



Redistribution Activities of Distributors in the Brewing Industry in an Emerging Economy

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between two authors. Author CA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author ITK guided and supervised the whole work. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The decision about marketing channels selection is critical as it ultimately affects the other supply chain activities of any business. The purpose of this study was to examine the redistribution role of distributors in the brewing industry. The study employed a survey using a single case study from the perspective of retail outlets. The study revealed that availability and visibility of brands increased brand penetration coupled with effective coverage and management of sales territories by the distributor. The outlets indicated that getting all the empties for their purchase of products was a challenge. The study suggests that distributors must be accountable and ensures flawless sales force coverage and effectiveness to avoid out-of-stocks situations. Manufacturers must intensify their trade and consumer promotions concurrently to really connect the push and pull aspect of distribution.

Keywords: Redistribution; brewing industry; sales territory; distributors; emerging economy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A firm's overall marketing strategy traditionally focuses on the marketing mix. Each firm makes a series of strategic decisions to determine how to distribute its product and services to the firm's end-user [1]. The price paid for a product by a customer is absorbed by the activities involved in getting that product to the customer, this has increased significantly over the past fifteen years as production costs have fallen while markets have segmented and distribution channels have multiplied [2]. Moreover, the success of any company depends on its ability to acquire and retain customers which sales force play a significant role in helping companies to accomplish this in many ways [3]. Even more, the role of the sales force is to sell the company's products and services to new and existing customers [4]. An important aspect of marketing strategy is choosing the most effective channel of distribution [5].

Distributors have been a key participant in marketing channels for a very long time [6]. Indeed, the role of the distributor's in supply chain management is indispensable due to the provision of value-added services in logistics, transportation, inventory management and information management services [7]. Distributors buy goods from a seller and then resell them at a higher price to the ultimate consumer or to another market participant such as a retailer [8]. The total firm-to-end-user links make up a marketing channel [1]. Channel function is most important to the success of a particular product as this will influence whether the company will use a push strategy or pull strategy [9]. The design of a distribution channel is an important strategic decision that needs to be integrated with other marketing decisions [5]. Channel profit stems from managing efficient and intermediary relationships, usually not strong competence of producers [10]. Channel members are a vital link in a company's effort to satisfy distant customers hence companies must see them as partners as this will help achieve its organizational goals [11].

Sales territories system must be seen as a strategic choice [3]. Maximum coverage of the entire market hinges on effective sales territory design [12]. Besides, a good design sales territory can set a company apart from the competition as it can optimise the role of the key distributors and that of the territory sales representatives to achieve proper market

coverage [13]. It is imperative that organisations allocate and define clearly the responsibilities of each salesperson accurately and resourced them to perform well [14]. Sales territory management ensures regular visits and interactions without sales territory management system, distributors would travel to their customers from the sales office without any planned scheduling, eventually spending more time and money in travelling [15]. In fact, management of sales territories has an important role in the realization of distribution [16, 12].

Segmenting the market into groups of end-users who differ not in the product(s) they want to buy, but in how they want to buy is critical in targeting decisions when it comes to channel design [6]. Targeting a channel segment means choosing to focus on that segment with the goal of achieving significant sales and profits from selling to it. However, all channel members irrespective of their roles must focus their attention on the end-user. It is important to think through channel intensity decisions be it intensive distribution, selective distribution or exclusive distribution [1, 9]. Successful sales strategies exploit customer's differences to enhance sales impact and efficiency [12, 8]. In a study investigating the interaction between supplier credit sales and customer advance payment found out that advance payments and credit sales are used as complimentary terms of payment in international trade and in transactions of differentiated goods [17].

Sales promotion must not be seen as a substitute for a long-term corporate and brand image-building which adds value in the eyes of the consumer [18]. Manufacturers with a poor grasp of changing segmentation and do not strongly support their brands will be poorly positioned in the competitive environment [19]. Trade marketing is concerned with gaining and retaining access to marketing channel in order to ensure maximum shelf space, distribution and availability of products/services [20]. In the same way, if a brand is strong it benefits from a high degree of loyalty and stability of future sales from customers and distributors [21]. Furthermore, the economic perspective of brands allows consumers to lower the search costs for products both internally and externally. The author further indicated that to firms brands represent enormously valuable pieces of legal property, capable of influencing consumer behaviour, being bought and sold, and providing the security of sustained future revenues [22].

Supply chain efficiency requires optimization of all types of logistic operations and functions. One of such functions is the choice of intermediaries and this is a major strategic decision in the management of supply chain [23]. Redistribution offers the potential to reduce cost, improve service, increase inventory turns, and broaden the product offering without requiring additional space, it is easy to understand why manufacturers embrace it [24]. In addition, cost avoidance, revenue impact and marketing volume are the three major areas to be considered when a manufacturer decides to engage a distributor for redistribution activities as this will impact the manufacturer profit and loss accounts [25]. Furthermore, companies with productive channel relationship stand to increase sales, reduce operating cost and improve customer reach. Importantly, effective distribution channel management delivers benefits to all players in the value chain, often by increasing the size of the market or capturing a greater share of customer market through the channel [26]. However, for companies to be successful, customers along their supply chains and the end-product users must be satisfied. Thus firms must invest time and effort in understanding supply chain partner and end-customer requirements and then adjust or acquire supply chain competencies to satisfy the needs of these customers [27]. In fact, distribution channels in many industries have experienced major transformations in their architecture, collaborative partnerships, operations practices, and performance requirements [28]

In the face of recent dramatic changes in the business landscape coupled with its intense competition have made markets more complex. The channel of distribution is a company bridge to the market, it is imperative to design and manage the distribution channel as an ongoing task. A company must ensure that its channel is properly aligned to the needs of important market segments. The issues of relationships in distribution channels and its corresponding effects and applications have drawn considerable attention in the field of marketing. Good products and a strong brand are not enough, what is more, important is that the products have to get through the right distribution channels to the target consumers effectively and efficiently. It could be said that the one who has the channel has the market. The study was motivated by the growth of channel partnership hence investigating the redistribution of Blue Banana Ventures, a Key Distributor of Guinness Ghana

Breweries Limited (GGBL). The rest of the paper is organized as follows; section two considers the methodology while section three is on the results and discussions whilst section four concludes the paper with recommendations.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of mixed method design comprising quantitative and qualitative approaches. A single case study strategy was adopted by the study via a survey. The study population was the retail outlets/owners. The population is one hundred and fifty-five (155) as the approved outlets in the territory census by Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited. The study purposively selected Blue Banana Venture as the Key Distributor for the sales territory in the Middle Belt. In selecting the outlets for the survey, simple random sampling was used which means every outlet in the sales territory had an equal chance of being selected as part of the fieldwork. Of the numerous outlets in the sales territory, a sample size of 100 was considered.

A structured questionnaire was employed as the data gathering technique. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section A contains the outlet profile; Section B to Section E contained twenty-eight (28) items on sectional themes such as receiving products, operational documents, promotional activities and handling of products. The composition of the questionnaire was a mixture of open and closed questions, and a five-Likert scale type of questions was used to measure these pertinent constructs of the questionnaire. The scale reliability of the questionnaire was .847 which is within the acceptable range and greater than the cut-off point of 0.70 suggested by many researchers. This shows the reliability of the scale for internal consistency of this study.

Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 89 responded to the questions properly by filling all the required spaces correctly that made it fit to be included in the analysis. The 11 rejected comprises of those that were not filled well and those that were not returned due to the absence of the respondents during the collection period. The data collection made used of questionnaire administration and an interview guide. The interview guide was used for the discussions with the Operations Manager of the Distributor, the Distribution Manager of GGBL and the Distributor salesmen. The analysis was descriptive in terms of the quantitative data while the qualitative was

interpretative. The ethical considerations were adhered to in terms of getting the consent of the outlet owners and their participation of the study was voluntary.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Case Company

Blue Banana Ventures was incorporated in 2002. The company has the franchise to distribute all the product lines of Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited (GGBL). The company has a working force of fifty-six (56). The company has a very big warehouse that can contain about sixty thousand (60,000) to eighty thousand (80,000) cases. The company is located at Kotwi off the Kumasi Obuasi highway. Blue Banana Ventures became the best key distributor in 2009 as a result of proper internal controls and management support. The company's sales operations comprise of direct daily sales person route within six (6) territories. This implies that each territory is operated by one sales person. In addition to the sales persons, the company has two vending sales persons who distribute to the smaller clients who are not among the retailers that the company's sales persons serve. The company's territory is divided into two apart from the normal six territories that the sales persons serve. The company has thirteen (13) trucks that the sales persons use to distribute the products on a daily basis. In all there are eight (8) territories that fall under Blue Banana Ventures distribution operations. For the vendors' territory, territory one starts from Sofo-line to Suame and territory two starts from Suame area. The spirits sales person sells in all the territories of Blue Banana Ventures.

Table 1. Journey plan for distributor salesmen

Territory	Area
1	Anyinam, T.U.C, Santasi and Nzema area
2	Tanoso, Abuakwa and Asuoeyeboah area
3	Parts of Abuakwa, Akropong and Owabi
4	Anwia Nkwanta, Bekwai, Manso area and Dompouse area
5	Suame, Anomangye, Bohyen and Abrepo area
6	Patasi, Kwadaso Nsuom area

Source: Operations Manager, 2016

The Operations Manager (OM) reveals how the company gets delivery of products from Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited (GGBL). The producer (GGBL) after production sends the products to Blue Banana Ventures. An agreement is signed between GGBL and Blue Banana Ventures upon receipt of the consignment. In case there are shortages, the company reports to GGBL for replacement. Blue Banana, in turn, redistributes the products to the various retailers. In the course of the distribution, they also collect the empty bottles for the producer so that the producer can produce again. The OM threw more light on the cost associated with redistribution to the retail trade by indicating that averagely the company spends about GH¢16,000.00 on fuel alone for a month in their distribution. The company also spend about GH¢4,000.00 a month for maintaining the distribution trucks. It is the company that bears the cost of distribution. In all, the firm has one hundred and fifty-five credible customer base. Out of this figure, eighty are credit customers while seventy-five are cash sales customers. On sales motivation, the OM stressed that the company motivates its sales persons by giving them cash incentives when they are able to achieve targets set at the end of each month. The distributor has instituted ongoing training programs to sharpen the sales persons selling skills.

It can be inferred from the discussion with the OM that the distributor has made strategic investments in their distribution capabilities for efficient sales and selling activities due to available logistics. This is refreshing meaning the distributor will enable GGBL to deliver goods and services to end-users. Successful companies depend upon the effectiveness and reach of its go-to-market strategy hence the role of the distributor can enhance the distribution channel optimization. The output of the discussion is line with [1] indicating the essence of the determination on strategic decisions on how a firm must distribute its products or service.

3.2 The Sample Outlets Profile

The composition of outlets number in each area gives a clear indication that a lot of thought and plans went into this study. The areas selected are at the heart of the Metropolis where nightlife is very active for business for example places like Bantama, Patasi, Suame, South Suntreso, Tanoso and Asuoeyeboa. Table 2 indicates the location and the number of outlets sampled.

Out of 89 outlets, 37 outlets representing 42% have been in business between one and five years, 41 outlets representing 46% have been in existence for six to ten years while 11 outlets representing 13% have been around for more than ten years. It was insightful from those outlets which have been in business for more than ten years such as Brotherman Spot at Patasi Estate, Casablanca Bar at Suame, Friends Garden at South Suntreso and Goil Rest Spot at Santasi Roundabout, all of them informed the study on some of the challenges they had to go through before they got to where they are now. All the four outlets have positioned their brands and are well known in the Metropolis with cherished and loyal customers. The result supports the assertion in [21] affirming that if a brand is strong it benefits from a high degree of loyalty and stability of future sales from customers. This is very true as customers do not only go there to drink and dine but to associate with the brand because most opinion leaders in the locality also patronize those outlets it is about status segmentation.

Table 2. Distribution of location

Area	Number of outlets
Santasi	11
Suame	14
Asuoyebo	12
Patasi	10
Bantama	14
Tanoso	12
Kwadaso Estate	5
South Suntreso	11
Total	89
Status	
Spot	58
Bar	25
Kiosk	4
Others	2
Total	89
Years	
1-5	37
6-10	41
More than 10	11
Total	89

Source: Field work. 2016

The status of a Spot had a composition of 58 outlets representing 65%, 25 outlets representing 28% had the status of Bar while 4 outlets representing 5% had the status of Kiosk. The status of outlet attracts or put certain class of customers off, due to intense competition in the catchment area, certain locations have certain

upscale outlet status. It can be said that the outlet status can be good for business as customers will be prepared to pay more. The result aligns with [8] suggesting the need for businesses to exploit customer's differences to enhance sales impact and efficiency. This brings life to the discussion as the locality vis-à-vis the socio-economic status of customers influence the investments that outlets owners have to make if it will enhance the profitability of the business.

3.3 Redistribution Activities

It was not strange that 81 outlets representing 91% indicated that their outlets are served by Blue Banana Ventures as their Key Distributor and only 8 outlets representing 9% revealed that their outlets are served by someone else. Technically, Blue Banana Ventures is the approved Key Distributor for the sales territory so 91% looks good but what about the many outlets they are not servicing. Blue Banana can penetrate into the virgin areas where outlets area being served by wholesalers who directly picked stocks from the Key Distributor. The result will benefit from the advised in [12] indicating that maximum coverage of the entire market hinges on effective sales territory design. There is the need for an on-going update of the sales territory census through prospecting and market intelligence from the distributor's salesmen to the distributor's OM for sales territory configuration and optimization. In practice, distributor salesmen might be quiet on new customers for the fear of increment in the sales target though they will serve the new customers.

Five outlets representing 5% indicated that their outlets were supplied on Tuesday, 37 outlets representing 42% indicated Wednesday, and 29 outlets representing 33% responded Thursdays while 18 outlets representing 20% revealed Friday stating when their outlets get its supplies from the distributor salesmen. In this context, the highest or lowest percentage does not matter much as it does not indicate superiority over the other. This is so because the salesmen have a journey planner that they follow for their redistribution. It happened that majority of the participating outlets got their supplies on Wednesday, followed by Friday and Saturday. *According to one of the distributor's salesmen, Saturday deliveries are normally orders for follow-ups.* The result supports the assertion in [4] that the role of the sales force is to sell the company's products and services to new and existing customers. This is the essence of

adhering to the journey planner. The journey plan guides the distributor's salesmen to religiously service the outlets within the sales territory.

When the outlet's owners were asked about their frequent purchase of goods from the distributor it was revealed that 71 outlets representing 80% purchases are once a week while 16 outlets representing 18% do it twice in a week. Only 2 outlets do it once a month. The locations, status of the outlets, the popularity of the outlet owner, availability of DSTV (Digital Satellite Television) and live bands on certain days among others influences the frequency of purchases of GGBL products from the distributor, as this will translate to good sales. The fast-moving outlets are likely to buy twice a week, even if once they will buy in bigger quantities, technically majority of outlets purchase once weekly. Logistics are needed for a rapid response to urgent demands from the outlets, this is important to ward-off competition. As suggested in [14] the need to resource salesmen to perform well. It was affirmed in [15] that sales territory management ensures regular visits and interactions. Outlets rating in the assessment of their supplies in terms of good, average and poor revealed that 69 outlets representing 78% indicated that it was good while 20 outlets representing 22% said it was average. Outlets owner's assessment can be biased as the way they are treated can influence their assessment. Consideration of factors like do they come on time to give you the order, do you normally get the quantity you asked for among others. The study believed this rather influenced their responses.

The outlet owners responses suggest that 20 outlets representing 23% indicated that through their demand for supplies was more than the available empties to be exchanged for the products the distributor's salesman granted the outlet empties credit whereas 69 outlets representing 77% stated that their outlets were not granted empties credit meaning they supplied them with the available empties. What can be deduced from this is that the distributor's salesmen are charged with the empties whenever they go out for sales, so they make sure that only those that are trustworthy are given the empties credit. Notwithstanding this, if the purchases are big; it can also change the salesman mind, for example, a big event in the area which will attract people to the outlet. From the distributor point of view, for him to get the orders from GGBL he must also have a healthy empties balance accounts otherwise his orders

will also be reduced. With the interview with the Operations Manager of Blue Banana Ventures, he indicated that mismanagement of empties can collapse the business as the empties can be expensive than the liquid itself.

The responses by the outlet owners on credit sales by the distributor indicated that 71 outlets representing 80% had benefited from credit sales while the other 18 outlets accounting for 20% revealed that their outlet does not benefit from the credit. It can be inferred that most of the distributors give credit to those they have been in business for a longer period, which can guarantee trust to some extent. Some are also forced to do it during lean seasons of their products so that they can achieve their target for the month. Those outlets which are not enjoying the credit facility can be accounted for their previous dealings with the distributor as the salesmen have to be on their necks before the outlet pays what it owes and some outlets simply refused because they are new in the business. The result supports the findings in [17] that advance payments and credit sales are used as complimentary terms of payment in international trade and in transactions of differentiated goods. Giving out credit sales or demand for advanced payment is the prerogative of the supplier based on its terms of payments.

The responses from 85 outlet owners which accounted for 95% confirmed that their outlets were given the record card while 4 outlets representing 5% said they have not received such a card yet. The essence of the outlet record card is to check the visitation of the distributor salesmen to the outlet, it is also used to record purchases when they sell to them and most importantly when an official from GGBL do accompaniment with the distributor they also check this. It was not a surprise as 95% of outlets visited had outlet record card. The distributor's salesmen can be queried if it is not there. Once again 5% of the outlets that did not have might be that the outlets do not buy from the distributor.

3.4 Promotional Activities

Branded outlets had 53 representing 60% while unbranded outlets had 36 representing 40%. Branding within this context simply means the painting of the outlet with the brand colours of the manufacturer, be it Star Beer, Club Beer or Guinness Stout among others. Sixty percent of the participating outlets were branded which

speaks volumes of the potential of the catchment area. Most of the outlets branded were on the high streets for visibility purposes, communication and reminding customers that the brand is available in the outlet. *The discussion with the Distribution Manager of GGBL revealed that the company have certain criteria for branding outlet such as how much the outlet sells in a week and making sure that GGBL brands are always there for consumers to buy.*

The study found out that Guinness as a brand had 39.6% of the total branding within the sales territory followed by Star 16.9% and Club beer 11.3% and the total sum of the rest which comprises of five (5) different brands accounted for 32.2%. The study revealed that most of the outlet owners also have a say which brand they preferred to be on their outlets because they have to agree with the brewing company before they can do that. *Distribution Manager informed the study that the performance of the brand within certain catchment area can also influence more of the brand visibility but concluded that the bottom line is the budget for the brands which means if the brand is contributing immensely to the total sales of the company then there is the likelihood that its budget will go up as compared to other struggling brands.* The result aligns with [21] assertion that if a brand is strong it benefits from a high degree of loyalty and stability of future sales from customers and distributors.

It was revealed that 81 outlets representing 91% of the participating outlets had some sort of merchandising while 8 outlets representing 9% indicated that they had no merchandised materials in their outlets. In the context of this study, merchandising simply means having posters, butins, wall clocks and other materials displayed with a company branded materials. It was not surprising as 91% of participating outlets had merchandised materials and was found across all the outlets. The status of the outlet influences the kind of merchandise to be done there. This is important for visibility in the outlets as it reminds customers of the presence of such brand in the outlet. It was revealed that 9% of the participating outlets that were not branded were a kiosk and some outlets do not allow those things in their outlets. The result supports [22] affirming that from an economic perspective brands allow consumers to lower the search costs for products both internally and externally.

Outlet owners were asked whether their outlets have branded fridge or not and the responses

revealed that 49 outlets representing 55% had branded fridges while 40 outlets representing 45% did not have branded fridges. In this context, branded fridge simply means fridge that has the colours of a company brand, for example, Star Beer fridge. The requirement of getting branded fridge was for outlets to make sure that GGBL products are available at all times and stocked in the branded fridge. The responsibility of the outlet is to make sure that they stock only products of the company for exclusivity; this enhances the distribution system for making sure that it is not enough for the availability of products but also to avoid fridge space with competing products. Out of the sampled outlets, 55 outlets representing 62% indicated that their outlets had benefited from occasional in-bar promotion while 34 outlets representing 38% responded that their outlets had not to experience in-bar promotion. In-bar promotion in this context simply means that a salesman will walk to an outlet on a specified day and specify a time to run promotions in the bar for loyal customers to win t-shirts, caps, key rings, pens among others and merrymaking around the brands. Though it is short-term if managed well can influence repurchase in the future. The result will benefit from [18] advising that sales promotion must not be seen as a substitute for a long-term corporate and brand image-building which adds value in the eyes of the consumer.

Trade promotions are targeted at the outlets and not the final consumers so that it will encourage the outlet owners to stock more of the company products, for example, buy six cartoons of Malta Guinness and get one free. This really helps to build and enhance the relationship between the company and the outlets which means when the company need their help the outlets will also be available for the company. Trade promotions are tied to sales volume, the study revealed that there are categories so that not too big outlets will also benefit from it. Forty outlets representing 45% had benefited from trade promotions whereas 49 outlets representing 55% indicated that they have not benefited from any form of trade promotions. The result confirms the assertion in [20] that trade marketing is concerned with gaining and retaining access to marketing channel in order to ensure maximum shelf space, distribution and availability of products/services. It is important to stress that there is a close relationship between trade and consumer promotion in the retail trade. If promotions succeed with the trade but lack

strong consumer element, it may still succeed with the consumer simply because of the display and supports of the retailer. However, the reverse is not true; a promotion with strong consumer elements that does not appeal to the trade is unlikely to succeed with either.

Shelf display is the empty or full bottle product for display behind the counter of the spot to draw customer's attention on what is available. It was revealed that 75 outlets accounting for 84% confirmed shelf display in their outlet's while 14 outlets representing 16% said there is no shelf display. This is evidence that the salesmen are doing their work well at 84% but the 16% is a worry as it does not cost much to display brands on the shelf on every outlet visitation. The problem is that competitors also visit the outlets to change the shelf display to their advantage. Some of the outlet owners indicated that due to the status of the outlet they do not allow the distributor's salesmen to do shelf display. The mixed result gives credence to [19] stressing that manufacturers with a poor grasp of changing segmentation and who are not strongly supporting their brands will be poorly positioned in the competitive environment.

At the time of visit, all the participating outlets had fridge stocking of Guinness, Star, Gulder, Malta Guinness while only 36 outlets had Alvaro available in their fridges. The reason being that it is what their customers come there to demand that the outlet will stock otherwise they will be out of business. Majority of the 36 outlets attracts a certain class of customers of different demands which needs to be met. Outlet status such as Spots and Pubs takes advantage of such customers and charge a bit higher than the rest. When asked which brand sells faster the outlets indicated that it is Guinness, Guinness Malta and Star beer. The advised in [9] stating that all channel members irrespective of their roles must focus their attention on the end-user supports the result. This is true based on market segmentation due to the diverse characteristics of end-users.

4. CONCLUSION

Distribution focuses on the continuous flow of product/service to fulfil customer requirements at the lowest possible cost. This is almost impossible without the role of market intermediaries such as distributors considering their redistribution activities of goods/services. Blue Banana Ventures as a key distributor of

GGBL has a well-structured business set up for effective redistribution activities considering the availability of manpower and logistics. It has put in place internal control mechanism to check activities of both the internal and external operational activities.

Coverage of the sales territory depicts the evidence of religiously observing the journey plan by the salesmen due to effective supervision of the salesmen. This was the reflection of its redistribution activities that were seen as responsive to the extent of having a back-up sales van at the distributor premise for onward redistribution in case of unplanned demand of products. Matching empties bottles with that of product demanded as sales was a challenge and this affected sales as those outlets that do not qualify for empties credit could buy to the needs of their demand of products. The volume of purchases of products was dependent on the status of the outlet, its location and the popularity of the outlet owner. The realization of the need for credit sales by the distributor was a good business practice as it can serve as a competitive advantage and boost sales volume if managed well. Documentation of the sales territory management and activities of the outlet visitation were indications for proper operational assessment of performance. Overall the outlet's owners were happy with the redistribution activities of Blue Banana Ventures and its relationship with the outlets.

Branding plays an important role in the management of product/service portfolio in the brewing industry. GGBL was visible in terms of brand presence through outlet branding, fridge branding, merchandising and shelf display within the outlets and outside of it within the sales territory of Blue Banana Ventures. Branding serves as a communication tool to encourage purchase through awareness and some essential information of the brand to the consuming public. In-bar promotion and activation were regular and frequent in some of the hot spots in the sales territory which enhances brand association and relationship. Trade promotions and supports for the outlets by GGBL build upon the already business relationship with the outlets. This gave the Blue Banana to leverage on it to boost sales since the outlet's motivation will be on a push and pull distribution.

The management of distribution and market intermediaries is a complex situation due to the diverse objectives of channel members, it can be concluded that availability and visibility of GGBL

products/services within the sales territories managed by Blue Banana Ventures for GGBL has been very productive in terms of sales territory coverage, sales territory management due to the concerted and collaborative efforts from both parties which hinge on strategic partnership. The paper suggests the following recommendations and its implementation:

- GGBL must facilitate but not to impose to an extent what Distributors should do. It will be appropriate for GGBL to facilitate the sales territory activities by empowering distributors to be strategic partners to own the sales area by so doing they go beyond the status quo. This will challenge them to be committed than to comply.
- GGBL must give the distributor's certain concession, for example, 5% of their empties account balance must be given as a loan to the trade. This is one way of penetrating the market or getting a potential outlet or for an existing one to switch to GGBL brands due to the availability of empty bottles for credit. GGBL can monitor that 5% at the end of the month with its corresponding performance or achievement if indeed it is serving its purpose at the retail level but not to better off distributors. The severe penalty must go to any Distributor who will take advantage of the scheme.
- GGBL must intensive their outlet branding to cover large scope for marketing communication purposes to connect the outlets to its loyal customers of the brand. This can be done by categorizing the outlets into different pool levels and support them according to their level and performance. In marketing perception is the reality, to reverse the perception that only top outlets get supports from GGBL.
- GGBL must intensify both the trade and consumer promotions concurrently for a period to really connect the push and pull aspect of distribution. Due to the incentives to the outlets, they will push the brand to pull the consumers along especially in sales areas where brand performance is behind the expectations of the company due to its contribution to overall performance.
- Blue Banana Ventures must be accountable and ensures flawless sales force coverage, sales force effectiveness and out-of-stock situations. This will measure the adequacy and effectiveness

of the systems that provide customers with reasons and opportunities to buy their products. In doing so salesman responsible for the sales territory must be held accountable for the territory performance. Blue Banana Ventures must do accompaniments to assess the performance of a salesman for sales effectiveness. Most importantly out-of-stock situation must be tackled through monitoring the ability of logistics systems to match supply with demand.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

The ethical considerations were adhered to in terms of getting the consent of the outlet owners and their participation of the study was voluntary.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The company names used for this research are commonly and predominantly selected in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and the company because we do not intend to use this company as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the company rather it was funded by the personal efforts of the authors.

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