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DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING. LOGISTICS AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

EVALUATING DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS CONTRIBUTION TO BRAND EQUITY ON WATER PRODUCING COMPANIES IN GHANA. A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED MINERAL WATER COMPANIES.

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DECLARATION

We the undersigned declare that this submission is our work towards the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Business Administration and that, to the best of my knowledge; it contains no material previously published by another person or material which has been accepted for the award of any degree of the university except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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Supervisor Declaration

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God, our family and loved ones.

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ABSTRACT

Brand equity is a very paramount aspect in the marketing of an organization's product. The organization's knowledge about how their product or service is perceived by their consumers is important for the management of marketing strategies used in the organization.

Mineral water producing companies has been operating business in the country for a long period of time. However, the evaluation of the different channels used in marketing their product and the impacts it has on the brand's equity has not been fully researched. This study therefore aims at evaluating distribution channels contribution to brand equity on water producing companies in Ghana, a case study of selected mineral water companies.

Descriptive research design was used for the study. An online survey was conducted where the sampling size for the study was 156. The sampling size was selected using convenience sampling technique. A five point Likert scale questionnaire was used in acquiring the respondent's information. The questionnaires were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.

The study revealed that distribution channel effectiveness has an impact on brand equity. From the findings of the study it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between brand equity and distribution channel effectiveness. According to the respondents of the study, distribution channel effectiveness impacts brand loyalty most followed by brand association, brand awareness and perceived quality respectively. From findings it can be deduced that water producing companies in Ghana are able to meet customers' demands, distribute their products on time, package their products well and have a constant price.

The study recommends that water producing companies in Ghana should pay more attention towards increasing direct marketing that is distributing mineral water to customers directly.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SA   -   Strongly Agree

SD   -   Strongly Disagree

A   -   Agree

D   -   Disagree

N   -   Neutral

CBBE   -   Customer based brand equity

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In recent times, marketing is greatly about choices. This current decade has experienced the explosion of various ways to communicate about and sell products to their consumers (K. L. Keller, 2010). Consumers move to business centers with a particular brand in mind to purchase. Businesses have over the years been focusing on how to build, manage, create and popularize strong brands.

Brand as explained by (Tuominen, 1999) is a name, sign, symbol, design or a combination of all, with the intention of identifying the goods or services of one seller from amongst a group of sellers and those of the competitors. This therefore creates a distinction between sellers and even with those of the same product and services. Brands show the consumer's perception and feelings about a particular product and its general performance thus the real value of a strong brand is its ability to capture a consumers preference and loyalty (Amegbe et al., 2016)The consumer's knowledge of a particular brand increases the chance of the consumer purchasing the particular service or goods, this has long been associated with brand equity.

Brand equity is the enhancement in perceived utility and desirability a brand name confers in a product. Also it is generally defined as the consumer's perception of the overall superiority of a product carrying that brand name when compared to other brands. Again, in dealing with food and beverage products, the taste and its sensory dimensions are usually mentioned by customers as the determinant constituents of perceived quality (Fornerio & D'Hauteville, 2012). This is attributed to the fact that different brands are associated with different taste even though the product might be the same.

In the marketing of an organization's product or services, there are various channels which are created to serve as a means through which it can be done. The channels are means of which the manufacturers get their products to their respective customers. Over the years different ways have sprung up concerning the channeling of products to their consumers. Technology has been identified as one of the means which has improved the services of business to their prospective clients. The various media which are used as channeling platforms are selling through phones, the internet, person visits, by mail, one on communication and others (K. L. Keller, 2010).

To create strong brand equity in the minds of consumers, these channels need to be studied to know the optimal ones which are mostly patronized by consumers. Firms and organizations that have information on the various channels employed and how their consumers patronize it, can harness great financial rewards at the blind side of their competitors (Carlos et al., 2016). This knowledge is imperative to inform mangers and marketers on the winning channel strategies needed to be improved to increase the sales of the organization. This situation thereby informed the research to evaluate the various channels and its contribution to brand equity in the beverage industry.

1.2 Problem Statement

Rapid changes occurring worldwide have laid upon organizations different challenges (Faryabi et al., 2015) in their line of business thus making organizations that have a fore knowledge about how to deal with these challenges an advantage to be successful. As the day goes by, new technologies in the business world arise. However, with these new technologies, the occurrence of challenges is not forfeited. These challenges however need to be understood and dealt with in order to allow free flow of business activities.

Building of a strong brand is one of the paramount assets of an organization seeking to be in a sustainable growing position (Thuy et al., 2019) Brand equity is a very paramount aspect in the marketing of an organization's product. The organization's knowledge about how their product or service is perceived by the consumers is important for the management of the marketing strategies used in the organization.

In recent times, business organizations operate on large and specialized, scales, which have all, resulted in increased production. As a result of this increased production, direct marketing to consumers had become very expensive and inefficient. Marketing channel decisions are among the most complex and challenging decisions facing the firm As man passes his life in phases: birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age and death so do products as evidenced in the product life cycle theory. The main objective of this research is to assess the significance of distribution channels and how it contributes to brand equity in Ghana. There are various channels through which a product or service of an organization is marketed. These channels have been identified to have impacts on the brand that is being marketed.

Mineral water producing companies has been operating business in the country for a long period of time. However, the evaluation of the different channels used in marketing their product and the impacts it has on the brand's equity has not been fully researched. Therefore, investigations into the impacts these channels have on the brand equity perceived by the consumer is paramount to this research. This would inform the organization on the specific activities and channels needed to make the consumer satisfied with their product and to successfully run the business.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objectives

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the contribution distribution channels have on brand equity of the selected water producing companies in Ghana.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the various distribution channels that are used in marketing mineral water of the selected water producing companies in Ghana.

2. To assess the impact of the distribution channels on the brand equity of the selected water producing companies in Ghana.

3. To assess the challenges associated with the distribution channels of the selected water producing companies in Ghana.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the various distribution channels involved in the marketing mineral water of the selected water producing companies in Ghana?

2. What are the impacts that the distribution channels have on the brand equity of the selected water producing companies in Ghana?

3. What are the challenges faced by the distribution channels used by the selected water producing companies in Ghana?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results obtained from this research will enlighten marketing managers on their consumer's perspective on the effective channels to be promoted and take various actions to increase their production and sales. This study would therefore inform the

managers the various water producing companies about the effective channel through which they can communicate well with their consumers therefore strategize their operations to meet the needs of their customers.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This is research is evaluating channel contribution to brand equity in the beverage Industries in Ghana. The study location is Ashanti region Kumasi precisely were the top water producing companies customers were selected for the study, the customers used for the study are customers of Voltic Ghana mineral water, Everpure Ghana mineral water, Verna Ghana mineral water, Awake Ghana mineral water, Zet Ghana mineral water and Bel Aqua mineral water Ghana.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the general introduction of the study. This entails the background of the study which defines and gives an overview of the subject matter. It also talks about statement of the research problem and justification for the study, the research questions that the study wants to address and the objectives of the study. The chapter also talks about significance and scope or delimitation of the study. Chapter two deals with the review of literature. Here, existing literature on the subject of study from other research findings, articles, books, journals among other information sources are perused and relevant portions cited and the authors cited accordingly. In chapter three, the methodology for the study is discussed. Materials and methods that were applied to obtain the data for the study were discussed. The chapter covers areas such as information on the study area, the study design, population of study, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection

instruments, data analysis procedure and ethical consideration for the study. Chapter four covers data analysis and discussion of findings. In this section the results obtained from the data analysis are reduced into simple descriptive representation for easy understanding. Also, the findings obtained from the study are discussed in relation to other results and/or findings from other studies on the subject or in a related area. Chapter five deals with summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations made by the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to review theoretical and empirical literature on the distribution channel and strategy. Specifically, the chapter examines the key concepts of distribution such as the key concepts of distribution, brand equity. In addition, both empirical and theoretical reviews are conducted to expose the researcher to the main issues under investigations.

2.2 The Concept and Definition of Distribution

A product is not important to the consumer, if it is not available when and where it is wanted. A product reaches customers through a channel of distribution. Decision areas include: selecting and manning the middlemen, storage, handling and transporting the product. Marketing channels are very crucial in structuring marketing decisions. This is because without the channels; products will never get to the customers who need them. Channel decisions can only be productive if there is goal congruence between the company and its channel members. However, intermediaries/middlemen who direct products to functionalities will set in if channel conflicts occur between them as marketing channels are very crucial for the success or otherwise of marketing efforts. Pride and Ferrell (1985) define marketing channel or channel of distribution as "a group of interrelated customers". Rachman and Mescon (1982) see channel of distribution as "a sequence of marketing agencies (such as wholesalers and retailers) through which a product passes on its way from the producer to the final user". Richard (1976) et al defines channel of distribution as "a combination of middlemen that a company uses to move its products to the ultimate purchaser". A distribution channel consists of the set

of people and firms involved in the transfer of title to a product as the product moves from producer to ultimate consumer or business user. A channel of distribution always includes both the producer and the final customer for the product in its present form as well as any middlemen such as retailers and wholesalers. The act of bridging the gap between producer and consumer and provide the purchaser with a convenient means of obtaining the product that he or she wishes to buy. In moving goods to convenient location for the consumer, channels provide form, time, place and ownership utility. Form utility is the want satisfying capability that is created when a good produced. Time utility is the want satisfying capability that is created when a product is made available to customers when they want it. Place utility is want satisfying capability that is created when a product is made readily accessible to potential customers. Products have no value to the consumer in the manufacturer's warehouse until it is made available to consumers where they want to buy them. Possession utility or ownership utility is want satisfying capability that is created when title of a product is transferred from the manufacturer to the buyer at the point or time of purchase (retail store). Possession utility is the want to satisfy capability that is created when a customer buys the product that is when ownership is transferred to the buyer. Marketing functions performed in channels of distribution can be grouped as those that are necessary to a transaction those that are required for the physical exchange of goods and those that facilitate both the transaction and the physical exchange. Channel decision-making involves establishing and maintaining the institutional structure in marketing channels. The strategy of distribution channels can be seen as a special part of the general marketing strategy with which the firm expects to achieve its distribution goals in the target markets. This way, the strategy of marketing channel is related with the aspect of marketing strategy of country (Bert R. 2013). One channel refers to different measures for making a product

or service available for the market. In this context, a channel serves as a bridge between the producer and the consumer through which the products reach the target market (Jokinen, 2012). The distribution strategy is considered as the axis of marketing functions that includes marketing channels, points of option, purchases and focuses on the customer relationship management (Road A., Daryaganj, 2007). The strategy of distribution channels refers to a wide group of principles through which a firm wants to achieve its distribution objectives by focusing in drafting distribution techniques and methods to achieve the general goals of the enterprise (Mehtaa et al., 2001). The company has to develop an integrated strategy of distribution channels. It has to evaluate each channel's direct influence in product sales and its transverse effect through other channel interactions or options (Kotler PH & Lane Keller K, 2012). Providing a plan that connects the strategy of distribution channels with individual performance is also a valuable tool in the reduction of conflicts (Kiran et al., 2012). The specific objectives included in the relationships between time, cycle, order and sales availability describe the influence of distribution strategies in consumer's value (Aila et al., 2012). An essential element towards company's success is the selection of an appropriate distribution strategy which will increase sales and profit (Nguyen, 2013). Distribution strategy is useful in the distribution of effective goods and services with the targeted clients. The company can choose to implement the exclusive strategy of distribution where a retailer receives the right to operate in a certain zone or intensive approach of distribution where a product is available in all possible branches of retail sales. This strategy should be followed by the objective to serve the selected markets with a minimal cost while maintaining the desired image of product (Road A., Daryaganj, 2007).

According to Coughlan et al. (2006), distribution channel comprise of different organizations who are concerned with delivering products and services to the final consumers in the right place at the right time. Zikmund & d"Amico (2001) also describe distribution channel as a system that helps to bring products of the producer to the final consumer. Distribution channels are utilized by the firm to ensure that products and services are delivered in the right time at a right and convenient place. The channel of distribution involves middlemen who aid the firm to distribute its products and services to the final consumer. Companies use distribution channels to ensure that their product will reach customers at the right time and at convenient location. Distribution channels involve intermediary organizations that help in a process to deliver products to end customers. The main focus behind distribution channel is to close the gap between where the product is produced and where the customer/consumer is located (Kim & Frazier, 1996). The producer/manufacturer, wholesalers and retailers are typically identified as the main actors in the distribution channel (Coughlan et al., 2006). Going by the definitions provided above, is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the distribution channel actually begins. This is because there is a possibility that there may be two or more producers involved in producing the final product at different stages.

2.3 Distribution Channel Process

According to Ilesanmi (2011) a company wants a distribution channel that not only meets customers' needs but also provides an edge on competition. Some firms gain a differential advantage with their channels to design channels that satisfy customers and outdo competition, an organized approach is required which comprises of a four sequence decisions: (i) specifying the role of distribution (ii) selecting the type of

channel (iii) determining intensity of distribution (iv) Choosing specific channel members - that is selecting specific firms to distribute the product.

a) Selecting the Type of Channel

Some firms adopt direct distribution a situation where producer deals with final customer, with no middlemen providing assistance. In contrast, a channel producer, final customer, and at least one level of middlemen represent indirect distribution (Ilesanmi, 2011)

b) Major Channel of Distribution

Diverse distribution channels exist today. The most common channels for consumer goods, business goods, and services are described as follows: Distribution of Consumer Goods. According to Ilesanmi (2011) there are four channels that are widely used in marketing tangible products to ultimate consumer:

1. Producer to consumer
2. Producer to retailer to consumer
3. Producer to wholesaler to retailer to consumer
4. Producer to agent to wholesaler to retailer to consumer

C. Distribution of Industrial/Business Goods

A variety of channels is available to reach organizations that incorporate the products into their manufacturing process or use them in their operations (Ilesanmi, 2011). According to Ilesanmi (2011) there four common channels for business are:

1. Producer to user
2. Producer to industrial distributor to user
3. Producer to agent to user
4. Producer to agent to industrial distributor to user

D. **Distribution of Services**: The intangible nature of services creates special distribution requirements. There are only two common channels for services (Ilesanmi, 2011).

1. Producer to consumer

2. Producer to agent to consumer

2.4 Defining and understanding multi-channel product distribution

As per Khan et al. (2009) study, multi-channel distribution includes having conventional intermediaries in addition to the producer's private distribution outlet. This incorporates a producer's private retail outlets, independent intermediaries, on-line producer, sales among others, existing together in the same distribution channel. Product distribution is an important process of the supply chain network, and connects the whole firm with its outbound supplies as a whole. Khan et al. (2009) explain that businesses working effectively relies on how well the distribution hubs and methods are organized and sorted out. They are of the perspective that distribution procedure permits the flow of information, products and services easily, at the best prices, which elevates the competitive edge of the organization. However, poor distribution procedures spread a variety of distractions and disappointment over the supply chain and ultimately the customer. Because of the fact that distribution process is vital, securing an effective and efficient distribution practice is crucial for minimizing the firm's cost, leading to benefits such as increases in sales and profit. This enhances firm performance since multichannel distribution in supply management is said to guarantee prompt response to the way information in the market flows, providing valuable information like customer orders among others (Chow et al., 2007).

The key factors fueling the use of multi-channel product distribution include the necessity for sales growth resulting from an extended market coverage that has the potential of improving the satisfaction of target customers, (Thornton & White, 2001). An expense decrease by substituting high for minimal effort channels (Wright, 2002), more and better market data given the expanded number of means connecting the organization with the business and diversifying so as to lessen business risk, by diversifying the sources of the company's business. Further writing demonstrates that occupant channels ought to not consequently be frightened when extra channels are presented. Consider that in specific situations one channel's endeavors can drive activity to another channel, particularly when led with such purpose (Chow 2005). Furthermore, losing sales must not hurt general profitability. For example, another channel may be focused at a current channel's slightest gainful clients. On the other hand a maker opening an immediate channel may in the meantime better the wholesale terms offered to existing middle people thus enhancing the execution of the multi-directed item conveyance firm.

2.5 Selecting Distribution Channels

As per Armstrong and Kotler (2000), choice of the distribution channel has a huge impact on all marketing decisions. As a consequence of the significance of distribution channel, various criteria have been proposed to decide how to pick the appropriate direction in the wider marketing context. Chow et al. (2007 Rangan and Jaikumah (1991),) for instance, propose seven key criteria in connection to deciding the best channel to employ. These incorporate trustworthiness (consistency of service); time in transit; market scope; the capacity to offer/operate door to door service; adaptability (taking care of and meeting the unique needs of shippers); loss and damage

performance; the capacity to give more than basic product delivery service. The greater part of these criteria concurred with Armstrong and Kotler's (2000) outline of the key effective criteria which have been embraced by the Caterpillar association which creates heavy plant vehicles for the construction business.

From the viewpoint of (Thornton & White, 2001) there are two fundamental choices when designing a channel of distribution: a strategic choice and a tactical choice. As per the authors, the former takes decisions regarding the number of levels between the producer and the client (consumer), while the latter decides the intensity of the proposed structure and policies for the management of the channel (Rangan & Jaikumar, 1991). It is not uncommon for distributional studies to research the seller-buyer dynamics, and they frequently take either the merchant's point of view or the purchaser's viewpoint (e.g Amato & Amato, 2009; Deusen et al., 2007). Conversely, supply chain management seems to have a perspective of "over the chain", which implies that researches on supply chain management have a tendency to take global angles and attempt to envelop multiple interfaces (e.g Love et al., 2004).

2.6 Distribution Channel Systems.

Distribution Channel Systems is defined as the route along which goods and services travel from producer/manufacturer through marketing intermediaries (such as wholesalers, distributors, and retailers) to the final user. Channels of distribution provide downstream value by bringing finished products to end users. This flow may involve the physical movement of the product or simply the transfer of title to it. Also known as a distribution channel, a distribution chain, a distribution pipeline, a supply chain, a marketing channel, a market channel, and a trade channel (Ostrow, 2009).

Similarly, distribution channel is defined by Hill: "Distribution channel - one or more companies or individuals who participate in the flow of goods and services from the manufacturer to the final user or consumer" (Hill, 2010).

Nevertheless, other types of flows should not be neglected in distribution channels, so that the following definition is also possible: "Channel of distribution consist of one or more companies or individuals who participate in the flow of goods, services, information, and finances from the producer to the final user or consumer."(Coyle et al., 2003)

These are various routes that products or services use after their production until they are purchased and used by end users.3 Therefore, marketing channels, i.e. distribution channels are all those organizations that a product has to go through between its production and consumption. Channel level is a layer of middle people that are included in procedure to perform channel undertakings. (Kotler, et al. 2008). Figure 1 demonstrates three fundamental distribution channel frameworks. The first channel above utilizes direct conveyance system, where items and administrations are exchanged specifically from maker to buyer. The different channels use mediators/intermediaries, - retailers and wholesalers to convey their items to last clients.

Figure 2.1 Graphical presentations of the various forms of distribution channels

Selling directly to consumer

Producer → Consumer

Selling through retailer

Producer → Retailer → Consumer

Selling through wholesalers

Producer → Wholesaler → Retailer → Consumer
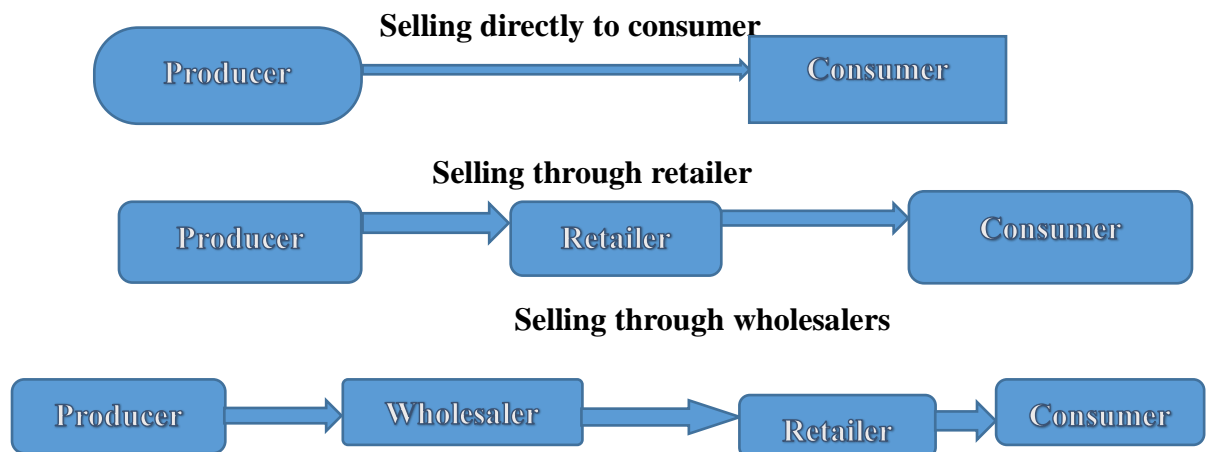
Source: Adopted from Kotler et al.

2.6.1 Direct versus Indirect Distribution

Distribution is usually done using two main approaches; direct and indirect. Direct distribution implies that items are dispersed specifically from producer to customer. Organizations offer their items specifically to clients at client's home, over telephone, on web or at some other open spot. (Raatikainen, 2008). Selling through web, inventories and telesales spares expenses of keeping up retail locations and utilities and enhances pace of conveyance and logistics capacities inside of the channel. Direct distribution likewise gives organizations better access to purchasers and offering through web helps them access markets even on worldwide level (Kotler et al. 2008).

The other direct channel distribution methodology is immediate retail frameworks: Here the item producer likewise works their own particular retail outlets. It could also be through individual offering system; the way to this immediate distribution is that a person whose principle obligation includes making and overseeing sales is included in the distribution process, for the most part inducing the purchasers to place orders. This request its self may not be taken care of by the salesman himself. The last classification of direct distribution methodology includes the assisted marketing frameworks. Here the producer depends on others (representatives/brokers) to help communicate the manufactured product to handle the distribution specifically to the buyers.

The indirect channel item distribution methodology includes the producer coming to the final clients through the assistance of others. These resellers for the most part take responsibility for the product, however now and again they may offer items on a consignment basis. The intermediaries assume the obligation of having the products of the manufacturer sold. Distributing indirectly may be in the form of a single party selling system; these include producers drawing in another party who then offers and distributes straightforwardly to the last client. These could be vast store based retailers

or online retailers. Distributing indirectly could likewise be various –party offering system; here the wholesalers buy from the producer and offers the item to retailers. From a marketing point of view, diverse distribution channels may vary in their capacities to perform different service outputs. The Internet channel is especially effective in giving data to the client, in this way decreasing the purchaser's search costs. Offering various reciprocal channels gives a more noteworthy and more profound blend of customer service, which enhances the overall value proposition of the seller (Wallace et al., 2004).

2.6.2 Intermediaries

Now and again, rather than making direct delivery to the client, the organization may choose to utilize intermediaries to enhance their products and to guarantee that items will be closer to target market. Intermediaries normally have selling experience, customer skills and networks that can give the organization an advantage than offering the products directly to the customer by doing everything naturally. Middle people additionally assume an essential part so as to coordinate supply with interest on bigger amounts of comparable products from makers and breaking them into sums sought for clients, giving them to clients in correct time and area (Kotler et al. 2008).

2.6.3 Distribution with intermediaries

Using intermediaries to distribute a company's products/services means the firm uses the services of other organizations such as wholesalers and retailers to make product/services available to the final consumer. Many organizations see the use of intermediaries as an expensive venture since it increases the cost of the company. Some argue that using intermediaries will not help the organization to save cost and improve profitability. However, a number of studies have shown that intermediaries do not necessarily inflate the cost of the organization. In most cases, the intermediaries

undertake tasks that would otherwise be taken by the manufacturer if it does not employ the services of intermediaries. For instance an intermediary provides services such as storage of the manufacturers' goods and transportation of such goods to the door step of the final consumer. Thus, taking away intermediaries and delivering the product directly to the final consumer implies that the company will have to bear the cost of storage and transportation by itself. It therefore stands to reason that the company actually wins if it decides to employ the services of responsible and dedicated intermediaries (Zikmund & d"Amico2001). The various forms of intermediaries are discussed below:

1. **Non-store retailing**

Kotler et al. (2008) defines non-store retailing as selling products to customers through catalogues phone-sales, vending machines and internet. Usually, non-store retailing is not intended to replace traditional stores but rather to complement them. Traditional retail stores are complimented by web/online retail stores. The online retail store affords consumers the opportunity to order and buy products online which may be more convenient to the consumer than appearing physically at the retail shop. Online delivery channels exhibits wide range of products and services for the consumer's consideration physical shops since there is no limit to the space available for display and storage. A typical example of a successful online distribution is e-bay, which affords consumers the opportunity to purchase wide range of products and services (Kotler et al. 2008).

2. **Store retailing**

One of the easiest ways to distribute products and services is through retail stores. Manufacturers/ producers do not need to worry when using store retailing. This is because storage, customer service, delivery and well-maintained premises are taken care of by the retail stores. The retailers also help to create awareness of the company's

product because if consumers appear in the store wishing to purchase something different, the product of the company will still be visible for the consumer to notice, evaluate and consider. Organizations tend to offer their products and services through retailers with the view of adding value to the company's products. For the sake of the convenience of customers, retailers store the products of the company for easy access by consumers. According to Levy & Weitz (2013), offering the product through retailers is important to the producer since it will help reduce inventory and transportation costs. Selling through retailers in beneficial for manufacturers, as they can reduce transportation and inventory costs.

3. Pop-up stores

Another form of retailing is through the use of pop-up stores. These are stores that are temporal and are set up at periods when sales are expected to increase. Usually, they are set up at occasions such as Christmas, Easter and Galantine"s day. Pop-up store affords the company the opportunity to improve its sales during a particular season without having to worry about renting premises to offer their products and services to the final consumers. (Loughran, About.com). The extent to which pop-up stores are becoming popular is making retailers consider this form of retail option. Online companies that are famous for online delivery such as eBay opened a pop-up store in London in order to access high-street customers. Even though customers purchase virtual products online that are physically delivered to them afterwards, it afforded eBay the opportunity to be recognized as one of the busiest streets in London and therefore promote their brand image (Guardian 2011, Evans 2012).

2.7 Distribution Strategy

According to Hooley et al. (2008), distribution strategy examines how a company's product/service reaches the consumer. The choice of distribution strategy is of crucial importance for the company and it has significant impact on the future survival and success of the organizations (Zikmund & d"Amico, 2001). Designing a distribution strategy entails selecting the best intermediaries, ensuring that the product/service is transported at the exact quantity and quality, and making sure that the products are delivered on time (Thompson & Soper, 2007). Choosing the distribution channel involve the process where producers select how the manufactured products will reach the final consumer, which is an essential decision to be undertaken by the company.

Before taking a decision on the distribution strategy, the firm must understand its goals and their expectations regarding the distribution strategy. The objective of a distribution strategy may include sales volumes and profit, expansion in market share, and cost effectiveness. Irrespective of the objective underpinning the distribution strategy, the firm must endeavor to remember that the convenience of consumers is extremely vital. The company must thrive to deliver the products or service to the final consumers in the place, time and quantity preferred by the consumer or customer at the minimal possible cost (Solomon et al., 2009).

Distribution has a great effect in profitability, so a firm should have an excellent and logistic plan of the supply chain and the management of distribution. All variables of mixed marketing are connected with each-other. By raising product's price, the product demand will be reduced and smaller points of distribution will be needed (Singh, 2012). Whether the firm sees the distribution issue as worthy of disturbing the high level management or not by developing general strategies and objectives, it still has to face the issue of distribution's role in the mixed marketing. The development of mixed

marketing strategies for the product, price, promotion and distribution's place that fulfill market's requirements better than the competitors, is the essence of modern management (Bert R. 2013). The size of sales force and the number of distribution channels are two vital elements for the enterprise (Haluk Koksal & Ozgul, 2007). The taken decisions in the field of distribution should mostly be in accordance with the decision-making in the field of product (Barcik & Jakubiec, 2013). The decisions about selecting the distribution channels include numerous of interconnecting variables that have to be integrated in the strategies of marketing mix. Based on this, the selection of channels can be further defined in the aspect of: distribution coverage, the desired degree of control, the general cost of distribution and channel's flexibility (Donnelly, 2001).

2.7.1 Channel's strategies and the design of distribution channels

The design of channels refers to the decisions that come from the organization to create a new distribution channel or from the taken decisions to change an existing distribution channel (Schugk, 2005). The design of a marketing channel's system includes the analysis of consumer's needs, setting the objectives of the marketing channel, identifying the main alternatives of marketing channels and their evaluation (PH Kotler & Lane Keller, 2009). The analysis of consumer's needs the channels produces these service results: space facility, in-time delivery, and various products and services advancements. Setting the objectives of the marketing channel the companies have to set their marketing channel's objectives in terms of the targeted levels of consumer's service. Identifying the main alternatives of marketing channels and their evaluation after the company has set the objectives of its channel; it also has to identify the main channel alternatives about: the types of mediators, the number of mediators and the responsibilities of every channel member. Evaluating the main alternatives – after the

company defines some of channel's options, it has to choose the one that fulfills bets its long-term objectives. Each option must be evaluated based on economic, control and adaption criteria (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011).

2.7.2 The strategy of marketing channels and its management

The management of marketing channels requires the selection, management and motivation of individual channel members and the evaluation of their performance over time. The producers distinguish based on their ability to seduce marketing mediators. When the mediators are selected, the company has to define what characteristics distinguish the very best (P Kotler & Armstrong, 2001). The manager of channel, in attempt to plan and implement a program that will achieve the cooperation of channel members faces three strategic questions (Bert, 2013). 1) How strong must the connection of channel members be? 2) How should the members be motivated to encourage cooperation in achieving distribution objectives? 3) How should mixed marketing be used to achieve this cooperation? Strategic requirements, management preferences and other limits assist in determining the intensity of distribution that offers a better performance of strategic potential. The correct selection of distribution intensity depends on targeting and positioning in the strategies of directing the product and market's characteristics (Road A., 2007). The task of managing distribution channels is to coordinate and monitor multiple flows that include mediators, sellers, wholesalers and agents (Rosenbloom, 2010).

2.8 Concept of Branding

The concept of branding have been variously explained and discussed by researchers, pundits and the learned in the business discourse and academia. Branding has been defined as the use of identifiable variable like attractive names, symbolisms,

terminologies (slogans), terms, signs and in an extended version, the combination of all the aforementioned variables with the intent of associating it with particular services and products in an organization which is distinctive from competitors' brand (Bennett, 1995).

Branding has been in existence hitherto large commercial activities (before the industrial revolution) to identify one product from the other particularly among the artistic workers. A brand that is meticulously planned and executed dominates the subconscious minds of consumers who do not struggle to recall them whenever the need arises and hence has become a vital tool for business organizations to break into every market. For instance, in Ghana, popular names like Voltic, Awake, Everpure, Verna comes into their mind when beverage brands are mentioned. Also when the name nestles comes to mind, beverage is what people think about. In that accord, the American Marketing Association (2014) asserted that products and services are branded to bring out the uniqueness of the product making it different from other products and services of competitors within the industry the organization finds itself.

The American Marketing Association (2014) emphasized that products and services can be branded using a name, symbol, logos, terms, designs and can be a combination of these variables. Researchers such as Watkins, 1986, Aaker, 1991 and Kotler adheres this definition. Through branding, customers develop an emotional connection with the product and the organization. When individuals develop emotional attachments with the product of the organization it becomes easy for the product to be identified with an increasingly choked market. Communicating the brand of a product to potential customers is very important. Proper communication measures make it easy for potential customers to understand and associate themselves with a particular brand. Communication removes all ambiguities concerning the purpose of a brand and easily

creates brand awareness. The study enumerated four stages including; brand positioning, brand communications; brand performance and brand equity and leveraging. Branding qualifies a product to become more than a product because of the emotional and mental connection they develop (Kapferer 2008; Kapferer, 1992).

2.8.1 Brand equity

Brand equity has been a major marketing research topic since the late 1980s (Aaker, 1991; Areska, 2012). Brand equity is usually defined as the difference between the marketing effects that accumulate to a particular product given its brand name and the effects that would accumulate if the product does not have the same brand name (Aaker, 1991; K. Keller, 2003; Zhu, 2009). According to Kotler and Keller, (2009), brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities that add to or subtract from the value provided by the product or service to the Company and or that the company's customers. Researchers have been looking for ways to measure brand equity since it has financial benefits for the firm (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity is the result of understanding of attitude of the brand to ensure continuation of the positive brand attitude which will lead to strong brand equity (Zhu, 2009).

Brand is not something tangible; it exists in the minds of consumers, as how people think and feel about a particular product. Brands are a result of the communication, marketing and private attitudes in consumers' minds and the adoption of a positive brand attitude that leads to strong brand equity (Hansen, 2003). In particular, the financial perspective underlines the overall value of the brand and answers the question of how well the business performs in the market (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011) Hence, the financial perspective permits firms to take out the financial value of the brand from the total value of the firm. Simon and Sullivan (1993) were among the first scholars to provide a method to measure brand equity mathematically. They measures brand equity

on the basis of financial market value of the firm. In contrast to the financial perspective of brand equity, a more consumer-oriented approach flourished as an alternative.

The main purpose of the consumer-based perspective is to determine how consumers respond to a brand (Keller, 1993; Shocker, Srivastava and Ruekert, 1994). Based on this perspective, brand equity has been defined by Keller (1993) as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand. Reviewing the existing literature on brand equity, there is a variety of definitions and dimensions for brand equity. Although there is no standard definition of brand equity, there is at least agreement in that brand equity signifies the added value that the brand endows to the product or service (Farquhar 1989, p: RC7). This value provides a linkage between the past experience of the brand and its future expectations (Keller, 2003).

Evidently, a variety of researches in the field of brand equity through the years result in diverse sorts of dimension for brand equity that can be related to a brand. However, the frequent denominator in all models is the use of one or more dimension of the Aaker model (Keller 1993; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Villarejo-Ramos and Nchez-Franco, 2005; Yasin et al., 2007; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010). Consequently, the consumer-based brand equity is an asset of four dimensions that are brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Although there is a diversity of definitions for brand equity as suggested by several scholars, but it can be noticed that majority of them point towards the agreement that brand equity is about providing added value to the customer in various ways. In fact, it can be derived that brand equity reflects consumers' evaluation of a brand. Therefore, brand equity for any brand must obtain favorable evaluation and perception of users towards its characteristics.

2.9 Theoretical Review of brand equity

2.9.1 Keller's Customer Based Brand Equity model (CBBE)

With the evolution of marketing, the focus of companies switched to the customer. Happy customers mean profit will be made. Companies realized that to become even more profitable they had to go beyond simply keeping the customers happy and build a strong relationship and resonance with them.

Figure 2.4 CBBE MODEL
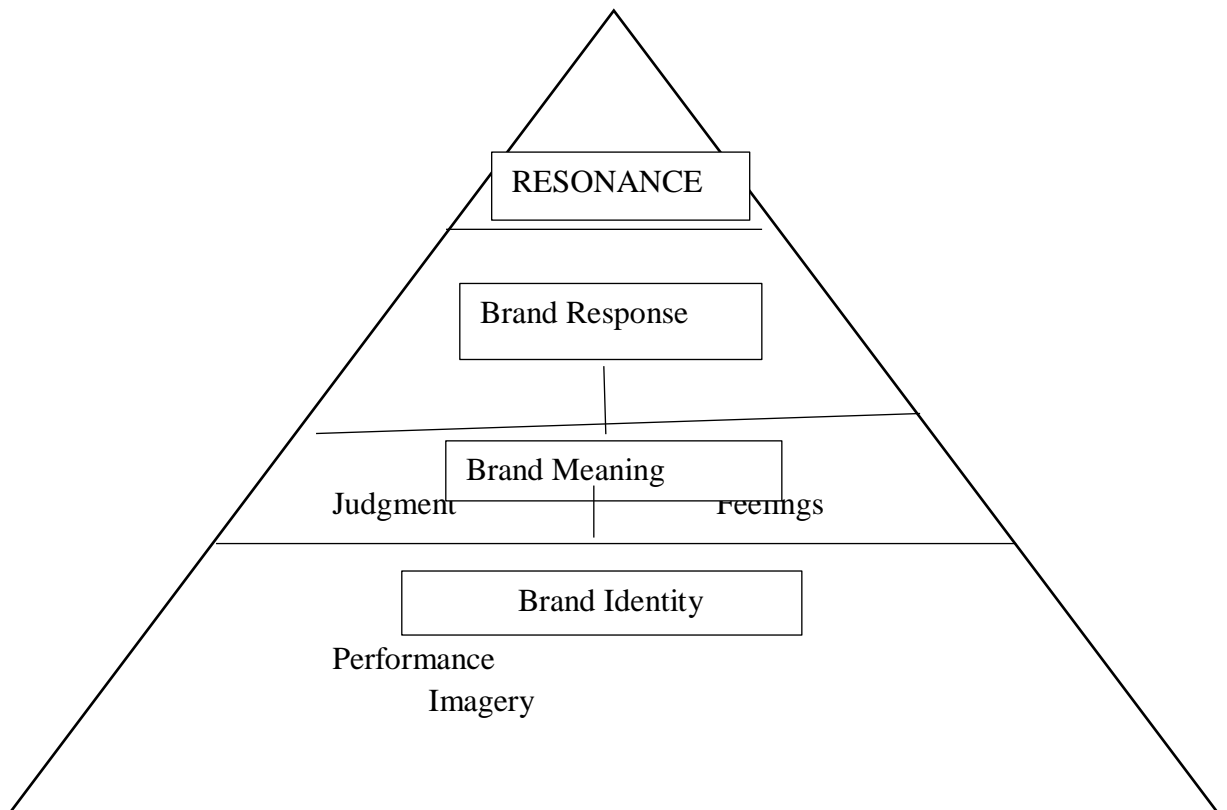
Source: Keller's Brand Equity Model- CBBE Model

2.9.1.1 Level 1: Brand identity (who are you?)

This is how customers look at your brand and distinguish it from other brands. It is the most important stage and must be strong to support the rest of the pyramid above it.

Brand identity builds when customers start off unaware of products and values, and then attract customers with advertisements.

2.9.1.2 Level 2: Brand meaning (what or who are you?)

The purpose is to create an identification of the brand, and an association with a specific product class. When customers become aware of a brand, they will want to know more about it. It is divided into two: Brand Performance: When a brand does what it says' and performs well over time, it will be loved and trusted. Brand Imagery: Brand image is the perceptions about a brand as reflected by brand associations held in consumer's memory. How the brand appears to be to customers.

2.9.1.3 Level 3: Brand response (What are the feelings for the brand)

This step is achieved with judgments and feelings. Once a customer has bought a brand, if they love the product, they have feelings for it and will inform friends, family and social media to buy one. If they are disappointed about the product, their judgment of the product will be negative and may criticize it widely.

2.9.1.4 Level 4: Brand resonance

When a customer loves a brand, they would not consider buying another one from a different brand. The way up to the resonance level affords brand opportunities to recognize and capitalize on its customer's loyalties and attitudes both positive and negative. It helps to capture developments in social media and how the consumers have become more involved in potentially new and different ways with brands (Keller, 2016).

2.9.2 Aaker's Brand Equity model

Brand equity from Aaker's perspective is a mixture of brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty. There are five components of controlling brand equity. Aaker explains brand equity as the set of brand assets and liabilities linked to the brand. The higher the data scores for these, the closer the product is to achieving brand equity:

2.9.2.1 Brand Loyalty

The building of a strong and positive brand generally leads to a preference of a particular brand among the customers, which over time might lead to brand loyalty. Loyalty consists of a high degree of bonding between customers and a brand. Furthermore, loyal customers are unwilling to switch brands and prefer to stick with a brand that they feel comfortable and satisfied with (Rosenbaum-Eilliot et al, 2011). Customers who are loyal towards a brand are also fewer prices sensitive and open to pay a higher price for a specific brand compared to other alternatives, since customers may perceive a unique value in the brand. Another advantage for companies with brand loyal customers is the fact that it can lead to market benefits. Companies get trade leverage and do not need to advertise as much as companies without loyal customers (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

2.9.2.2 Brand awareness

Channels affect brand awareness at purchase in the manner in which they display and promote a brand. For example, with consumer packaged goods, it is often crucial that they are stocked in the right aisles and sections within the store so that they are thought about at the right time and in the right way. To the extent that in-store decision-making is prevalent in a category, retail channels will play a particularly important role in facilitating brand recognition. Similarly, the page displays and page positions for a brand online also affect its awareness there.

The extent to which a brand is known among the public and which can be measured by the following parameters: anchor to which associations can be attached, familiarity and liking (customers with a positive attitude towards a brand), signal of a commitment to a brand, brand to be considered during the purchasing period (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011).

2.9.2.3 Perceived quality

It is the extent to which a brand is considered to provide quality products. Is the brand known or expected to deliver good products? Quality above features will give a product the edge with consumers. It is measured on these bases: the quality offered by the product is a reason to buy it, level of differentiation, price, availability in different sales channels and the number of brand extensions. Perceived quality is the consumer's perception of the overall quality of a product or service with its intended purpose or that is relative to alternatives (Alhadad, 2015). It is first a perception by consumers. Perceived quality cannot necessarily be objectively determined in part because it is a perception and also because judgments about what is important to customers involved. Perceived quality is an intangible overall feeling about a brand. To understand perceived quality, the identification and measurement of the underlying dimensions will be useful, but the perceived quality itself is a summary, global construct (Aaker, 1991).

2.9.2.4 Brand associations

Channels can play an extremely important role in the formation or strengthening of brand associations. Channels can impact performance and imagery associations about the brands they sell by exactly how they choose to sell them. Moreover, as noted above, they also can influence these image associations indirectly by virtue of their own brand image and how it transfers to the product brands they sell. Channels can be highly beneficial in managing the imagery of the brand. By virtue of the imagery associations of the retailer who shops at the stores; what it is like to shop at the stores; what is the look and personalities of store employees, floor personnel, the physical facilities and so on imagery associations for the product brands that are sold there may also be created or impacted (Inman, Shankar, and Ferraro 2004; Desaiand Keller 2009). Because customers and employees are not physically visible over the Internet, online channels

may be less effective at building imagery associations for a brand. On the other hand, online channels can provide much detailed product information that can help to build or strengthen performance associations.

2.10 Empirical Review

Yoo et al (2000) researched on how distributing channels affects brand equity, their findings revealed that good store-image attracts more attention, interests, and contacts from potential consumers, as well as increases consumer satisfaction and positive word of mouth. Thus, distributing through good-image stores signals that a brand has good quality. Distribution intensity also has a positive impact on dimensions of brand awareness because high distribution intensity increases the probability of buying a brand wherever and whenever consumers want (Yoo et al., 2000).

Kim & Hyun (2011) studied on how distribution channels create awareness of brand to consumers using IT software as a case of study. Their findings revealed increase in distribution intensity reduces consumer efforts for finding and acquiring a brand, consumers are likely to perceive it as more valuable, which in turn increases consumer satisfaction and brand awareness (Kim & Hyun, 2011).

McQuiston, 2004 in his research on distributing channels in industrial marketing find out that the activities of order processing, coverage, and delivery are found to be critical for building brand awareness (McQuiston, 2004). Several researchers found that these activities positively affected perceived quality, brand awareness and distribution (McQuiston, 2004 & Van et al, 2005)

Ahmed et al., (2015) researched into the political brand equity model and how the integration of political brands influences voters' choice in Pakistan. The study aimed at exploring the concept of party equity analogous to commercial equity by developing a

politics specific brand equity model. Questionnaires were developed and administered. The model was validated by 550 responses from the constituency of District Gujrat, Pakistan. It was analyzed through the SEM methodology. Results from the study showed that political parties vary according to outcomes of their role in the political socialization process of the communities, loyalty and voters attitude.

Gomez et al., (2015) studied the model of tourism destination brand equity. The research aimed at addressing the gap in existing literature by proposing a model for the influence of the designation of origin brand image and the destination image on the brand equity of wine tourism destinations and to examine the effects on two stakeholder groups, winery managers and visitors in Spain. A survey using questionnaires was conducted. 219 managers and 598 visitors participated. A partial least squares-based multi group analysis was employed in the analysis of the gathered data. The results showed that the overall managers evaluate wine tourism destination brand equity, DO brand image and destination image more positively than visitors do.

Boo et al., (2009) researched into a model of customer-based brand equity and its application to multiple destinations. The research was conducted in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. Data was collected through an online panel survey. A total of 510 respondents completed the survey. The data was downloaded and transformed into SPSS format using multi-sample invariance tests. Results showed that tourists' image congruence with a destination was an important influential factor in destination loyalty. Also, as product attributes accompany perceived value in marketing, so destination attributes go along with perceived value as the key criteria in destination brand loyalty.

Pacheco & Rahman (2014) researched the effects of sales promotion type and promotion depth on consumers' perception. The study used a between-subjects experimental design to test the effect of two sales promotion formats (coupon versus

markdown) with either high and low face values on consumer attitudes toward the deal, perceived product quality and purchase intentions. The study relied on a 2 (promotion type: mark down vrs coupon) x 2 (face value: high vrs low) x 2(retailer reputation: positive vrs negative) factorial design with 190 undergraduate business students. The participants' scores on items measuring their attitudes toward the retailer, perceived retailer trustworthiness and overall retailer reputation were assessed to check for the manipulation of the retailer's reputation. The findings showed that the retailer reputation is an important moderator of sales promotions effectiveness.

Sinha & Verma (2018) studied the impact of sales promotion's benefits on brand equity. The study examined the possible influence of sales promotion's benefits on four components of brand equity. A model was proposed to show the relations between sales promotions and component of brand equity. 265 consumers of fast moving consumer goods from Madhya Pradesh state in India were sampled. The covariance based structure equation modeling technique was used for data analysis. It was revealed that the ultimate benefit of sales promotion has maximum impact on brand loyalty.

Park & Kim (2003) studied the key factors that affect consumer purchase behavior in an online shopping context. The study researched the relationship between various characteristics of online shopping and consumer purchase behavior. 602 customers were sampled for the research. A research model was developed for consumer's relational purchasing behavior on an online shopping context. The results indicated that information quality, user interface quality and security perceptions affected information satisfaction and relational benefit that in one way or the other, significantly affects each consumer's commitment and actual purchase behavior.

Faryabi et al, (2015) studied brand name, sales promotion and consumer's online purchase intention for cell phone brands. The research examined the final impact on

brand name and sales promotion, as two powerful marketing strategies on consumers online purchase intention. 248 professors, employees and students from University of Tabriz in Iran undertook the survey. Data was collected through administration of questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS GRAPHICS software. The results indicated that cell phones stores should strengthen their online store's image, upgrade service quality and provide effective promotions to attract consumers' overtime.

Guo and Meng (2008) researched the consumer knowledge and its consequences. The study intended to obtain knowledge of the relationship between two consumer knowledge components and four product related task performances, with a focus on the influences of two psycho-linguistic differences in cognition. An empirical survey was done with 200 participants. An exploratory factor analysis using principle component method was used in the data analysis. Results showed that psycho linguistic differences largely affect the consumption task performance. Different consumer knowledge play different roles in consumption task.

Kukor-Kinney et al., (2012) studied the role of price in the behavior and purchase decisions of compulsive buyers. The study examined the relationship between consumers' tendencies to buy compulsively and their response to price. 1490 customers were sent emails for collections of data. The hypotheses of the study were tested with MANOVA with compulsive buying as the fixed factor and the response variables as the dependent variables. The results showed that compulsive buyers possess greater knowledge of store prices and are more brand conscious and prestige sensitive in comparison with non-compulsive buyers.

Paul and Rana (2012) studied 201. The aim of the study was to understand the behavior of consumers and their intention to purchase organic food. Data was collected through face to face interview using a structured questionnaire with close ended questions. 463

respondents participated in the survey. The results indicated that health, availability and education positively influenced the consumer's attitude towards buying organic food.

Table 2.1 Summary of empirical review

No.	Topic	Author/s	Date of publication	Findings
1.	An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity	Yoo, B., Donthu, N., Lee, S.	2000	Distribution intensity also has a positive impact on dimensions of brand awareness.
2.	A model to investigate the influence of marketing-mix efforts and corporate image on brand equity in the IT software sector.	Kim, J.-H., Hyun, Y.J.	2011	increase in distribution intensity reduces consumer efforts for finding and acquiring a brand, consumers are likely to perceive it as more valuable, which in turn increases consumer satisfaction and brand awareness
3.	Successful branding of a commodity product: The case of	McQuiston, D.H.	2004	activities of order processing, coverage, and delivery are found to be critical for building brand awareness

	RAEX LASER steel.			
4.	Political brand equity model and how the integration of political brands influence voters' choice in Pakistan	Ahmed, M. A., Lodhi, S. A., & Ahmad, Z.	2015	Political parties vary according to outcomes of their role in the political socialization process of the communities, loyalty and voters attitude.
5.	The model of tourism destination brand equity	Gomez, M., Lopez, C., & Molina, A.	2015	The overall managers evaluate wine tourism destination brand equity, DO brand image and destination image more positively than visitors do.
6.	A model of customer-based brand equity and its application to multiple destination	Boo, S., Busser, J., & Baloglu, S.	2009	Product attributes accompany perceived value in marketing, so destination attributes go along with perceived value as the key criteria in destination brand loyalty.
7.	The effects of sales promotion type and promotion depth on	Pacheco B. G & Rahman, A.	2014	The retailer reputation is an important moderator of

	consumers' perception.			sales promotions effectiveness.
8.	The impact of sales promotion's benefits on brand equity	Sinha, S. K & Verma, P.	2018	The ultimate benefit of sales promotion has maximum impact on brand loyalty.
11.	The key factors that affects consumer purchase behavior in an online shopping context	Park, C. & Kim. Y.	2013	The information quality, user interface quality and security perceptions affected information satisfaction and relational benefit that in one way or the other, significantly affects each consumer's commitment and actual purchase behavior.
12.	Brand name, sales promotion and consumer's online purchase intention for cell phone brands.	Faryabi, M., Fesaghandis, K. S., & Saed, M.	2015	Cell phones stores should strengthening their online store's image, upgrade service quality and provide effective promotions to attract consumers' overtime.

13.	Consumer knowledge and its consequences	Guo. L, & Meng. X	2008	Results showed that psycho linguistic differences largely affect the consumption task performance. Different consumer knowledge play different roles in consumption task.
14.	The role of price in the behavior and purchase decisions of compulsive buyers.	Kukay-Kinney, M., Ridgway, M. N & Monroe, K. B.	2012	Compulsive buyers possess greater knowledge of store prices and are more brand conscious and prestige sensitive in comparison with non-compulsive buyers
15.	Consumer behavior and purchase intention for organic food	Paul, J & Rana, J	2012	Health, availability and education positively influenced the consumer's attitude towards buying organic food

2.11 Conceptual Framework

The ideas and abstract principles which have been reviewed and discussed above have been modeled with the aid of a conceptual

Figure 2.5: Conceptual Framework

DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL EFFECTIVENESS	→	IMPACT OF DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL ON BRAND EQUITY.
1. Timely delivery 2. Availability in the market 3. Sufficient Retailers 4. Constant price		1. Brand awareness 2. Brand loyalty 3. Perceived quality 4. Brand association
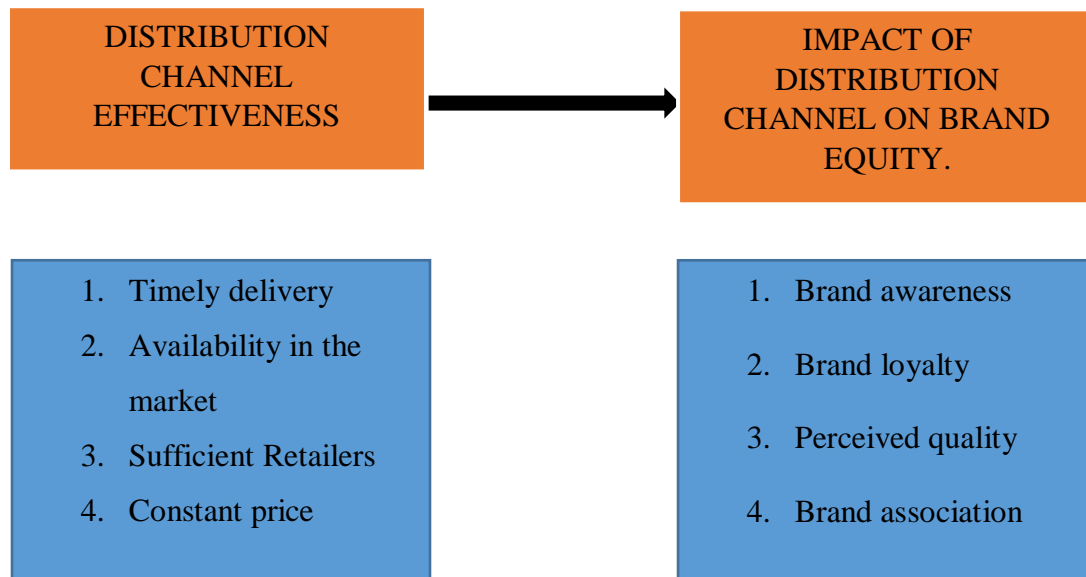
Source: Researcher's Construct

Figure 2.4 above illustrates a conceptual framework that models a relationship between effect distribution channels and brand equity. The research seeks to find how effective distribution channel of water producing companies such as timely delivery, sufficient retailers, constant price, easy access to mineral water products and products availability impacts brand equity and its elements (brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality. The dependent variable for the study is brand equity while the independent variable for the study is effective distribution channel. The model is summarized in Figure 2.4. This study seeks to test the following hypothesis based on the above objectives:

1. Find out the type of distribution channel that exist in water producing companies in Ghana.

2. Find out the impact of effective distribution channel on water producing companies in Ghana.

3. Find out the challenges customers of water producing companies in Ghana faces due to the distribution channels available to customers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the research methodology that was used in this study. Areas that were looked at is the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection methods, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation techniques, ethical considerations, operationalization of the variables and a summary of the chapter. Validity and reliability were discussed in line with the quality standard of the research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design that was used in the study was descriptive survey research design. This was used to collect information from respondents on opinion on how a distribution channel contributes to brand equity. Oso and Onen (2009) point out that this design presents oriented methodology used to investigate populations by selecting samples to analyse and discover occurrences. It describes events as they are. It facilitates rapid data collection and ability to understand population from a sample. Kombo and Tromp (2006), emphasize that this descriptive survey will allow the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret it for more clarity. The research design adopted allowed me as the researcher to describe record, analyze and report conditions that exist or existed before. It also allowed the generation of both numerical and descriptive data that is meant to assist in measuring correlation between the variables.

3.3 Population

Barton (2001) defines a population as any set of persons or objects that possess at least one common characteristic. Miles and Huberman (1994) describes a population as a well-defined set of people, services, elements, events, groups of things or households that are being investigated. Barton (2001), states that any scientific research, targets a given population through which questionnaires, interview guides, focused group discussions or observation guides are distributed so as to get the desired or the required data for analysis. The population in this study was customers of Voltic Ghana mineral water, Everpure Ghana mineral water, Verna Ghana mineral water, Awake Ghana mineral water, Zet Ghana mineral water and Bel Aqua mineral water Ghana.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sampling Procedures

The sample size of this study is one hundred and fifty six (156) selected from the target population of customers based. Sampling procedures involves the process of selecting a given number from the subjects or total population. In this research the sampling procedure used was convenience sampling.

3.4.1 Convenience Sampling

The study employed convenience sampling technique in selecting customer to answer questions related to the research objectives and questions. This technique was employed because those customers (retailers, agents, wholesalers and customers) were willing to participate in an online survey in which the questionnaire link was sent to them and were willing to answer. The number of respondent selected was one hundred and fifty six (156). It took a week for the online survey to be completed.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The questionnaires were the main instrument for data collection. Both open and closed ended questions were constructed with the motive of gathering information from respondents. All one hundred and fifty six (156) respondents were given the online questionnaires personally by the researchers for them to fill online. This gave them the opportunity to express their views and opinions without any interruption.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Data was analyzed using descriptive, correlation and regression analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to look at the commuters' perceived satisfaction on the visible variable, total satisfaction and particularly attribute of any service quality. The responses was summarized in a table and a correlation analysis to measure linear correlation between variables was done to get the correlation coefficient to understand how the specific service quality attributes relate to total customer satisfaction. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Before administering the questionnaire to the respondents, prior arrangement was made with the route managers on the date and time to administer the questionnaire to the commuters. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and they were not forced to give their responses but were allowed to participate voluntarily to the study. An explanation of the objectives of the research was done before and after undertaking the research for clarity purposes on the direction of study. Utmost confidentiality about the respondents' responses was assured by way

of keeping all responses secure and using them only for academic purpose. Before embarking on the field research, the researchers sought permission from the Voltic Ghana mineral water, Everpure Ghana mineral water, Verna Ghana mineral water, Awake Ghana mineral water, Zet Ghana mineral water and Bel Aqua mineral water Ghana. Prior arrangements were made with the key informants before conducting the interviews or issuing them with the questionnaires.

3.8 Profile of Case Company

This section provides further information about the background of the company selected for the study. The information presented here was obtained from a combination of data from the companies' websites and also through interviews with officials of Voltic Ghana mineral water, Everpure Ghana mineral water, Verna Ghana mineral water, Awake Ghana mineral water, Zet Ghana mineral water and Bel Aqua mineral water Ghana. The six companies selected have been in existence for more than ten years expect Zet mineral water that has been in existence less than five years. These selected companies are the leading producers of bottle water. The selected companies capitalized on their locations in the local market to effectively market and extensively distribute its products all across Ghana.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the data obtained from the field. The data was processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented with tables before analysis was made. All the data used in this analysis was first-hand information collected from users of bottled mineral water in Ghana through an online survey. The chapter focuses on findings and their discussion. In this regard, the research objectives and the research questions in which the researched data was collected from are revealed, analyzed and discussed. The chapter pinpoints how distribution channels contribute to brand equity using water producing companies as a case. The chapter is grouped under four themes which are the demographics, distribution channels, impacts of distribution channel on brand equity and challenges faced by customers on the distribution channels available. The respondent rate for all questions was 100% as all questionnaires were answered by respondents.

4.2 Demographics

Questionnaires were administered to customers of the users of mineral water in Ghana through an online survey. The questions addressed were on gender, age, education level of customers, customer's marital status and the type of users respondents were to the various water producing companies.

Table 4.1 Demographics

	Frequency	Percentage
GENDER		
Male	84	53.8%
Female	72	46.2%
Total	**156**	**100%**
Age of Respondents		
18-25years	13	8.3%
26-30 years	26	16.7%
31-35years	47	30.1%
36-40 years	32	20.5%
41-50 years	27	17.3%
51 years and above	11	7.1%
Total	**156**	**100%**
Educational Backgrounds		
SHS/Technical	27	17.3%
Tertiary	98	62.8%
Masters	26	16.7%
Other	5	3.2%
Total	**156**	**100%**
Marital Status		
Married	90	57.7%
Single	66	42.3%

Total	**156**	**100%**
Users		
End User	109	69.9%
Retailer	22	14.0%
Agent	14	9.0%
Wholesaler	11	7.1%
Total	**156**	**100%**

Source: Researchers Survey July, 2020

4.2.1 Customers Respondents' Age

In terms of the respondent's age: out of the 156 questionnaires answered online, a scale of one (1) to six (6) was used to categorize the age range as 18-25years representing 1, 26-30 representing 2, 31-35 years representing 3, 36-40years representing 4, 41-50 years representing 5 and 50 years and above representing 6. From the findings on data collected, customers of the various water producing companies had most of their respondents (47) between the ages of 31-35 years, followed by those between the age of 36-40 years with 32 respondents, those between the ages of 41-51 27 respondents, those within the ages of 26 and 30 had 26 respondents, those between the age of 18-25 followed with 13 respondents and those above 50 years had the least 11 respondents. Findings can be found in table 4.1 above. All respondents answered this question.

4.2.1. Customers Respondents' Gender

Regarding gender as shown in Table 4.2, 84 of the respondents were males and 72 were females implying that majority of the respondents were males. Table 4.1 looks at the respondents' gender. Out of the 156 questionnaires administered to the customers of the various water producing companies in Ghana, a scale of one (1) to two (2) was used to categorize gender as male and female.

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4.2.3 Respondents' educational level

The follow up question on the questionnaires focused on customers' level of education. 62.8% percent of the respondents selected their highest level of education as tertiary representing 98 respondents, 26 respondents revealed that they held master's degree; 17.3 percent of the respondents representing 27 revealed that their highest education level as secondary or technical certificate, the remaining 5 respondents indicated that they hold other qualification which is revealed in the table 4.1 above.

4.2.4 Respondents Marital Status

90 respondents revealed that they were married; the remaining 66 respondents indicated that they were not married (single), findings can be found in table 4.1 above.

4.2.5   Customer type

In terms of the type of customers, respondents were asked about the various water producing companies, findings of respondents is shown in Table 4.1, 109 of the respondents stated that they were end users of the products of the selected mineral water companies. Also, 22 of respondents noted that they were retailers for the various mineral water producing companies. Furthermore, 14 of the respondents indicated they agents and the remaining 11respondents revealed that they were wholesales for the selected mineral water producing companies.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

The questionnaire adopted for the purpose of this study consists of 30 questions made up of distribution channels, brand equity and challenges faced by using the selected distribution channels. Reliability of the measures was assessed by the use of Cronbach's coefficient. Cronbach's coefficient α allows us to measure the reliability of different variables. It consists of how much variation in scores of different variables is attributed

to chance or random errors (Selltiz et al, 1976). The Cronbach's coefficient normally ranges from 0 to 1. As a general rule, a coefficient greater than or equal to 0.7 is considered acceptable and a good indication of construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The lower limit of acceptability is 0.6 (Sekaran, 2003). The overall Cronbach's alpha for the 30 variables presented in table 4.2 below is 0.898. The Cronbach's alpha for brand equity is 0.968 and that of challenges faced on distribution channel is 0.987 indicate a highly reliable measure for variables used for the study. Table 4.2 below gives breakdown of variables reliability.

Table 4.2 Reliability

VARIABLES	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items
Distribution Channel	.738	10
Brand Equity		
Brand Loyalty	.971	3
Brand Association	.974	3
Brand Awareness	.960	3
Perceived Quality	.965	3
Total Brand equity	**.968**	**12**
Challenges	.987	6
Total all variables	**0.898**	**30**

Source: Researcher Survey July, 2020

4.3 Distribution channel

The section B of the questionnaire focused on distribution channel effectiveness by the selected water producing companies in Ghana. Ten questions were asked to assess distribution channel efficiency of water producing companies in Ghana.

4.3.1 Brand of water normally use

Respondents were asked to select as many as possible the brand of mineral water they often use, selecting from six brands which were voltic, everpure, awake, zet, verna and bel acqua. 111 of the respondents indicated that they normally use Voltic, 74 of the respondents selected Verna, the next mineral water used by respondents often was awake with 64 respondents followed by Bel acqua with 58 respondents, everpure followed with 40 respondents and last on the list was Zet with 22 respondents. Respondents' answers can be found in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Brand of water that is often used

VARIABLES	No of selection
Voltic	111
Everpure	40
Awake	64
Zet	22
Verna	74
Bel Acqua	58

Source: Researcher Survey July, 2020

4.3.2 Distribution channel Efficiency

Questions were asked to assess how easy it was for citizens of Ghana to acquire mineral water in the market. A scale of 1 to 5 was used to represent 1= strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Disagree and 5= Strongly Disagree. All questions were answered and can be found in table 4.4 below. All 156 respondents answered all questions.

Table 4.4 Distribution Channel Efficiency

Statement	SD (5)	D (4)	N (3)	A (2)	SA (1)	MEAN	Standard Deviation
My main water producing company easily supplies me with my water directly.	21	25	34	61	15	2.85	1.20
I am satisfied with my main mineral water direct distribution.	11	22	28	71	24	2.52	1.12
Is easy to acquire my main mineral water through retailers in my locality.	3	8	22	64	59	1.92	0.94
Is easy to acquire my main mineral water in the market.	3	8	19	67	59	1.90	0.93

Is easy to acquire my main mineral water across Ghana.	7	8	19	80	42	2.09	0.99
My main mineral water is always available in the market.	3	12	19	71	51	2.00	0.97
Retailers always have available stocks to meet my demand for my main mineral water.	6	11	28	68	43	2.16	1.03
I have to travel miles to acquire my main mineral water.	72	51	13	14	7	4.07	1.14

I am satisfied with retailers of my main mineral water.	5	7	32	78	34	2.17	0.93
I have never experience shortage of my main mineral water anywhere I ago.	24	19	26	63	24	2.72	1.30

Source: Field Survey, 2020

4.3.3 Direct Supply

Questions were asked on whether water producing company easily supplies their customers with my water directly. 61 of the respondents revealed that their water producing companies supplies water to them directly, the other 34 respondents that they have a neutral opinion to this statement that's they did not agree nor disagree to the statement, 25 of the remaining respondents disagreed to the statement that their water producing companies distribute directly to them, the remaining respondents 15 and 21 respondents strongly agreed and strongly disagreed to the above statement. The mean score of 2.85 from this question indicated that customers of the various water producing companies have a neutral opinion that water producing companies distribute mineral water to them directly.

Moreover findings on how satisfied customers are with direct distribution by their water producing companies revealed a mean score of 2.52 which meant that respondents slight agreed to the above statement. Findings revealed that customers are content with the direct distribution of their water producing companies with 71 been majority of the respondents agreeing to the statement, 28 respondents had a neutral view and 24 respondents strongly agreed that the direct distribution of their water producing companies meets their satisfaction beyond expectation. The remaining respondents 22 and 11 disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statement respectively. Findings is in line with Yoo et al (2000) who pinpointed in their studies that companies with good direct distribution is likely to retain its customers and does not differ from Kim and Hyun (2011) who revealed in their studies that direct marketing is an effective channel of distributing a company's product.

4.3.4 Retailers assessment

The follow up questions focused on how easily to acquire this mineral water from retailers in respondents' locality. Respondents revealed that was easy acquiring their mineral water in their locality with a mean score of 1.92, which means respondents agreed to the statement. 59 of the respondent strongly agreed to the statement that is easy to acquire my main mineral water through retailers in my locality, majority of the respondents representing 67 respondents agreed to the same statement. The remaining 22, 8 and 3 respondents had a neutral view, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. Still on retailers the next follow up questions was to find out if retailers always had stock of these selected mineral water. Respondents revealed with a mean score of 2.16 agreeing to the statement that retailers always had in stock products of their water producing companies. 68 of the respondents agreed to the statement while the next majority of respondents strongly agreed that retailers always had stock to meet

their demand. 28 respondents had a neutral view on the statement, while 11 and 6 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. Findings also revealed with a mean score of 2.00 indicating that respondents agreed to the statement that is easy to acquire their main mineral water in the market. 71 of the respondents agreed to the statement, the next majority of respondents 51 strongly agreed with the statement while the remaining 19, 12 and 3 respondents had a neutral view, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. Findings were in line with Illesanmi (2011) who pinpointed that middle men distribution is one of the effective ways of distributing products.

The last question on retailers was to find out whether customers were satisfied with retailers of my main mineral water. 78 respondents agreed to the statement that they were satisfied with retailers of their mineral water; the next majority 34 respondents strongly agreed that they were satisfied with retailers of their main mineral waters. 32 of the respondents had a neutral view the remaining respondents representing 7 and 5 disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. A mean score of 2.17 indicates that customers of the various water producing companies are satisfied with their retailers.

4.3.5 Easy to acquire

The next follow up question which was to find out how easy respondents acquire their main mineral water in the market gave a mean score of 1.90 revealing that respondents agreed to the statement. 67 of the respondents agreed that is easy to acquire their main mineral water in the market. 59 respondents strongly agreed to the statement. Findings did not differ from Yoo et al (2000) and Kim and Hyun (2011) who revealed in their studies that availability of products in the market is one of the effective ways of distribution channels. Still on the easy on acquiring mineral water, the next question

focused on how easy to acquire the selected mineral water across Ghana, Findings did not differ from Yoo et al (2000), Kim and Hyun (2011) and Illesanmi (2011) who revealed that products are also available in the market across a country when distribution channel is effective.

Findings revealed with a mean score of 2.09 indicating that respondents agreed to the statement of acquiring these selected mineral water across Ghana. 80 of the respondents agreed to the above statement, 42 of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, the remaining 19, 8 and 7 respondents had a neutral view, disagree and strongly disagreed to the statement.

Moreover on easiness in acquiring this selected mineral water in the market the next question was to find out if customers had to travel miles to get their main mineral water. 7 of the respondents strongly agreed to this statement, 13 of the respondents agreed to the statement. Majority of the respondents 72 strongly disagreed with the statement that they have to travel miles to get their mineral water. The next majority 51 respondents disagreed with the statement. From the mean score of 4.02 it can be deduced that respondents of the selected mineral water disagreed with the statement that they have to travel miles in other to buy their main mineral water.

Lastly on easiness of acquiring the selected mineral water the next followed up question was to find out if experience shortage of their main mineral water anywhere I ago. Findings revealed with a mean score of 2.72 indicating that respondents had a neutral view on the statement. This is alarming and has to be addressed by water producing companies in Ghana.

4.4 Impact of distribution channel on Brand equity

The next objective of the study was to find the impact of distribution channel on brand equity, in other to achieve this objective the elements of brand equity was used in this

study that is brand loyalty, brand association, brand awareness and perceived quality. Regression analysis was run to find how distribution channel affects these elements.

4.4.1 Impact of distribution channel on brand loyalty

The next objective of the research was to ascertain the impact of distribution channel on brand loyalty. Question asked on this section used a scale of 1-5, 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. All questions were answered by respondents under this section. This study conducted a linear regression analysis in order to find out the impact of distribution channel on brand loyalty. The r square revealed that there is a positive impact between distribution channel and brand loyalty with an r square of 0.387. This means that a change 38.7% variation in distribution channel can be explained by 38.7% change or variation brand loyalty. The F-statistic was 97.320, f significant 0.00 respectively. The p value was 0.00 which is less than 0.01 which means that distribution channel has significant impact on brand loyalty, meaning an effective distribution channel by water producing companies will lead to a relatively increase in brand loyalty. Findings is in line with McQuiston, (2004), Hyun, (2011) and Boo et al, (2000) who revealed in their various studies that activities of order processing, coverage, and delivery are found to be critical for building brand loyalty and pinpointed that brand loyalty and effective distribution is positively related. Findings can be found in table 4.5below.

Table 4.5 Impact of distribution channel on brand loyalty

Variable	Mean	SD	B	T	Sig.
Dependent					
Brand Loyalty	2.29	0.923		17.19	.00
Independent					
Distribution Channel	2.31	0.528	.662	9.865	.000
S.E estimate	**0.726**				
R	**0.622**				
R-square	**0.387**				
F-statics	**97.320**				
F-sig	**.00**				

Note: significant @ p<0.00

   Significant @p <0.05

Source: Researchers Online Survey July, 2020

4.4.2 Impact of distribution channel on brand association

The next analysis focused on the impact of distribution channel on brand association, findings revealed that effective distribution channel has a positive impact on brand association. That is customers want to be associated with mineral water with good image. The studied revealed that effective distribution channel impacts brand association by 36% as characterized by an adjusted R square of .360 in table 4.6 below. This means that other elements not studied in this study contributes 64% of customers' reasons to associate themselves to a brand (mineral water). Findings did not differ from Yoo et al (2000) who revealed in his studies that distribution intensity also has a positive

impact on dimensions of brand association. Findings was also in line with Kim and Hyun (2011) who pinpointed that increase in distribution intensity reduces consumer efforts for finding and acquiring a brand, consumers are likely to perceive it as more valuable, which in turn increases consumer satisfaction and brand association and awareness.

The significance value is 0.000 which is less than 0.01. Therefore, the model is statistically significant in predicting the impact of distribution channel on brand association. At 0.00% level of significance, the F calculated was 86.735, which explains that the overall model was significant with a mean square of 39.346 this can be found in table 4.6 below. The results presented illustrates that statically there is significant impact of distribution channel on brand association decision as explains by a coefficient of 0.60 as shown by a p-value of 0.00.

Table 4.6 Impact of distribution channel on brand association

Variable	Mean	SD	B	T	Sig.
Dependent					
Brand association	2.29	0.839		17.15	.00
Independent					
Distribution Channel	2.31	0.528	.600	9.313	.000
S.E estimate	**0.67**				
R	**0.6**				
R-square	**0.36**				
F-statics	**86.735**				

F-sig	.00

Note: significant @ p<0.00

      Significant @p <0.05

Source: Researchers Online Survey July, 2020

4.4.3 Impact of distribution channel on brand awareness

Findings revealed that effective distribution channel had a positive impact on brand awareness with an R square of .327. The r square revealed that there is a positive impact between distribution channel and brand awareness. This means that a change 32.7% variation in distribution channel can be explained by 32.7% change or variation brand awareness. The F-statistic was 74.994, f significant 0.00 respectively. The p value was 0.00 which is less than 0.01 which means that distribution channel has significant impact on brand awareness, meaning an effective distribution channel by water producing companies will lead to a relatively increase in brand awareness. Findings is in line with McQuiston, (2004), Hyun, (2011) and Boo et al, (2000) who revealed in their various studies that activities of order processing, coverage, and delivery are found to be critical for building brand awareness, also findings did not differ from that of Yoo et al (2000) and Kim and Hyun (2011) who also revealed in their various studies that distribution intensity also has a positive impact on dimensions of brand awareness. Findings can be found in table 4.7 below. The results presented illustrates that statically there is significant impact of distribution channel on brand awareness as explains by a coefficient of 0.572 as shown by a p-value of 0.00 and a T-statistic of 15.310 and 8.660.

Table 4.7 Impact of distribution channel on brand awareness

Variable	Mean	SD	B	T	Sig.
Dependent					
Brand awareness	2.147	0.911			.00
				15.31	
Independent					
Distribution Channel	2.31	0.92	.572	8.66	.000
S.E estimate	**0.75**				
R	**0.572**				
R-square	**0.327**				
F-statics	**74.994**				
F-sig	**.00**				

Note: significant @ p<0.00

Significant @p <0.05

Source: Researchers Online Survey July, 2020

4.4.4 The impact of distribution channel on perceived quality

The last analysis on objective two focused on the impact of distribution channel on perceived quality of water producing companies in Ghana, findings revealed that effective distribution channel has a positive impact on perceived quality. That is customers have the mentality that products available in the market regularly are of quality. The studied revealed that effective distribution channel impacts perceived quality by 27.5% as characterized by an adjusted R square of .275 in table 4.8 below. This means that other elements not studied in this study contributes 72.5% of customers'

reasons to perceive a brand of mineral water to be of quality. The F-statistic was 58.530, f significant 0.00 respectively. The p value was 0.00 which is less than 0.01 which means that distribution channel has significant impact on perceived quality meaning an effective distribution channel by water producing companies will lead to a relatively increase in perceived quality. The mean square was 29.679. The results presented illustrates that statically there is significant impact of distribution channel on brand awareness as explains by a coefficient of 0.525 as shown by a p-value of 0.00 and a T-statistic of 14.901 and 7.651. This can be found in table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8 Impact of distribution channel on perceived quality

Variable	Mean	SD	B	T	Sig.
Dependent					
Perceived quality	2.214	0.833		14.90	.00
Independent					
Distribution Channel	2.31	0.92	.525	7.651	.000
S.E estimate	**0.712**				
R	**0.525**				
R-square	**0.275**				
F-statics	**58.530**				
F-sig	**.00**				

Note: significant @ p<0.00

Significant @p <0.05

Source: Researchers Online Survey July, 2020

4.4.5 Impact of distribution channel on brand equity

Findings revealed that other factors apart from distribution channel has more influence on brand equity with r square 0.653. Findings revealed with an r-square of 0.347 that distribution channel impact brand equity by 34.7%. This means that even distribution channel has significant impact on brand equity. The significance value is 0.00 which is less than 0.00. Therefore, the model is statistically significance in predicting distribution channel impacts brand equity. The F-statistic calculated was 81.658 and the mean square was of 40.23 this can be found in table 4.9. The results presented illustrates that statically there is significant impact of distribution channel brand equity as explained by a coefficient of 0.589 and p-value of 0.00 respectively.

Table 4.9 Impact of distribution channel on brand equity

Variable	Mean	SD	B	T	Sig.
Dependent					
Brand equity	2.23	0.86		16.425	.00
Independent					
Distribution Channel	2.31	0.92	.589	9.036	.000
S.E estimate	**0.702**				
R	**0.589**				
R-square	**0.347**				
F-statics	**81.658**				
F-sig	**.00**				

Note: significant @ p<0.00

Significant @p <0.05

Source: Researchers Online Survey July, 2020

4.5 Challenges of distribution channels

The last objectives focused on if customers faces any challenges on the distribution channels used by the selected mineral water producing companies in Ghana, six statements were asked and respondents were to choose scale of 1 to 5 was use to represent 1= strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Disagree and 5= Strongly Disagree. All questions were answered and can be found in table 4.19 below. All 156 respondents answered all questions.

Table 4.10 Challenges of distribution channels

Statement	SD (5)	D (4)	N (3)	A (2)	SA (1)	Mean	Standard Deviation
My main mineral water producing company find it difficult meeting my demands of their products.	41	80	19	14	2	3.92	0.93
My main mineral water producing companies do not deliver their products on time.	44	78	21	11	2	3.96	0.90
Products of my main mineral water producing company delivered are not well packaged and are defective.	66	63	13	12	2	4.14	0.96

38	70	33	14	1	3.83	0.92

Prices of my main mineral water producing company are not constant compared to other products.

48	74	19	13	2	3.98	0.94

There are often shortages my main mineral water producing company products in the market.

40	76	30	8	2	3.92	0.88

Distributors of my main mineral water producing company products are unfriendly and unreliable.

Source: Field Survey, 2020

4.5.1 Not Meeting demand and shortages

The first question on challenges focused on if the selected water producing companies finds it difficult to meet the needs of customers. Finding revealed with a mean score of 3.92 indicating that respondents disagreed with the statement meaning that the water producing companies in Ghana are able to meet the demands of customers. Out of the 156 respondents 2 respondents strongly agreed to this statement, 14 respondents agreed to the statement, 19 respondents had a neutral view on this opinion, the majority of the

respondents (80) disagreed to the statement while the next majority respondents 41 strongly disagreed with the statement. In conclusion it can be deduced from findings the demand of customers of the selected water producing companies in Ghana is meet.

4.5.2 Untimely delivery

Table 4.10 reveal with a mean score of 3.96 meaning that respondents disagreed with the above statements. 78 of the respondents that are 78 out of 156 respondents revealed that the selected mineral water producing companies delivers their products in on time. 44 respondents strongly disagreed to the statement that water producing companies do not deliver their products on time. 21 of respondents had a neutral view on the above statement while 2 and 11 respondents agreed and strongly disagreed with the above statement. In the nutshell findings revealed that untimely delivery is not a constraint for the selected water producing companies in Ghana.

4.5.3 Packages defective

The next question was to find out if products of respondents main mineral water producing company delivered are not well packaged and are defective. 66 of the respondents out of 156 strongly disagreed to the above statement, the next majority 63 respondents disagreed with the above statement, 13 of the respondents had a neutral view while 12 and 2 respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. With a mean score of 4.14 from table 4.10 above it can be deduced from our studies that water producing companies in Ghana packaging is free from defect and are well package.

4.5.4 Price Variation

The next follow up question was to find out if the selected water producing companies' prices are not constant and varies from time to time. 70 out of 156 respondents been the majority respondents disagreed to the above statement. The next majority been 44 respondents strongly disagreed with the above statement, 33 of the respondents had a

neutral view while the remaining respondents agreed and strongly agreed to the above statement respectively (12 respondents and 2 respondents). Findings can be found in table 4.10 above.

4.5.5 Unfriendly and unreliable distributors

The last question on challenges focused on how unfriendly and how unreliable distributors of the selected mineral water were. From the mean score of 3.92 from table 4.10 it can be deduced that respondents disagreed with the above statement. With majority of the respondents 76 out of 156 disagreeing to the above statement, the next majority 40 out of 156 strongly disagreed with this statement, 30 of the respondents had a neutral opinion while 8 respondents agreed to the above statement.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the summary of the main findings of the study. It also covers the conclusions drawn from the study and the recommendations that are made based on the findings from the study.

5.2 Summary of Main Findings

This portion summarizes the main findings regarding the evaluating distribution channels contribution to brand equity in Ghana. The summary focuses on the effectiveness of distribution channels of water producing companies in Ghana, the impact of distribution channel on brand equity and the challenges customers of the selected water company faces through the distribution channel available to them.

5.3 Distribution Channel effectiveness

Findings revealed with a mean score of 2.85 that customers of the various water producing companies have a neutral opinion that water producing companies distribute mineral water to them directly. This means that the selected water companies are not distributing directly to their customers and can improve on their direct distribution. Also findings further revealed with a mean score of 2.52 which meant that respondents slight agreed to the statement of been satisfied with direct distribution from their water producing companies.

One of the interesting findings from the study revealed that customers of the selected mineral water easily acquire their mineral water in their locality with a high mean score of 1.92, still on retailers findings revealed that retailers always had stock of these

selected mineral water. Respondents revealed with a mean score of 2.16 agreeing to the statement that retailers always had in stock products of their water producing companies. Moreover findings revealed with a mean score of 2.00 indicating that respondents agreed to the statement that is easy to acquire their main mineral water in the market. Lastly on retailers a mean score of 2.17 indicates that customers of the various water producing companies are satisfied with their retailers.

Lastly on easiness in acquiring mineral waters from the selected water producing companies in Ghana findings revealed that with a mean score of 1.90 that is easy to acquire the selected mineral water in various markets. Also findings further revealed with a mean score 2.09 that is easy to acquire the selected mineral water across all region in Ghana. From the mean score of 4.02 it can be deduced that respondents of the selected mineral water disagreed with the statement that they have to travel miles in other to buy their main mineral water. The only alarming finding that needs to be addressed by the selected water companies in Ghana was findings on easiness of acquiring the selected mineral water findings revealed with a mean score of 2.72 indicating that respondents had a neutral view on the statement that they experience shortage of their main mineral water anywhere they go even though respondents did not agree with the statement a neutral view means the stand between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement that the experiencing shortages.

5.4 Impact of distribution channel on brand equity

Findings revealed that there is a positive impact of distribution channels on brand equity, findings revealed with an r square of 0.387 that there is a positive impact between distribution channel and brand loyalty. This means that a change 38.7% variation in distribution channel can be explained by 38.7% change or variation brand

loyalty. The beta coefficient of the impact on distribution channel on brand loyalty is 0.622. Also the studied revealed that effective distribution channel impacts brand association by 36% as characterized by an adjusted R square of .360 in table 4.6 and a beta coefficient of 0.60.

Moreover findings revealed that effective distribution channel had a positive impact on brand awareness with an R square of .327 and a beta coefficient of 0.572. The r square revealed that there is a positive impact between distribution channel and brand awareness. This means that a change 32.7% variation in distribution channel can be explained by 32.7% change or variation brand awareness. Findings further revealed that effective distribution channel has a positive impact on perceived quality. That is customers have the mentality that products available in the market regularly are of quality. The studied revealed that effective distribution channel impacts perceived quality by 27.5% as characterized by an adjusted R square of .275 and beta coefficient of 0.525 in table 4.16.

From findings in can be deduced that distribution channel effectiveness influences brand loyalty most with r-square of 0.387, followed by brand association with an r-square of 0.36, next in line is brand awareness with an r-square of 0.327 and last perceived quality with an r-square of 0.275.

5.5 Distribution channel challenges faced by customers

Findings revealed that customers of the selected water companies were content with the distribution channels used by the selected water companies. The first question on challenges focused on if the selected water producing companies finds it difficult to meet the needs of customers. Finding revealed with a mean score of 3.92 indicating that respondents disagreed with the statement meaning that the water producing companies

in Ghana are able to meet the demands of customers. Findings in table revealed with a mean score of 3.96 meaning that respondents disagreed with the statement that water producing companies in Ghana do not deliver on time. Furthermore with a mean score of 4.14 from table 4.19 it can be deduced from our studies that water producing companies in Ghana packaging is free from defect and are well package. Lastly on price variation and inconsistent of mineral water findings revealed that the prices of the selected water producing company is constant and does not varies.

5.6 Conclusion

On the basis of above results it can be concluded that distribution channel effectiveness has an impact on brand equity. From the findings the study concludes that there is a positive relationship between brand equity and distribution channel effectiveness. According to the respondents of the study distribution channel effectiveness impacts brand loyalty most, followed by brand association, brand awareness and perceived quality respectively.

Moreover it can be deduced from the findings that even though customers are satisfied with indirect distribution customers had a neutral view on direct distribution by the selected water companies which must be improved.

Lastly from findings it can be deduced that water producing companies in Ghana are able to meet customers' demands, distribute their products on time, package their products well and have a constant price.

5.7 Recommendation

It is necessary for water producing companies to pay more attention towards increasing direct marketing that is distributing mineral water to customers directly.

Furthermore, water producing companies should pay attention to their distribution channels as it has a lot of impact on their brand equity.

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INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONNAIRE TO CUSTOMERS OF SELECTED MINERAL WATER PRODUCING COMPANIES IN GHANA

This survey is purposely designed to collect data for the topic: Evaluating distribution channel contribution to brand equity on water producing companies in Ghana. A case study some selected water producing companies in Ghana.

Section A:

Demographics

1. How old are you? [   ] 18-25 [   ] 26-30 [   ] 31-35 [   ] 36-40 [   ] 41-50 [   ] 50above

2. Gender Status. [   ] M   [   ] F

 3. Marital Status. [   ] Married   [   ] Single

 4. Educational Status. [   ] Secondary/ Technical [   ] Tertiary [   ] Masters [   ] Other….

5. Which customers of the selected products are you [   ] Agent [   ] Wholesaler [   ] Retailer [   ] End user

SECTION B: Distribution Channel Efficiency.

1. Which brand of water listed below do you normally use? Tick as many as possible

   [   ] Voltic

   [   ] Everpure

   [   ] Awake

   [   ] Zet

   [   ] Verna

   [   ] Bel Acqua

Kindly use a scale of 5= "strongly disagree", 4= "Disagree", 3= "Neutral", 2= "Agree" and 1= "strongly agree"; to rate the statements in this section.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Distribution Channel Efficiency	1	2	3	4	5
1. My main water producing company easily supplies me with my water directly.					
2. I am satisfied with my main mineral water direct distribution.					
3. Is easy to acquire my main mineral water through retailers in my locality.					
4. Is easy to acquire my main mineral water in the market.					
5. Is easy to acquire my main mineral water across Ghana.					
6. My main mineral water is always available in the market.					
7. Retailers always have available stocks to meet my demand for my main mineral water.					
8. I have to travel miles to acquire my main mineral water.					
9. I am satisfied with retailers of my main mineral water.					
10. I have never experience shortage of my main mineral water anywhere I ago.					

SECTION C: Brand Equity.

Kindly use a scale of 5= "strongly disagree", 4= "Disagree", 3= "Neutral", 2= "Agree" and 1= "strongly agree"; to rate the statements in this section.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement *BRAND EQUITY*	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Loyalty 1. I am satisfied with how my mineral water company distributes its products. 2. I will always prefer how my main water producing company distributes its products. 3. My water producing company distribution is the best in the market.					
Brand Association/ Image 1. My water producing company image is high because of how it distributes their products. 2. My water producing company image is a hallmark of reliability. 3. My water producing company image is positive because of its distribution.					
Brand Awareness 1. Some characteristics of my main water producing company come to mind quickly.					

Statement					
2. I can quickly recall the symbols and logos of my main water producing company.					
3. When I think of water, the brand of my main water producing company is the first brand that comes in mind.					
Perceived Quality 1. My main water producing company distribution is high quality. 2. My main water producing company distribution is value for money. 3. My main water producing company distribution meets expectations.					

SECTION D: Challenges faced from distribution challenges.

Kindly use a scale of 5= "strongly disagree", 4= "Disagree", 3= "Neutral", 2= "Agree" and 1= "strongly agree"; to rate the statements in this section.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Statement	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1. My main mineral water producing company find it difficult meeting my demands of their products.					
2. My main mineral water producing companies do not deliver their products on time.					

3. Products of my main mineral water producing company delivered are not well packaged and are defective.					
4. Prices of my main mineral water producing company are not constant compared to other products.					
5. There are often shortages my main mineral water producing company products in the market.					
6. Distributors of my main mineral water producing company products are unfriendly and unreliable.					

THANK YOU