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THE EFFECT OF SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS ON CONSUMPTION OF PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS IN SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA.

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Abstract: Globalization has presented many consumers, especially those in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs), with the dilemma of choosing between domestic and foreign made products. Other factors which include price of pharmaceutical products, income of consumers, family size, and age of consumers among others also play important roles in the consumption of pharmaceutical products. In Nigeria, research on consumers' attitudes to and perceptions of foreign and domestic goods shows that country of origin (COO) is a significant factor in consumers' product preferences. The broad objective of this study is to investigate the effect of socioeconomic characteristics on consumption of pharmaceutical products in South-Eastern Nigeria. . The specific objectives are: to understand the socio-economic factors that drive Nigerian consumers' buying decisions in the context of locally and foreign manufactured pharmaceutical products; to evaluate the bias for and against foreign pharmaceutical products, by comparing the relative importance of Country Of Origin (COO) with other extrinsic factors, such as brand name, product attributes, quality, and price. The key finding is that socio-economic factor that drive Nigerian consumers' buying decisions in the context of locally and foreign manufactured pharmaceutical products are income of consumers, age brackets (experience), brand, price of the products among others and that the Nigerian consumer of pharmaceutical products prefers foreign made products to local ones seems to corroborate the results of earlier empirical studies conducted using product categories that are not related to pharmaceuticals. Conclusively, consumers' income and country of origin of a pharmaceutical products play key roles in the determination of pharmaceutical products in Nigeria. The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study: Socioeconomic characteristics most especially income of the consumers, price of the pharmaceutical products, has important roles to play in the consumption of pharmaceutical products and Country Of Origin was an important [deciding] factor for consumers when purchasing Non-Prescription Drugs NPD". Furthermore, "country brand attitudes [(country image)] influenced the purchase intention of NPD products from favourable countries.

Background of the Study

Many reviews have shown that country of origin is frequently used as an extrinsic cue by consumers when making purchasing decisions. The empirical relationship between the country of manufacture and brand preference has been well documented for consumable goods while empirical evidence for pharmaceutical products are critically limited in the literature. It is also evident that the very few studies conducted within the pharmaceutical industry surveyed respondents from Asia while no documented evidence exists on African respondents. This study also intends to fill this gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence in this regard to particularly

show whether a perceptual difference exists between Asian and African respondents.

It is widely acknowledged that medicine contributes to the health of a nation. Effective use of drugs has been found to improve people's quality of life, reduced the need for surgical intervention and the length of time spent in hospital, and saved many lives (House of Commons Health Committee Report, 2005). The consumption of drugs is vast and also increasing. As long as human beings remain susceptible to illness, there will always be a need for drugs. This assertion is particularly true for developing countries like Nigeria where the need for drug importation is very high, owing to the prevalence of various kinds of diseases and ailments.

The central theme of this paper relates to the perceptions that consumers in Nigeria have about foreign and domestic goods, with special reference to pharmaceutical products. In the face of increasing and intense competition among firms, consumers in many countries are faced with an ever-expanding choice of product purchase options especially pharmaceutical products. Additionally, globalization has presented consumers, especially those in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs), with the dilemma of choice between domestic and foreign made pharmaceutical products. This is believed to be driven by the force of perception as motivated by certain basic or fundamental variables. Some of those factors capable of motivating a consumer to make a choice may include among others product origin, consumption income, taste or fashion and other demand determinants subject to the convenience and other factors that may appeal to the consumer at the time of need (Mellott, 1984).

There is a reflection of a general relationship between purchase behaviour, group influence, and product type, depending on the product involved. By this, it is rational to suggest that reference group influence will be more important in relation to some products than others, especially when it has to do with certain salient variables like country of origin. There may also be other variables capable of influencing consumers' perceptions of products that may affect a decision to buy or not to buy. This idea is based not only on the premise that a particular social group is more likely to be interested in some products with certain characteristics than others but also common understanding holds that products displayed in the public space are more likely to be purchased through the influence and beliefs of social groups than purchase based on the product's intrinsic value (Emenike, 2014).

It is against this backdrop that researchers' interests have considerably focused on what actually influence consumption decisions of consumers, particularly the effects of country-of-origin (COO) on consumer product perception and choice. This has made it imperative to study, analyse, and develop instruments through which an assessment of consumers' attitudes and preferences for both domestic and foreign goods can be carried out. Research in Europe has looked at the effect of "COO" on decision behaviour, product image, consumer perception, and "made in Europe" concept (Ettenson, 1993; Liefeld et al., 1996; Watson and Wright, 1999, Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Peris et al., 1993; d'Astous and Ahmed, 1992; Schweiger et al, 1995). Yasin et al. (2007) argue that consumers give consideration to brands based on "COO" in addition to quality and price when deciding to buy a product. They posit that consumers attach product quality and performance to country of origin when trying to evaluate the inferiority or superiority of goods. For example, when reliability is sought in electronics, for instance, a country such as Japan comes to the mind (Yasin et al., 2007).

There is evidence to suggest that the combined effects of country of origin (COO) and consumer ethnocentrism (CE) would lead consumers in developed countries to have preference for home made products but there seems not to be evidence to suggest otherwise for consumers in developing countries (Hamin and Elliott, 2006).

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The current study therefore aims to fill this void by examining the relationship between country of origin and consumer preference for pharmaceutical products. In addition, most of the available studies on consumable goods have been carried out within the context of developed economies while those on developing economies are quite few.

In the context of developing economies, which is the focus of this study, both simple manufactured products and highly technologically produced ones are usually imported from the developed world. Globalization has particularly worsened the situation and tremendously increased the import dependency problems of the developing economies (Sachs, 1998; Emenike, 2014). Citizens' preference for foreign products is getting higher as against their confidence in locally produced ones (Opoku Akorli, 2009). Many consumers argue that locally produced products are poor imitations of their foreign alternatives. Moreover, the costs of locally made products are more often than not higher than those of their foreign counterparts. Many Nigerians believe in the superiority of foreign goods over their locally made alternatives. Admittedly speculative, this belief could extend to choice of pharmaceutical product. This is more so because drugs are delicate items. They impact on people's lives. Consumers have a tendency to select and buy drugs that are perceived to be of higher quality.

In retrospect, while there is a plethora of work on country of origin in relation to consumers' choice of consumable and non-consumable products in the developed economies, there is a dearth of evidence in regard to the experience of developing countries (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, and Ramachander, 2000; Opoku Akorli, 2009). In addition, most of the available research on the developed economies have only looked at products other than pharmaceutical products (Sanyal and Datta, 2011; Woo Jun and Won Choi, 2007). Furthermore, available research on Nigeria has also looked at products other than pharmaceutical goods (Okechuku and Onyemah, 1999; Oyeniyi 2009.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Nigerian consumers based on the country of origin of some selected foreign pharmaceutical products in South-Eastern Nigeria. The specific objective is;

i. The study seeks to understand the socio-economic factors that drive Nigerian consumers' buying decisions in the context of locally and foreign manufactured pharmaceutical products.

ii. The study seeks to evaluate the bias for and against foreign pharmaceutical products, by comparing the relative importance of Country Of Origin (COO) with other extrinsic factors, such as brand name, product attributes, quality, and price.

Research Questions

Based on the preceding analysis, the following research questions were investigated in this study:

i. What role do socio-economic factors such as gender, education, social status, and income level play in consumers' purchasing decision in relation to foreign and domestic pharmaceutical products?

ii. Does the bias for and against foreign pharmaceutical products, by comparing the relative importance of COO with other extrinsic factors, such as brand name, product attributes, quality, and price?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

i. **H0:-** There is no relationship between socio-economic factors such as gender, education, social status, and income level and the purchasing decisions made by consumers in regard to foreign and locally manufactured pharmaceutical products.

ii. **H0:-** Nigerian made pharmaceutical products do not rank high in terms of quality and efficacy when compared to those made in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

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LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Strategic Context of Country of Origin

The marketing literature generally viewed products in terms of their intangible and tangible features, otherwise known as intrinsic and extrinsic cues respectively. From the context of strategic marketing, country of origin has been used as a strategic means for differentiating products in the marketplace among competitors. Insights from the marketing and consumer behaviour literature suggest that consumers do use country from which a product originates as an extrinsic information cue in their evaluation processes and subsequent purchasing decisions (Kwok, Uncles, and Huang, 2006). Studying the country of origin effects on purchasing behaviour and decision has become expedient given the difficulty associated with differentiating a product's image from its country of origination image (Kim, 2006). Driving home this argument, Kim (2006), citing several authors, draws a comparison between products made in Japan and those made in Korea. Specifically, he states that:

Made-in-Japan comparatively has acquired credibility among American consumers since 1970s. Japanese electronic goods were generally considered technically advanced and highly dependable. Thus, some Korean companies have not actively publicized the nationality of the product in case obscuring the country of origin plays a positive role in building favorable brand image and reinforcing purchasing intention…It is critical for emerging companies like Samsung [a Korean company] to understand whether or not using the masked country image has any benefits to its image and selling. In the same context as the foregoing, this researcher is tempted to assume that COO could influence the purchasing intention of consumers in buying pharmaceutical products, given that countries are perceived differently by consumers. Though, not necessarily so, there might be a tendency for consumers of pharmaceutical products to think that drugs made in the developed Western countries, such as U.S., U.K., France, and Germany are more efficacious than those from developing Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, Thailand, India, and Taiwan

Country of Origin and Consumer Choice

Insights from the marketing and consumer behaviour literature suggest that consumers are inclined to utilize the country of origin as a reference group when they have little or no knowledge about a product. Furthermore, they also use COO cue to arrive at decisions when choosing among some kind of products, such as luxury products. While it might be true that consumers consider COO in luxury goods, there is no evidence to show, at least to the best knowledge of this researcher, that COO is considered in the case of pharmaceutical products, which are categorized as essential products. choosing among some kind of products, such as luxury products. While it might be true that consumers consider COO in luxury goods, there is no evidence to show, at least to the best knowledge of this researcher, that COO is considered in the case of pharmaceutical products, which are categorized as essential products.

International Trade and Country of Origin

In international trade, it is a general requirement that goods must be labeled in the country from which they originate or the country where they are manufactured (Harilal and Beena, 2004, Jones and Martin, 2008). Such labeling must be clearly shown in the import/export document issued by the government through the appropriate agencies. In effect, such information will assist in determining the admissibility or otherwise acceptance of the products, the duty to impose and other necessary considerations in line with the country's import/export policies. In Nigeria, simple pharmaceutical formulations are placed under import restriction by the Federal Government. This is in a bid to encourage local manufacturing of such products and also protect such locally produced products against unfair competition from cheaper products manufactured abroad.

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The products in this cadre are mainly of OTC categories e.g. Paracetamol where only the relevant raw material required for production is allowed to be imported.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), an international organization that deals with the global rules of trade among nations, works to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably, and as freely as possible (GATT, 1994).

Country of Origin (COO) Effect

The country of origin of a product has a great impact on consumers' perceptions of such a product (Yasin et al., 2007; Han, 1989). For instance, a consumer who already had certain impression concerning a particular country, either positive or negative, brings this to mind when considering products originating from such a country. The peculiarity of globalization, particularly in marketing and distribution of goods, comes with the perceived notion that attitudes, culture and technology of a certain nation reflect on its products. These perceptions make the 'country of origin' construct to really stand out, and this is captured as the *country of origin effect* (Han, 1989). This image turns out to form a part of the brand image that contributes to the labeling of that product. People can distinguish what is foreign as something peculiar and different and potentially important with great potency. That is arguably one of the reasons some producers imitate some foreign products and try to adapt them to the local market. This is more so considering that insights from the marketing and consumer behaviour literature suggest that consumers give credence to products based on where they originate from (Roth and Romeo, 1992; Heslop et al., 2008; Essoussi and Merunka, 2007).

As expressed by Sivakumar (n.d.), in a consumer's product evaluation, two broad important variables were considered in making a purchasing decision: these were the intrinsic variables, such as design, taste, and performance and extrinsic variables, such as price, brand, warranty, and country of origin.

Drawing from Niss (1996), Sivakumar argues that there is a tendency for consumers in developed economies to show preference for products manufactured in their country; consumers do consider other variables in addition to country of origin criterion in product evaluation; country of origin effect, as extrinsic cue in product evaluation, is stronger when there is little or no knowledge about a product or its manufacturing country (Sivakumar, 2010).

The influence of COO on brand evaluation, Sivakumar, borrowing from Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001), considers the role of halo effect on consumers' choice. Historically, the halo effect has been used to describe situations in which the evaluation of a single object or person or a multitude of dimensions is based on the evaluation of just one or a few dimensions such as a man is trustworthy, fine, and noble because he looks you in the eye when he speaks. Consumer behaviorists have broadened the notion of halo effect to include the evaluation of multiple objects (for instance, a product line) on the basis of the evaluation of just one dimension. Sivakumar posits that: Halo effect will be present when the consumer has no familiarity with the product made in the rated country. Due to the limited knowledge of the product, consumers use country image as a product cue to form individual belief of product's attribute, which will formulate the overall brand attitude. A belief about one product trait (in this case, the country in which the product was made) produces a belief structure about unknown traits that are congruent with the known trait.

Country of Origin Effect on Purchase of Pharmaceutical Products

The COO literature suggests that COO effect is product specific, that is, COO effect varies based on product categories. While a large number of studies have looked at the COO effect in relation to household and non-household products or what the literature has termed as consumer durables, few have actually related country of origin to pharmaceutical products (Won Jun and Won Choi, 2007;

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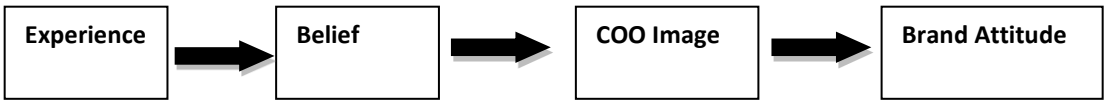
Sanyal and Datta, 2011). After an extensive literature search, two articles were only found relevant to the industry of interest of this study. This section therefore presents a review of this available literature on pharmaceutical drugs**.** Won Jun and Won Choi (2007) examined the effect of country of origin on the purchasing intention of non-prescription drugs (NPD) and the role of country image between two countries with similar economic growth. NPDs are commonly used drugs which can be purchased over the counter and do not require enormous information process for consumers to make a purchase decision. The findings suggest that "country of origin was an important [deciding] factor for consumers when purchasing NPD" (p. 239). Furthermore, "country brand attitudes [(country image)] influenced the purchase intention of NPD products from favourable countries".

Theoretical Framework-The Halo Model of the Country of Origin Effect

The Halo Model of the Country of Origin Effect



Source: Sivakumar (n.d.): Country of Origin and its Impact on Brands

The proposed framework by Sivakumar was capped with the Single Flexible Model where he argued that both the country image and belief can have simultaneous effects on the consumer's attitude in varying degrees. He further contends that country image can directly affect brand attitude or indirectly through belief. Based on several studies, Sivakumar further identified factors moderating the Country of Origin effects on brand evaluations to be time, consumer expertise, demography, similarity between countries, product categories, economic development, and ethnocentricity

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research strategy and survey research design were adopted for this study. The sample population for this study consisted of all Nigerian adult consumers of pharmaceutical products, however, grouped into two major categories, namely: the medical practitioners, and final consumers of pharmaceutical products. The medical practitioners consisted of professionals from the following cadres: doctors; pharmacists; nurses; patent medicine dealers and others (those not specifically mentioned). The 'final consumers' mentioned in this thesis represent other users of pharmaceutical products classified on the basis of some demographic characteristics such as 'age' and 'income levels'.

The unit of analysis in this study is the adult Nigerian consumer of pharmaceutical products. In determining the size of the sample population, consideration was given to ensure that the sample size was representative enough of the entire population of the country. The Nigerian population is estimated to be about 167 million people (Nigerian National Population Commission). However, in deciding on what the sample size should be, further consideration was given to the size of the adult literate population who were the target of the data collection. Initially, a sample size of 6,000 was considered representative of the study population. Based on this, this researcher sampled 3,000 medical practitioners with the other 3,000 representing the group of final consumers of pharmaceutical products. The procedure for selecting the sample is as important as the sample size. In this regard, the sample was drawn randomly across the three major sites of the study, through the administration of questionnaires to medical practitioners and the final consumers of pharmaceutical products. Questionnaires were administered to respondents directly. The sample of

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the medical practitioners was selected randomly through the various cadres of professionals across several health facilities in the designated study sites. Similarly, the final consumers of pharmaceutical products were randomly selected at various points within the study sites. These procedures of sample selection and data collection ensured a high level of return of questionnaires from the respondents. The return rate was 88 per cent for the Western zone (Lagos State). The Eastern zone (Anambra State) recorded a return rate of 80 per cent, while the return rate for the Northern zone (Kano State) was 68 per cent. Despite this relatively small percentage, the rate in the North was still considered good enough.

A total of 2,313 medical practitioners responded to the questionnaire. These consisted of 545 medical doctors, 422 pharmacists, 555 nurses, 408 patent medicine dealers and 383 persons categorized as 'others'. There were 2,411 respondents from the group of 'final consumers' who were classified according to their 'age' and 'income levels',

Test of Hypothesis

Table 1: Which of these age brackets do you belong to?		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Frequency				
Valid	970	40.2	40.2	
18-30 years old				
31-40 years old	604	25.1	65.3	
41-50 years old	402	16.7	82.0	
51-60 years old	258	10.7	92.7	
above 60 years old	177	7.3	100.0	
Total	**2411**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

The age bracket with the highest responses is 18-30, which indicates that they are mostly youths which have more and clear knowledge about the pharmaceutical products.

Table 2: Respondents' Annual Income		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Frequency				
Valid	0	96	4.0	4.0	4.0

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120,000.00 naira & below		1003	41.6	41.6	45.6
120,000.00 - 360,000.00 naira	-	468	19.4	19.4	65.0
360,001.00 - 600,000.00 naira	-	343	14.2	14.2	79.3
600,001 - 960,000.00 naira	-	262	10.9	10.9	90.1
960,001 & Above	&	238	9.9	9.9	100.0
Total		2410	100.0	100.0	
Missing		System	1	.0	
Total		2411	100.0		

Income which is a very important factor in socioeconomic is predominantly in the range of 120, 000 and below which is the income range of civil servants and public servants, while this range occupy majority of the populace in the country.

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Contingency Table 3: for Hypothesis 7 X	**Y**	_ (X – X)	_ (Y – Y)	_ _ (X – X)(Y– Y)	_ (X – X)2	_ (Y – Y)2
112	82	-370.2	-400	148,080	137,048.04	160,000
300	312	-182.2	-170	30,974	33,196.84	28,900
394	314	-88.2	-168	14,817.6	7,779.24	28,224
893	1,034	410	552	226,761.6	168,756.64	304,704
712	668	229.8	186	42,742.8	52,808.04	34,596
2411	**2410**			**463,376**	**399,588.8**	**556,424**

- 2411
X = 5 = 482.2
_ 2410
Y = 5 = 482

_ _
Σ(X – X) (Y - Y) =>463,376
r =_ _
√Σ(X – X)2 Σ (Y – Y)2 √(399,588.8 X 556,424)
r = 463,376
471,530 = 0.98

This is a high positive correlation which prompts us to reject the H0 and conclude that: **There is a strong correlation between the price and the decision to buy a pharmaceutical drug.**

Option X1	**grade**	**Frequency X1**	**D (X1 – X2)**	_ **D - D**	_ **(D – D)2**
0		195	-195	263.8	69590.44
1		572	-571	-112.2	12588.84
2		364	-362	96.8	9370.24
3		786	-783	-324.2	105105.64
4		387	-383	75.8	5745.64
Total			**-2294**	**202400.8**	

_ ΣD
D = N - 458.8

The variance of the difference of scores => S2D = Σ(D – D)2 = 202400.8 = >202400.8
N – 1 5 – 1 4

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S2D = 50600.2

–
t =D =>-1458.8 = 2.3

√ S2D √202400.8
5
Degree of freedom = N – 1 => 5 – 1 = 4
At 95% confidence level, α = 0.05 and the tabulated value is 2.776. Since the calculated was smaller than the critical value, H0 was not rejected. It was therefore concluded that: **Ethnocentrism has no remarkable impact on the decision to consume a pharmaceutical drug, foreign or local**
So we can be 95% confident that there has been no remarkable impact on the means of decision to consume a pharmaceutical product based on ethnocentrism.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings

The findings of this study as expounded above are indeed revealing. They have to a great extent given credence to some of the known general principles of consumer behaviour as elicited in the literature review section of this study. Of greater benefit though is the fact that it has led us to better understand the factors that influence consumers' choice under a very peculiar case – especially that of the Nigerian consumers of pharmaceutical products and their perception of foreign and locally produced drugs

- The key socio-economic factor that drive Nigerian consumers' buying decisions in the context of locally and foreign manufactured pharmaceutical products are income of consumers, age brackets (experience), brand, price of the products among others.
- The finding that the Nigerian consumer of pharmaceutical products prefers foreign made products to local ones seems to corroborate the results of earlier empirical studies conducted using product categories that are not related to pharmaceuticals. The study also confirms the speculation that Nigerian consumers prefer foreign made pharmaceutical products to locally made ones based on the perception that foreign made pharmaceutical products offer superior quality and efficacy..

Conclusively, consumers' income and country of origin of a pharmaceutical products play key roles in the determination of pharmaceutical products in Nigeria.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- Socioeconomic characteristics most especially income of the consumers, price of the pharmaceutical products, have important roles to play in the consumption of pharmaceutical products
- Country Of Origin was an important [deciding] factor for consumers when purchasing Non-Prescription Drugs NPD". Furthermore, "country brand attitudes [(country image)] influenced the purchase intention of NPD products from favourable countries.

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