the Volta Region, Ghana. The relevance of the accessible population is that, it is well known that some young people notably students in Ghana make purchase decisions concerning purchase of personal care products like laundry soaps for their personal use. Some SHS boarding students buy their personal care products which include laundry soaps for their use in boarding schools and some day students also shop for their personal care items though they live with their parents or guardians.

Ho is the regional capital of the Volta Region of the Republic of Ghana. The Volta Region lies at the eastern side of Ghana. The region is bounded on the east by the Republic of Togo and on the west by three other regions of Ghana namely the Greater-Accra Region, Eastern Region and the Brong-Ahafo Region. At the Northern border of the Volta Region is the Northern Region and at the south of the Volta Region is the Gulf of Guinea. The Ho Municipality has the highest concentration of SHSs in the Volta Region and for that matter there exist a lot of young consumers of convenience products in the region.

There were twenty-two (22) SHSs in the Ho Municipality at the time of the study comprising fifteen (15) public SHSs and seven (7) private SHSs. Multistage sampling method was used to select the respondents. First, simple random sampling technique was used to sample eleven (11) public SHSs and five (5) private SHSs making sixteen (16) SHSs in total. In the use of simple random sampling, names of all public and private SHSs in the municipality were written separately on pieces of paper. For each category, the pieces of papers were folded and these folded papers were put into a container according to the category. The containers were shaken vigorously and then the papers from each of the containers were picked one after the other until the required number for each category was obtained. At the second stage, quota sampling method was adopted. In the use of quota sampling, the respondents were selected on the basis of certain basic parameters such as age and sex that describe the nature of the population so as to make it represent the population. Five male and five female students were selected in every sampled SHS. In all, the total number of respondents were one hundred and fifty two (152). Also, purposive sampling method was then adopted in selecting the Area Sales Manager of PZ Cussons as a key informant to respond to interview schedule. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the respondents and the Area Sales Manager of PZ Cussons in the Volta Region of Ghana. A questionnaire was administered to the student respondents and an interview schedule was used to interview the Area Sales Manager. The first part of the students' questionnaire was used to collect data on the demographics of the respondents such as gender, age and form (or class). In the second part of the questionnaire, data collected included the impact of the sales promotion. This included awareness and the influence of Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion on the purchase behaviour of the respondents. An interview schedule was used to collect information from the Area Sales Manager on the various sales promotion programmes for duck bar soap. It also covered the purpose, target audience and advertising of Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion. In addition, the interview schedule was used to identify the sales promotion prizes and mechanisms used. Finally, the effect of Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion on sales in the territory was also determined through the interview schedule. Data gathered were

checked for clarity, organized and analyzed in line with the research objectives. The analysis of data was done by SPSS version 16 software to produce descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was carried out among students from sixteen (16) Senior High Schools in the Ho Municipality with a sample size of 152. Equal proportions of both sexes were considered in the study, representing 50% each (Table 1).

Table 1. Gender and age categories of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	76	50.0
Female	76	50.0
Total	152	100.0
Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
10-15	2	1.3
16-20	126	82.9
21-25	22	14.5
26 above	2	1.3
Total	152	100.0

Source: Field data 2012

Most of the student respondents (82.9%) interviewed belong to the 16-20 years age bracket (Table 1). It is not surprising since this is the age category of most students in the Senior High Schools in Ghana. The respondents included students from various forms, borders and day students. Furthermore, respondents' experience with the use of PZ Cussons duck bar soap was captured.

3.1 The Mechanisms Used for the Sales Promotion

Companies use sales promotion chiefly to increase sales temporarily to gain sales volume and market share. PZ Cussons code named her sales promotional programme for duck bar soap as Se m'anyhia and it was advertised through television, radio, posters and newspapers to create awareness about the sales promotion. In this sales promotion, the company emphasized certain features of the product. In addition, the company also used raffle draws to attract customers to purchase the product. The study revealed that sales promotion mechanisms employed for the Se m'anyhia duck bar soap sales promotion included token of gifts lucky consumers found in the soap while using it. When cutting of the soap into smaller pieces or units, whatever was written on the material inserted became the prize of the consumer involved. These prizes ranged from GTP wax prints, washing bowls, shopping baskets, T-shirts and pieces of duck bar soap. The first three lucky consumers won as prizes a two- bedroom house, a TV set and a home theatre respectively after which their names were published. An interview with the Area Sales Manager revealed that these promotional activities led to a mad rush for the product particularly after the initial winners were published.

3.2 Viewing of Se m'anyhia Sales Promotion and Awareness of Items to be Won

The result indicated that 87% of the student respondents said they have watched or listened to the Se m'anyhia duck bar soap sales promotion (Table 2). Table 2 below presents responses to the question "Did you watch or listen to the phrase "Se m'anyhia" attached to duck bar soap awareness created by the company?"

Table 2. Viewing of Se m’anyhia sales promotion

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Viewers	132	87
Non viewers	20	13
Total	152	100

Source: Field data 2012

Thus their usage of the duck bar soap could also be influenced by the sales promotion. This is because sales promotions have some significant effects on consumers. This includes short-term effects, which occur during the sales promotion and long-term effects which involve attitudinal changes that take place after the sales promotion. According to this study, the respondents were aware of the items to be won under the sales promotion and some of them won some prizes. The respondents responded to the item “Which of the items have you won during the Se m’anyhia duck bar soap sales promotion?” Table 3 below indicates the prizes the respondents won.

Table 3. Items won by respondents during the Se m’anyhia sales promotion

Prize won	Frequency	Percentage
Duck bar soap T-shirt	45	29.6
Washing bowl	16	10.5
Shopping basket	4	2.6
Duck bar soap	39	25.7
None of the above	48	31.6
Total	152	100.0

Source: Field data 2012

According to this study, most respondents (68.4%) won various prizes (Table 3). The details are duck bar soap T-shirt (29.6%), washing bowl (10.5%), shopping basket (2.6%) and duck bar soap (25.7%) during the Se m’anyhia sales promotion. However, 31.6% of the respondents did not win any of the prizes promised during the sales promotion.

3.3 Reactions to Promises in Se m’anyhia Sales Promotion

The study also found out whether the respondents were influenced by the prizes promised in the Se m’anyhia sales promotion to buy the duck bar soap. They were asked the question “Did those items promised influence you to buy duck bar soap the first time?” Among the respondents, 65 % of them said the prizes promised in the sales promotion influenced them to buy the duck bar soap (Table 4). This implies that the Se m’anyhia sales promotion made a significant impact on student consumers. Thus, varieties of sales promotion of the product by the company are highly encouraged to create awareness and promote the product as it has significant influence on consumer behaviour.

Table 4. Reactions to promises in Se m’anyhia sales promotion

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Purchasers because of promises	99	65
Purchasers not because of promises	53	35
Total	152	100

Source: Field data 2012

Sales promotion has both short-term and long-term effects. Short term effects occur during the sales promotion and long-term effects involve behaviours that take place after the sales promotion. From this point of view, Se m’anyhia sales promotion had some amount of long-

term effect especially on students interviewed. This could also increase sales during the promotion by attracting customers from other stores (store switching), inducing customers to switch brands (brand switching), inducing customers to buy from the promoted category rather than another category (category switching), inducing customers who normally do not use the product category to purchase it (new users), or inducing customers to move their purchases forward in time (purchase acceleration) [13]. Purchase acceleration could also occur because consumers purchase earlier or because they purchase more than they would have done without the sales promotion. The study indicates that the promises associated with the Se m'anyia sales promotion influenced 65% of the respondents to patronize the product (Table 4). Notwithstanding the possible influence of product, price, distribution and other promotional mix elements such as advertising, personal selling and public relations, these variables were virtually constant during the Se m'anyia sales promotion period. During the Se m'anyia sales promotion, there were no changes in product quality, price and distribution strategies of the product. Also, personal selling and public relations were not used during the said sales promotion period. Though advertising was used during the sales promotion period through media such as television, radio, posters and newspapers, the adverts were about awareness creation of the sales promotion being run. Since the other marketing variables were constant during the Se m'anyia sales promotion period, the only marketing variable during that period was the Se m'anyia sales promotion. In view of that, the increase in the patronage of duck bar soap among the respondents during and after the Se m'anyia sales promotion was highly influenced by the prizes of the sales promotion. Furthermore, the study also found out whether the perception the respondents had about the quality of duck bar soap during the Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion had changed after the sales promotion or not. The change in perceived product quality after sales promotion was determined by asking the question "Did the quality of duck bar soap during the Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion change after the sales promotion?" The responses to this question are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5. Perception of quality of duck bar soap after sales promotion

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No change in quality	112	74
Change in quality	40	26
Total	152	100

Source: Field data 2012

According to the study, majority of students (74%) said the quality of the duck bar soap during and after the sales promotion is the same (Table 5). If the quality of the product diminishes after the sales promotion, it would affect sales and hence profit for the company. According to a study conducted by [11] in Iran, consumers who are quality conscious are influenced by sales promotions hence manufacturers also maintain quality of products after the sales promotion. Respondents who noticed reduction in quality of duck bar soap after the Se m'anyia sales promotion mentioned that its lathering ability has changed (72.5%) and also there was a change in the fragrance of the soap (27.5%) which they were not comfortable with.

3.4 The Effect of Sales Promotion on Customer Loyalty

The respondents answered the item "Did you repeat purchase of duck bar soap even after the

Se m'anyia duck bar soap sales promotion?" The study indicated that most students (93%) interviewed indicated that they continued to use of duck bar soap after the sales promotion (Table 6).

Table 6. Usage of duck bar soap after the sales promotion

Duck soap users	Frequency	Percentage
Users	141	93.0
Non-users	11	7.0
Total	152	100.0

Source: Field data 2012

Duck bar soap is one of the commonest products of PZ Cussons which is often used by many people in bathing and washing. Because students use soap a lot, the study revealed that duck bar soap's sales promotion has gone well with the students as it is one of the soaps students prefer using.

The current users of duck bar soap derived some benefits such as its quality, low price etc from its usage. In order to determine the preference of duck bar soap among the respondents, they were required to indicate their intention to recommend duck bar soap to others by responding to the question "Would you recommend duck bar soap to other potential users?" In response, majority of the respondents (94%) mentioned that they would recommend duck bar soap to other potential users (Table 7). These recommendations have the potential of increasing the customer base of the use of the product.

Table 7. Intention to recommend duck bar soap to others

Intention to recommend	Frequency	Percentage
Would recommend duck bar soap to others	143	94
Would not recommend duck bar soap to others	9	6
Total	152	100

Source: Field data 2012

However, a few respondents (6%) responded that they would not recommend duck bar soap to other potential users (Table 7).

Table 8. Reasons for recommendations to other potential users

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Cheaper and smells good	52	36.4
Very good product (Quality)	71	49.7
Lasts longer	19	13.3
Does not fade clothes	1	0.7
Total	143	100

Source: Field data 2012

The reasons for recommending duck bar soap to other potential users were stipulated in (Table 8). Among them, the core reason is its quality (49.7%). Because of its quality, customers believe if they recommend it to other people, they would accept it and patronize it. The reasons given by the respondents who would not recommend duck bar soap to others are that duck bar soap has a poor lathing ability (92%) and unpleasant scent (8%). Thus, these are some of the weaknesses of the duck bar soap which the manufacturer should know and work on to attract other potential customers. Furthermore, these weaknesses can create the opportunity for new entrants to penetrate the soap and detergents market and increase the

competition within the industry in Ghana.

3.5 The Effect of Se m'anhya Sales Promotion on Sales

According to the Area Sales Manager, the duck bar soap promotion was done for a minimum of three times in a year. However, the sales promotion did not achieve its objectives entirely. This was because competition from competitive detergents such as key soap from Unilever and their "Kroshia key soap" promotion presented a more attractive option for consumers than duck soap. Furthermore, Se m'anhya duck soap promotion was able to increase the sales of duck bar soap by 41.43% during the sales promotion period. The Area Sales Manager said that a month after the Se m'anhya sales promotion, sales increased from about 70,000 cartons a month to about 99,000 cartons a month. Since the Se m'anhya sales promotion was the marketing variable that changed during that period, the increment in sales of the product has been attributed to the Se m'anhya sales promotion.

4. CONCLUSION

The sales promotion mechanisms adopted included token of prizes such as T-shirts, shopping baskets, GTP wax pieces of cloth and TV sets which most of the respondents were aware of. The sales promotion has influenced some respondents to purchase the product especially after the initial winners were announced and published. The study shows that most students in the Senior High Schools have used duck bar soap. Also, fifty percent of the respondents had information about the soap at home. However, more than three-quarters who purchased the product attributed their purchase to the influence of sales promotion adverts in the various media such as television, radio, posters and newspapers. Thus, this sales promotion had significant influence on their purchase decision. The study also revealed that this sales promotion was carried out as a competitive strategy to promote the product and increase its market share against competitors. Furthermore, it also helped to build a brand identity and loyalty, which actually increased sales and impact positively on the company. It is clear that the sales promotion had significant effect on the purchase behaviour of the respondents. Therefore, for the company to increase sales of duck bar soap, there is the need to organize sales promotion regularly and target students as a major market segment.

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