

ADDRESSING UNETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES AMONG HERBAL DRUG VENDORS IN THE SOCIETY: ROLES OF THE MASS MEDIA AND REGULATORY AGENCIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Local herbal drug vendors operating on market days in most local markets and on the streets in major cities of Nigeria have indeed become a regular part of the nation's total market force engaging daily in the distribution chain of foods, drugs, and other consumables. These itinerant sales force or hawkers many of whom are without formal education or any form of training in advertising marketing and salesmanship are however a force to be reckoned with. This is so because they have become so ubiquitous as they engage in various unethical conducts and unwholesome business practices while advertising and marketing different drugs, local herbs, herbal mixtures, ointments, concoctions, etc. in our surroundings. Based on the imperatives of this phenomenon as a potential health hazard to the members of the society, this research was conducted. The paper employed the discourse analysis method in exploring relevant research materials and journal articles to address the menace of this ugly trend in the society. Findings identified illiteracy, poverty, lack of control and regulation of the market sector, ignorance on the side of the consumers and role conflict among the agencies as some of the factors promoting the continuous existence of these unethical conducts and unwholesome business practices. The paper suggested ways of ensuring effective monitoring and regulations of the activities of these itinerant herbal drug vendors and recommended increased public enlightenment and media campaigns among other solutions as part of the measures to streamline and regulate the trend of this abnormality and illegality in the society.

Keywords: Unethical Business Practices, Herbal Drugs Vendors, Mass Media, Regulatory Agencies, Nigeria.

Introduction

Door to door sales and advertisement or personal selling as one of the six commonly used and discussed promotional mix in marketing has over the years remained the earliest and cheapest marketing activity and method according to (Aruleba 2015; Partel 2019). On the other hand, (Adewale, Adeniran and Oluyinka, 2019) opine that modern personal selling is far from being cheap as they described it as “the most expensive form of promotion”, obviously since many big and small organisations have now adopted it as a sales strategy and are now spending a lot of money on its implementation. Tracing its root to the time of trade by barter, door to door sales or personal selling has indeed come of age as a useful and indispensable tool in the hands of both organisations and individuals. In practice, personal selling is an act which field salesmen engage in to complete the much necessary process of products and services distribution chain. As one of the methods of salesmanship, personal selling is indeed a crucial skill which every successful salesman must possess and utilize at any given time during his business. Patel, (2019) describes it as “an extremely important part of a salesperson’s arsenal and a skill every good salesperson must master”. With steady technological advancement, personal selling now takes place even via the telephone, video conferencing and the internet (Adewale et.al, 2019). Despite the modern dimension, salesmen still engage in personal selling physically and as a two-way communication process between sellers and buyers where the sellers uncover and satisfy buyers’ needs in a mutual long-term manner suitable for both parties (Weitz and Castleberry 2004; Adewale et.al, 2019).

The focus of this paper is therefore on herbal drug vendors who usually employ hawking or door to door advertising, personal selling, or door to door marketing to sell various traditional herbs and drugs (tradomedicines) at various local and urban markets in the country. These sets of sales forces have herein been described as “herbal drug vendors” owing to some characteristics which they exhibit as salesmen or sales representatives. ‘Local’ in the sense that their products (mostly herbal drugs and ointments) are manufactured locally, and their target customers are usually found in the rural and local areas. They are usually the owners of these businesses (manufacturers of most of these herbal drugs) or sometimes casual or permanent employees of a manufacturer.

Another peculiar attribute is that many of them are not well educated but may be very good at selling their products obviously due to regular training and opportunity to communicate with their target customers in their mother tongue. Like modern salesmen/representatives, ‘local sales representatives’ also engage in personal selling by practically using the same process or stages’ which starts with prospecting; pre-approach; the approach; need assessment; the presentation; handling the objection; closing the sale and follow-up, (Abodunrin, 2020). Most interestingly, they are also like modern salesmen highly susceptible to ethical dilemmas which eventually lead to lots of unethical business practices on their parts. Specifically, the focus of this paper dwells on addressing the spate of unethical conducts such as deceit, false claims, and exaggeration by these local salesmen and how to ameliorate that through effective implementation of regulations by the mass media and relevant regulatory agencies in the country.

Conceptual Explications

Mass Media and Health Communication

The term mass media is used to describe the means of modern technology used for communication to the public. It is the primary means of communication used to reach most of the target audience. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet. The public typically relies on the mass media for the provision of news and information regarding health matters, political issues, social issues, entertainment, and human-interest stories. Communication about health through mass media is complex, however and offer challenges to professionals in diverse discipline. (Winert and Wallack, 1996: 173) opine that “using the mass media to improve public health can be like navigating a vast network of roads without any street signs – if you are not sure where you are going and why, chances are you will not reach your destination”. However, since modern societies are dependent on mass media to deliver health information, it follows that employment of mass media to disseminate health news (or other matters) has in effect, reduced the world’s size. According to (Moynihan, 1999:1645),

“The news media are an important source of information about health and medical therapies and there is widespread interest in the quality of reporting. Previous studies have identified inaccurate coverage of published scientific papers, overstatement of adverse effects of risks and evidence of sensationalism. The media can also have a positive health role as they did in communicating simple warnings about the connection between Reye’s syndrome and the use of aspirin in children”.

Regulatory Agencies

A regulatory agency is a public authority or government agency responsible for exercising autonomous authority over some areas of human activity in a regulatory or supervisory capacity. They are commonly set up to enforce safety standards and or to protect the public from unethical business practices in markets where there is a lack of effective competition or the potential for the undue exercise of market force. Examples of regulatory agencies that enforce standards on foods and drugs in Nigeria include the Chartered Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (CIMN), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), Consumer Protection Council (CPC). Regulatory agencies deal in the areas of administrative law, regulatory law, secondary legislation, and rulemaking i.e., codifying and enforcing rules and regulations and imposing supervision or oversight for the benefit of the members of the larger society, Ounirk (2014).

Door to Door Sales/Personal Selling

Door to door sales or personal selling have been defined by many scholars in various ways Patel (2019) defines it as a method of selling where a salesperson meets a potential buyer or buyers face-to-face with the aim of selling a product or service. It is a business activity involving a person-to-person communication process during which a salesperson discovers and satisfies the needs of a buyer to the mutual, long-term benefit of both parties, (The Nation, 2018). Similarly, (Cant and Van Heerden, 2004, p.3) define it as "the process of person-to-

person communication between a salesperson and a prospective customer, in which the former learns about the customer's needs and seeks to satisfy those needs by offering the customer the opportunity to buy something of value, such as a good or service". Arshiya, (n.d) also defines door to door sales or personal selling *as a promotional method in which one party (e.g., salesperson) uses skills and techniques for building personal relationships with another party (e.g., those involved in a purchase decision) that results in both parties obtaining value. According to (Aruleba, 2015, p.318)*

"Door to door sales or personal selling is the delivery of a specially designed message to a prospective customer by a seller, usually in the form of face-to-face communication, personal correspondence, or a personal telephone conversation rather than impersonal or indirect mass communication of radio advertising, TV and newsprint. Telemarketing, direct marketing over the telephone, relies very much on personal selling. Personal selling is based on recognising and developing customers' relationships, discovering and communicating customers' needs, matching the appropriate products with these identified needs".

From a functional perspective, (Verma, 2020) defines personal selling as simply the function of a salesman (salesmanship). This implies that personal selling is a tool in the hand of a salesman/sales representative.

Salesmanship

Following from the definition of personal selling above, salesmanship therefore can be defined as a general term used in explaining the process of all forms of a salesman's efforts to sell a brand. According to (Verma, 2020),

"Salesmanship, on the other hand, is just an art of selling. It is an art of successfully persuading prospects or customers to buy products from which they can derive suitable benefits. Salesmanship is all about skills required by the salesman to understand the need and emotions of the prospect and offering him/her various information, options and benefit to satisfy their need. Thus, we can say that personal selling includes salesmanship".

Herbal Drug Vendors

The term 'Herbal Drug Vendors' is a coinage by the researchers to describe those specific sets of salesmen and women/sales representatives who employ personal selling methods to sell their local and herbal drugs in various markets in the society.

Ethics and Unethical Business Practices by Local/Herbal Drug Vendors

Limaye, Pande, Patil and Pune, (2016) assert that although, ethics has no universal definition, it is however linkable to morality. Citing (Magee, 1999: p.299), they affirm that ethics is a "philosophical reflection on how we should live and thereby what is right or wrong, good or evil, should or should not be done, duty, and other conceptions of this kind". Ethics simply refers to moral principles that control and influence a persons' behaviour (Hornby, 2005). It can be said to be a set of standards or codes guiding the behaviours of individual or a group of individuals. Ethics determines what is wrong or right in terms of attitudinal behaviour of

a person. Ethics guides behaviour but they are not laws, because they are not backed with statutes or any enactment. Ethics may and may not be written but they can be accepted by people as general codes of conducts or guiding rules/principles governing the behaviours of people.

When one behaves contrary to such generally accepted and adopted codes, such a person will be seen to have engaged in an unethical behaviour. Ethics according to (Verma, 2020) plays a very significant role in personal selling where one-to-one relationship and trust of the salesperson by the consumers matters a lot. A high level of ethical standards facilitates and grows the business relationships between the salesmen and by extension the organisation and the consumers. Like other elements of the promotional mix such as advertising, personal selling also has ethical issues both towards the organization and also towards the consumers. For instance, (Verma, 2020) listed some of such ethical issues by these herbal drug vendors engaging in personal selling as follows:

- (a) Dishonesty about working hours usually reported, (b) Dishonesty in the use of Company's Credit Card and expense account, (c) Inflation of number of contact calls, (d) Giving unauthorised discount, (e) Misusing confidential information,
- (f) Unethically quitting job and joining competitors, (g) Stealing leads and other competitors' customers, (h) Making false and exaggerated claims about products,
- (i) Unsatisfactory treatment of customers complaints, (j) Preferential and discriminatory treatment of customers, (k) Forceful selling or pressure tactics,
- (l) Hiding useful information from customers, (m) Ineffective after sales service and, (n) Misleading pricing, overpricing and fake discount.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study dwelt on Addressing the Unethical Business Practices of Herbal Drug Vendors in the Society: Roles of Mass Media and Regulatory Agencies in Nigeria. Other specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Examining the activities of herbal drug vendors in the society.
2. Identification of the relevant regulatory agencies in the areas of food and drugs administration and control in Nigeria.
3. Examining the role of mass media as instruments of health communication.
4. Assessing the relevance of regulatory agencies in regulating, monitoring and control of the activities of herbal drug vendors in the country.
5. Suggesting possible ways of curbing the menace of unethical business practices among herbal drug vendors in the society.

Methodology

The discourse analysis method was adopted for this study. Discourse analysis is a method of research used in qualitative research design to study the contextual meaning and relationships of human communication. It involves how meanings are ascribed to human language used in expressing human thoughts. It also enables researchers to read, understand, interpret, and draw inferences from people's words, sentences and paragraphs in a particular write up on any issue or subject matter. Materials that can be analysed under the discourse analysis include:

- Books, newspapers, magazines, and periodicals
- Marketing materials such as brochures and advertisements
- Business and government documents
- Websites, forums, social media posts and comments
- Interviews and interpersonal communications.

In a nutshell, it is an approach of understanding, analyzing, and making inferences from a bunch of secondary materials for the purpose of academic write-ups and research.

Literature Review

According to (Ayuba and Aliyu, 2018) several studies have shown that among the most prevalent form of unethical conduct in business is corruption which is defined as “the giving of some goods, money or service to a preferred individual for the aim of obtaining an advantages and positive thought”. Other regularly reported untoward practices are associated with exaggeration, misrepresentation, carelessness, deceptive practices, dishonesty, and sharp practices whereby one tries to get some exploitative and out of line favourable position through unscrupulous means, (Ayuba and Aliyu, 2018). A study by (Rahman, 2008) revealed that the most well-known unethical conduct that are experienced by the experts in businesses are borne out of cordiality, actuations, rewards, and social behavior. Meanwhile (Patrick 2006) classified these unethical business practices into four universal kinds of actions known as conflicts of interest’s namely unfair conduct; fraud; collusion; bribery and corruption.

Similarly, there are also numerous studies conducted on ethical issues in personal selling, (McClaren, 2012). In his 2012 study titled “*The Personal Selling and Sales Management Ethics Research: Managerial Implications and Research Directions from a Comprehensive Review of the Empirical Literature*”, McClaren x-rayed a total of 65 peer-reviewed journal articles on Ethics in Personal Selling and Sales Management and confirmed that several other scholars had conducted research on similar topics. While his study covered an eleven (11) year period, one of the earlier studies before his reviewed 37 peer-reviewed Journals and covered twenty-five (25) year period (McClaren, 2000). In his own study, McClaren continued the previous review by providing insight into the extent and the direction of the current knowledge, by synthesizing managerial implications and proffering recommendations and by suggesting areas for further exploration. Finally (McClaren, 2012, p.115) in his review suggested other areas to be explored, and such areas include:

“The status of the sales profession, professional values, the extent to which sales practitioners identify with their profession, and the regulatory and governance roles performed by a wider array of industry associations. Studies might also examine the impact of professional membership and professional codes on the ethics of salespeople, investigate compliance issues related to professional membership, and research the application of professional codes of ethics”.

Factors Responsible for Unethical Business Practices by Local/Herbal Drug Vendors

In this context and as it is the case with the ‘local salesmen’ who are engaged in the hawking, door to door marketing and personal selling of herbs, herbal mixtures, and other forms of

traditional medicines all around local markets in Nigeria, their major unethical behaviours are:

- **Giving deceitful and false information about their products**

It was confirmed that local salesmen of products such as 'Gangariya De Flush', 'Yoyo Bitters' and 'Ero-Arike' among others are often in the habit of personally offering these products, they are also fond of deceiving prospective customers with false information about the popularity and acceptability of their products. They are fond of using unconfirmable statements about dates of discovery, places where the products have been or are currently being sold and used to boost the image of such products as a popular, long existing and well accepted brand, when actually it is not the case. This indeed is not only unethical but contradicts the ethical code of marketing and advertising in Nigeria.

- **Making false and exaggerated claims about potency and efficacy of their products**

Like the unethical issues discussed above, these local salesmen and women also go further in their deceit of prospective customer, when they unnecessarily exaggerate the potency and effectiveness of the said herbal mixtures and ointments. For instance, for these products, the common statement is that they cure many ailments, and they are for general purposes.

- **Making false promises to deceive buyers into buying the products**

Another common unethical business practice among these local/herbal drug vendors is in the form of false and empty promises often presented in form of promotions meant to attract prospective buyers. They often promise gifts and other freebies that are never given to buyers.

- **Non-disclosure of very important information about the composition of their products and possible side effects**

The worst form of these unethical business practices by the observed salesmen in the society is the non-declaration of significant information to prospective buyers about their products. In most cases, especially for some products in the herbal mixture category, information such as the ingredients used for the mixture as well as the possible side effects of such drugs are never disclosed to consumers.

Nevertheless, apart from the general problem of societal loss of value and moral uprightness, negative social behaviours and other forms of unethical practices have been linked by scholars to several other factors why local or herbal drug vendors engage in such acts. These factors as highlighted by (Belle and Cantarelli, 2017); (Parashar, 2019); (Tobah and Fischhoff, 2020) are discussed below; under these broad categories: social influences, greed, egocentrism; and self justification:

- **Social Influences**

Factors under social influences usually emerge either in the form of social identity, interdependence, and empathy-altruism. First, the theory of social identity holds that every individual belongs to a specific social group which has some sorts of groups' principles, norms and value or codes which every member of such social group always

imitate or conform with. That means that as individual, one tends to copy from the common traits and forms of behaviours found peculiar to one's social group even if such behaviour is an unethical behaviour. (Belle and Cantarelli, 2017). The second social influencing factor is 'interdependence and self-serving altruism'. Citing, (Gino, Ayal, and Ariely, 2013), Bell and Cantarelli (2017) posit that, under this factor, individuals are quick at rationalising their dishonesty and unethical behaviours if such behaviour also create benefits for others who necessarily need not be a member of same group with the individual. The third factor is empathy-altruism which holds that, due to emphatic emotion, an individual's willingness to help a victim automatically increases when such victim is identified rather than non-identified.

- **Greed**

While drawing on the outcome of vast meta-analysis research, (Bell and Cantarelli, 2017) confirm that individuals, drawing on the knowledge of abundance of wealth in the environment, individual difference in input-to-output, and inequality of any sort in relation to others, are more likely to engage in unethical business practices. This simply means that the tendency for greed in individuals especially in an organisation and among a work group such as business or market force of an organisation can lead one into engaging in unethical conduct or unethical practice for the maximisation of profits in business.

- **Egocentrism**

Studies according to (Bell and Cantarelli, 2017) have also confirmed that drawing on self-construal theory, individuals when in the state of independent self are less likely to update their self-concept when acting unethically and less likely to recognise how much their behaviours violate social norms and/or affect others. These set of self-oriented individuals are also fond of maximizing their benefits in whatever situation they find themselves and therefore, are not concerned about the outcomes they cause onto others. For that reason, they are usually having less stringent moral standards and to be more likely to engage in an unethical conduct

- **Self-Justification**

Citing (Bandura, 1999), (Bell and Cantarelli, 2017) also explain that when an individual displays some sense of self-justification, such attitude promotes unethical behaviour through moral disconnection. Such moral disconnection and lack of sense of self condemnation makes individuals perceive unethical behaviour as less immoral and responsibility for dishonest behaviour usually displaced and victims of unethical behaviour are often devalued or blamed.

Effects of Unethical Business Practices by Herbal or Local Drug Vendors

There is no doubting the fact that all forms of unethical behaviours of the local salesmen are of tremendous negative impact to the consumers, first, at the short run and also to the marketing organisations as well as the salesmen themselves at the long run. This is because when such unethical practice persists, the buyers are almost immediately at loss of both his/her money and the expected satisfaction. Such false claims and non-disclosure of information may even lead to death. On the part of the salesmen, unethical business practice

is usually a great dis-service not only to the product and the organisation but also to the salesmen. Unethical behaviours are also of great negative impact on the nation's economy as well as on the image of sales and marketing profession in the country. Ethical misconduct in any organization or in any business setting can lead to very serious consequences which can cause loss of time and money in trying to repair their business reputation and any legal issues that may arise depending on the severity of the situation. Loss of integrity by an organisation can lead to a decrease in the productivity levels and poor patronage by prospective customers. When an organization engages in unethical business practices there is the possibility of such acts being publicised. This in turn can cause such a company to lose its credibility, resulting in customers boycotting the product, bad mouthing the business and subsequent loss of patronage.

The consequences of unethical conducts in businesses do not only affect the organisations alone but also spreads to the society and the community where the business is located. The society relies so much on these companies/manufacturers as a source of employment, source of goods and services and to some extent to helping social responsibility (William, 2002). When a business decides to abuse ethical values, it is likely that such a business will collapse which will severely affect the society in one way or another. Those who work in such a business enterprise will lose their means of livelihood, investors will lose their investments and customers who happen to come from within the community will be deprived of the goods and services offered by the company (Mimi and Shenon, 2003). Similarly, engaging in unethical business practices especially one that has to do with the production of local or herbal drugs can lead to loss of lives and other health challenges. The usage and consumption of expired or fake and substandard products can cause damage to the body or even deaths in severe cases.

Ethical Codes of Relevant Regulatory Agencies in Nigeria

There are lots of private and public efforts at regulating and maintaining decency within the sales and marketing management sector of Nigeria's economy. On one side, there exist the Organised Private Sector (OPS) and professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (CIMN), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), and on the other part the public or governmental agencies such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC). All these agencies both private and public are all engaged in to sanitise the sales, advertising, and marketing sector of the nation's economy. Findings revealed that each of these bodies with their code of conduct/ethics are committed to ensuring ethical conducts and professionalism and practices that are mutually beneficial not only to consumers, salesmen, marketers, and advertisers, but also the entire nation. For instance, specific clauses and sections in the various codes of conduct/professional ethics of these bodies clearly spell out the expected standards set to achieve both the objectives of these bodies as well as sanitising the entire sales and marketing activities. Such regulations are tabulated below.

Table 1: List of Regulators and their relevant regulatory codes or statements

REGULATORS	SOURCES	RELEVANT REGULATIONS/ LAWS
NAFDAC	S.5 & 30 NAFDAC ACT, Cap I N1 LFN 2004&S. 12. FD Act F33. LFN 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No herbal medicine and related product shall be manufactured, imported, exported, distributed, advertised, sold, or used in Nigeria unless it has been registered in accordance with the provisions of these regulations
CIMN	CIMN Code of Conduct 2017, S.2, SS.1.2.3.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A member shall always conduct himself with integrity in such a way as to bring credit to the profession of marketing and The Chartered Institute of Marketing. A member shall not by any unfair or unprofessional practice injure the business, reputation, or interest of any other member of the Institute. Members shall, always, act honestly in their professional dealings with customers and clients (actual and potential), employers and employees. A member shall not, knowingly, or recklessly, disseminate any false or misleading information, either on his own behalf or on behalf of anyone else.
APCON	APCON Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "All advertisement in Nigeria or directed at the Nigerian market shall be legal, decent, honest, truthful, respectful, and mindful of Nigeria's culture, constitutional tenets and relevant lawful enactments."⁶ Therefore, all forms of advertisement must be legal i.e., must not be contrary to any law in Nigeria. It must also be honest and true, respectful and cognizant of Nigeria's culture and the provisions of the constitution and local laws".
FCCPC	Section 123 (1) FCCPC ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A producer, importer, distributor, retailer, trader, or service provider shall not make any false representation to a consumer in a manner that is likely to imply any false or incorrect representation concerning those goods. Similarly, Article 84 of the Advertising Code provides that the product advertised must conform to the descriptions as provided in the advertisement. It must be an exact replication of the descriptions and features as mentioned in the pages referred to above.

(CIMN 2017; NAFDAC 2019; Scot 2020)

Discussion of Findings

Unethical business practices in advertising and marketing and other professions refer to actions or behaviours that fail to meet up with acceptable standards of business practices.

Unethical practices can also be defined as any action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for an individual, a profession, an industry, or work force. Today, the Nigerian society is one that is characterized with so many unethical business practices which have eaten deep into the fabrics of the nation's business and economy, (Bello and Aliyu, 2018). These unethical conducts or practices are the kind of practices that are deceptive, exploitative, and hazardous to human life. They are those actions that do not conform to the acceptable standard of business operation by doing what is right in every situation. Even though there are many instances where marketers and manufacturers act within the provisions of the law, but sometimes their actions and conducts in the distribution of their goods and services may be hazardous to the members of the society and thus are generally considered to be unethical. There are so many ways through which businesses engage in unethical conduct, exploiting their workers, their customers, and the society at large. In some cases, it may be an individual within a business or profession who is unethical in the cause of his/her duties.

For example, the case of herbal drugs vendors in the local markets and major streets in the nooks and crannies of the country. These groups of market force sometimes engage in various activities which are considered unethical during door-to-door advertisements and personal selling of their local/herbal drugs like Gangariya De Flush, Yoyo Bitters, AporoEpa Ijebu, Ero-Arike, Ero Baba Ero, etc. Some of these unethical practices include the dissemination of deceitful and false information about their products, making false and exaggerated claims about the potency and efficacy of their herbal drugs and other products, etc. All the same, the activities of these itinerant herbal drugs vendors do not go unchecked as is expected in any ideal and organised society. And so various relevant regulatory agencies are established by both the private and public sector to monitor and regulate the activities of this workforce in their various businesses. These agencies include Chartered Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (CIMN), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), Consumer Protection Council (CPC) and even the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), etc. Similarly, the mass media comprising of the radio, television, newspapers, and magazines and most recently the internet are all instruments of health communication. They provide collaborative efforts with the relevant regulatory agencies in ensuring the distribution of safe and healthy herbal products for the consumption of the members of the society.

Summary of Findings

The study addressed the issue of unethical business practices among herbal drugs vendors and the roles of the mass media and relevant regulatory agencies in monitoring, regulating, and controlling their activities within acceptable norms, values, and world best practices. The Discourse Analysis Method was used as the research methodology. An in-depth and extensive literature review was carried out where various literatures highlighted the conceptual explications of ethics, unethical business practices, mass media and regulatory agencies in Nigeria. The highlights of the study revealed the following: there exist various forms of unethical business practices in the Nigeria society especially among the itinerant door to door herbal/local drug vendors. For Oguechi (1998) and Asolo (2008) in Ikelegbe (2018), unethical practices in Nigeria business terrain are multifarious and multidimensional. These include shortchanging of consumers by businesses, fake and adulterated products, over-pricing of

goods, sales of expired foods and drugs, false, exaggerated, and misleading information. Ekanola (2005) stated also that businesses in Nigeria are founded on wrong principles that are devoid of strong ethical anchor. Most businesses are guided by narrow-mindedness and selfish interests without consideration of the ethical implications of their internal and inter-transactional behavior on critical stakeholders that include consumers, society, and the environment. Unethical business practices among herbal drug vendors in Nigeria is undoubtedly a recurring decimal that portends a health risk to the consumers. However, in Nigeria, there exist various regulatory agencies who are saddled with the responsibility to sanitise businesses and curtail unethical practices. Similarly, the mass media also serve as veritable instruments in the dissemination of news and information on local and herbal drugs. Unfortunately, their impacts have not been as effective as expected as such herbal drug vendors continue to hold sway in the society.

Conclusion

It is indeed very regrettable to note that despite several efforts from many regulatory agencies such as those mentioned above, the state of unethical business practices within the nation's sales promotion, advertisement and marketing industry in Nigeria is still alarming. The local salesmen selling some of these (sometimes unregistered) herbal mixtures and local drugs still operate in our various local markets within the country. Investigations have revealed that while most manufacturers of these herbal medicines are either semi or outright illiterates, their local salesmen are equally illiterates as well. This indeed calls for concern and collaboration from stakeholders to not only stem the tide of the risk, but also save a lot of lives that might be lost due to such situation. From the consumers who need to be more vigilant, conversant with and ensure strict adherence to the rule of the game and down to the professionals who are expected to ensure they play the game more professionally and meritoriously, all hands must be on deck. And, on the part of the government, more is still expected especially in creating the enabling environment and strict implementation of the rules and regulations guiding the production and distribution of local and herbal drug mixtures.

Recommendations

Nevertheless, and with all things being equal, in addition to improved collaborative efforts of all the stakeholders, as highlighted in the main body of this study, unethical business practices among local and herbal drug vendors can be checked if the following recommendations can be considered for adoption and implementation:

- Constant monitoring of sales force activities and behaviours on the field can and will surely reduce unethical business practices among local/herbal drug vendors. This is because such monitoring keeps reminding the sales force of the existence of some set of ethical code and the need for them to adhere to such codes. It also helps in reminding them that they would be held accountable of their conducts and activities especially if they go contrary to those Codes.
- Unethical business practices among herbal drug vendors can also be reduced drastically when an individual is reminded of his/her moral values. Such reminder of both the existing Codes of Ethics and the need for such individuals (sales force) to

remain conscious of their moral standards are enough deterrent to unethical behaviour by individuals.

- Like the above recommendation (moral reminder), encouraging individuals to also take a self-evaluation or appraisal of themselves from time to time enables individuals to discover themselves and be conscious of their image as a good and ethical person. Such realisation usually comes with some sense of responsibilities and expectations that eventually reduce their tendencies to engage in unethical behaviours.
- There is need for increased rate of mass media campaign, public enlightenment, and sensitisation of both the public (consumers) and the sales force, to reduce unethical behaviour among the sellers of local/herbal drug mixtures. The consumers are supposed to be fully enlightened of what their expectations from a typical Salesman are and when unethical behaviour is being put up by a marketer /Salesman. Professional bodies are also enjoined to frequently embark on constant enlightenment and sensitisation of members as well as the public, to increase the general level of awareness and adherence to professional ethical codes.
- Regulatory bodies are also expected to up their games by improving methods and processes of enforcing their professional codes and regulating the practice of the profession. This becomes more expedient as modern technology continues impacting on virtually all facets of human endeavours. Professional bodies and Government regulatory agencies are therefore expected to always keep improving their methods by using latest technology driven approaches to achieve their objectives.
- Role conflict among the various regulatory bodies is indeed an impediment to effective and efficient regulation of the sales and marketing activities in the country. A common feature of sales and marketing sector of the nation's economy is the proliferation of professional bodies sometimes within the same professional practices. Such development makes the bodies work most times in cross purposes and thereby leaving room for unethical conducts amongst members. Professional bodies should rather avoid proliferation of different institutes and allows for synergy among themselves for a more efficient and effective regulations.

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