

## **Determinants of Customer Satisfaction through Effective Wholesale Distribution System: A Survey of Distributors and Retail Outlets at Makola Market- Accra, Ghana**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined determinant of customer satisfaction through effective wholesale distribution system using distributors and retail outlets at the market in Accra, Ghana. Specifically the study assessed the nature of distribution channels used by Makola Marketers for product distribution to distributors and retail outlets in Makola market in Ghana; distributor channel differential strategy adopted by Makola Distributors; effect of Product distribution channel on customer satisfaction at Makola Market and effect of distribution channels on customer's satisfaction. This case study research had customers and employees as unit of analysis. It had a sample of 20 respondents, whereby primary and secondary data were collected through the use of interviews, questionnaires, and documentary review.*

*Data were analysed through Statistical Package of Social Science. Findings revealed that distribution channel adopted by Makola Distributors ensures availability of her products, reduce response time and makes information available to their customer in aspect it facilitates positive relationship with her customers and agents. Also, agreement by respondents to effect that process for getting their concerns resolved is high thus impacts positively on their satisfaction and commitment to doing business with Makola Distributors. Averagely, respondent agreed to been satisfied with current level distribution channel adopted by Makola Distributors in products delivery to their shops in Makola, Ghana. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Makola Distributors should be in position to continuously weigh the benefits that accrue from application of distribution channel. Makola Distributors should ensure strict adherence to their policies and guideline regarding the use distribution channel. Makola Distributors should ensure aggressive Marketing, regular visit to distributors.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Satisfaction, Distribution System, Distributors and Retail Outlets*

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Growing competition in the domestic and international markets, more demanding and assertive customers, rapid advancement in technology, and changing government policies and laws, the marketing environment has changed dramatically in the last decade and is becoming more turbulent (Cravens et al., 2000). Scholars suggest that businesses must have more distinctive and purposeful marketing strategies and they should be effectively implemented (Cravens et al., 2000). Literature also suggests that companies that compete effectively on time (speeding new products to market, manufacturing just in time, responding promptly to customer complaints) tend to be good at other business attributes. Some of those business attributes include assessment of customer requirements, product quality consistency, and ability to exploit emerging markets, enter new businesses, generate new ideas and incorporate them in innovations (Sharma, 2004). According to Crosby and Johnson (2002), the key elements of competitiveness include the “voice of the customer through current and future demands and the voice of the process through establishing the organisational capability to deliver customer wants”.

As noted by Black *et al* (2002) the past decade has seen some of the most rapid and substantive changes in channels of distribution for goods and services in developing economies. The choice of distribution channel is quite complicated in the home market of a company but even more complicated when going international and starting to export (Anderson et al, 1997). The choice of distribution channel is central that the decision is given the attention and acknowledgement which is called for due to the fact that it has such a long-term outcome of the export investment's success (Anderson et al, 1997). Also, as national markets expand and as new opportunities arise for satisfying consumer demand, greater specialization in distribution is evident both in level of distribution and in goods and services handled (Mallen, 1996). Distribution builds stable competitive advantages, since marketing channels have long-run character and to build them it is necessary to have a consistent structure; and due also to the fact that they are focused on people and relationships (Neves *et al*, 2001).

Studies show that firms devote all their efforts in strategic distribution in order to obtain the competitive advantage for the success business (Berry, 2010). For example, Dell Computer used a business model of selling directly which eliminated a step in the value chain and other PC makers also were then forced to revamp their value chain approach (Crosby and Johnson, 2002; Thompson and Strickland, 2001). And this assertion may not be different

from manufacturers who undertake wholesale distribution of products and services at Makola market; however, there is paucity of evidence to empirically state so. The market industry in Ghana, over the past few years has witnessed stiff competition which has resulted in aggressive use of various distribution models employed by companies to strengthen their brands by appealing to the customers. For the forward looking ones, the consistent and divergent use of distribution strategies has proved effective in improving their corporate image and turnover. Given the above, firms who are eager to sustain long term growth and overall success need to develop and implement solid competitive strategies to deal with an increasing uncertainty and dynamic business environment. These competitive strategies are aimed at giving the firm an understanding of the changes in the environment; clear view of the opportunities available to the firm and quick response to any barriers arising. The end result is one of greater manoeuvrability for the firm and increased market share leading to more profitability (Kehinde & Ikioda, 2011).

Businesses are therefore constantly looking to determine the factors for success and identify which are critical for them to stay ahead of the competition and create value for their customers (Kehinde & Ikioda, 2011). In Ghana, rising competitiveness within the business environment has led organizations to use various marketing strategies to help achieve their organization goals of long term profitability and sustainable business revenues. Evidence shows that overall company profitability is directly linked to the level of customer satisfaction. This has resulted in organizational strategy shifting towards the customer or end-user and how they interact with the organizational products or services and establishing long-term relationships (Al-Hersh, Aburoub, & Saaty, 2014). However, there is less empirical studies focus on effect of marketing strategies on customer satisfaction within the Makola Market. This study aims to assess how marketing strategies or mix impacts on customer satisfaction at the Makola Market in Accra, using Makola Distributors as survey for the study.

**Problem statement:** In recent years there have been signs of substantial research interest in marketing practices of SMEs (Gillmore et al., 2001; Blankson and Stokes, 2002; Siu et al., 2004; Morrison, 2003 ;). Most of these studies have indicated the role of marketing to be critical in the sustainability of the small firms. It was observed that majority of the studies focus on organizational factors leading to the market responsiveness and marketing strategies. There has been, however, limited scope in these researches to explore the relative merits or appropriateness of marketing strategies adopted by the firms within the context of a developing country like Ghana. There is a growing concern for poor performance of Ghanaian businesses and there is an increasing recognition of the need to integrate marketing strategy with business strategy. Furthermore, marketing strategy has been regarded as having a pivotal role in enhancing business performance and is contingent on business strategy (Sharma, 2004); whereas customer satisfaction forms the basis of any organization's marketing strategy because it determined overall success (Sabir, Irfan, Akhtar, Pervez, & Rehman, 2014). Thus, this current study aims to addresses the issue of interpreting the appropriateness of marketing strategy adopted by Makola Distributors and how it impacts on customer satisfaction.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definition of Key terms

#### 2.1.1 Distribution

Distribution is the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption by a consumer or business user, using direct means, or using indirect means with intermediaries. Or are the movement of goods and services from the source through a distribution channel, right up to the final customer, consumer or user, and the movement of payment in the opposite direction, right up to the original producer or supplier. An order or pattern formed by the tendency of a sufficiently large number of observations to group themselves around a central value (Wren, 2007). The familiar bell-shaped curve is an example of nominal distribution in which the largest numbers of observations are distributed in the centre, with progressively fewer observations falling evenly on the either side of the centre (average) line. See also frequency distribution, nominal distribution, and standard distribution (Wren, 2007).

#### 2.1.2 Channel

The channel function concept has already been extensively discussed by academics (Rangan et al., 1992). The basic idea was that channel functions could be allocated in different combination among various channel actors depending on the characteristics of the channel (Wren, 2007). Channel functions are categories of activities and services that add value to physical goods as they move from manufacturers to customers (Atwong and Rosenbloom, 1995).

#### 2.1.3 Distribution Channel

Coughlan et al., (2006) defined a distribution channel as a set of independent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption. The ultimate goal of a distribution channel

is to bridge the gap between producers and consumers by adding value to products or services (Kim and Frazier, 1996). Typically, manufacturers, intermediaries (wholesaler, retailer, specialized) and end users are perceived as the key actors of distribution channel (Coughlan et al., 2006). Based on these definitions, it is not easy to determine where the distribution channel actually starts, since there might be multiple producers involved in manufacturing the final products at different levels. Some of these producers are close to the end at which raw material is supplied, while others are closer to the end that deals with final buyers or users.

#### **2.1.4 Indirect Distribution Channel**

The indirect channel is used by companies who do not sell their goods directly to consumers. Suppliers and manufacturers typically use indirect channels because they exist early in the supply chain (Aaker, 2001). Depending on the industry and product, direct distribution channels have become more prevalent because of the Internet. Distributors, wholesalers and retailers are the primary indirect channels a company may use when selling its products in the marketplace. Companies choose the indirect channel best suited for their product to obtain the best market share; it also allows them to focus on producing their goods (Aaker, 2001).

#### **2.1.5 Direct Distribution Channel**

A direct distribution channel is where a company sells its products direct to consumers. While direct channels were not popular many years ago, the Internet has greatly increased the use of direct channels. Additionally, companies needing to cut costs may use direct channels to avoid middlemen mark-ups on their products. Selling agents and Internet sales are two types of direct distribution channels (Anderson et al, 2006). Selling agents work for the company and market their products directly to consumers through mail order, storefronts or other means. The Internet is an easy distribution channel because of the global availability to consumers (Bakosi et al, 2006).

#### **2.1.6 Wholesaling**

Wholesaling includes all activities involved in selling goods or services to who buy for resale or business use. Manufactures use wholesalers because wholesalers can perform function better and more cost effectively than the manufacture can. These functions are not limited to selling and promoting, buying and building bulk barking, warehousing, and transporting financial risk bearing dissemination of marketing information and provision of management services consulting. Like retailers wholesaler must decide on target market, product assortment and services promotion and place (Berman, 1996). The most successful wholesalers are those who adopt their services to meet and target customer's needs, recognizing that existing add value to the channel (Berman, 1996).

### **2.2 Distribution Channel Management**

Distribution, as one of four elements of marketing complex, is an inseparable part of marketing decisions which involves all the decisions about distribution of products to the end user. The issues of distribution were analyzed by a number of marketing specialists (Berman, 1999; Kim, 1996; Delton, 1997; Frazier, 1999; Kotler, 2003; Rosenbloom, 1999; Stern, 2006; etc.), paying a big attention to the elaboration of the procedures of marketing channel design (Gudonavičienė & Alijosiene, 2008). Distribution still offers a new frontier for competing successfully, especially if the emphasis is placed on the design and management of superior marketing channel systems to provide excellent customer services. Yet designing optimal marketing channel systems to boost sales, formulating innovative distribution strategies and managing channels system effectively is no simple task. (Obaji, 2011). The very earliest formal conceptions of marketing channels focused on the functions performed by a distribution system and the associated utility of these functions and the overall system. Reflecting their presence in industrial and transitional economies, marketing channels gradually came to be viewed as the set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption (Coughlin, Anderson, Stern, and El-Ansary, 2001). This institutional oriented perspective draws attention to those members (e.g. wholesalers, distributors, retailers, etc.) comprising the distribution system and engaged in the delivery of goods and services from the point of conception to the point of consumption (Anderson and Coughlan, 2002). The management of such institutions through marketing channel management involves the planning, organizing, coordinating, directing and controlling efforts of channel members (Gundlach et al, 2006).

In general, the concept of distribution refers to where and how product and services are to be offered for sale, all essential mechanism and logistical supports for the transfer of goods and services as well as ownership of goods and services to the customers (Stern et al, 2006). A successful marketing channel ensures that a desired product is distributed in a desired amount to a desired channel to satisfy the desired consumer (Kotler and Keller, 2009). One of the initial problems encountered when the area of integrated distribution is discussed is the problem of definition. No single "model" distribution system can be tailored for all business firms. The distribution function, like other functions

of the firm, must be developed within the framework of management philosophy and available resources of the individual firm. During the 1960s, three characteristic or identifiable approaches to integrated distribution management have emerged. They are: physical distribution management, materials management and business logistics. (La Londe, Grabner, and Robeson, 1993).

Research devoted to channel management has played an important role in the marketing discipline for over 40 years. Two main areas of channels research in marketing have evolved. First, how channels are organized or structured has been a focal point, centering on the level of channel integration, reliance on multiple channels, distribution intensity and organizational policies relating to centralization, formalization, standardization, and surveillance (Dwyer and Oh, 1988; John and Weitz, 1988; Fein and Anderson, 1997; Shervani, Frazier & Challagalla, 2007). Second, how ongoing channel relationships are coordinated in a behavioral sense has been even more prominent, dealing with methods of channel governance, including the impact of contracts, the development and application of interfirm power, communication approaches, levels of control and conflict, and the attainment of trust and commitment (cf. Frazier, 1983; Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Boyle, Dwyer, Robicheau and Simpson, 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Kumar, Sheer and Steenkamp, 1995; Lusch and Brown, 1996).

### 2.2.1 Development of Distribution Channel

A channel of distribution can be defined as the collection of organization units, either internal or external to the manufacturer, which performs the functions involved in product marketing. These functions are persuasive and include buying, selling, transporting, storing, grading, financing, market risk bearing and providing marketing information. A channel member is an individual organization unit institution or agency that performs one or more of the marketing functions and by doing so has an active role in the channel of distribution (Lambert, 1978).

The marketing channels literature has given considerable attention to the study of channel structure. Early researchers discussed channel structure in terms of the functions performed by channel members (Mallen, 1973). The basic idea was that these functions could be allocated in different mixes among the various channel members depending on the characteristics of the channel. As structure research evolved, several common elements emerged, which were seen as varying across different channels, including: the number of channel levels (i.e., number of intermediaries involved), the intensity at the various levels (the number of intermediaries at each level of distribution), and the types of intermediaries at each level (i.e., retailers, wholesalers, distributors) (Rosenbloom B. 1987). Thus, channel structure was essentially treated at a micro level, rather than examining the more macro issues such as: how firms decide who will perform what activities, the costs and trade-offs involved in using various channel strategies, and various extraneous factors affecting channel relations.

Starting from the 70's, tremendous strides have been made in the understanding of how firms should organize and manage their channels of distribution. Still, the researchers have barely touched the surface of all the managerial issues that have been addressed. Furthermore, many issues of managerial importance relating to the organization and management of channels of distribution have received no attention in empirical research (Frazier, 1999). More recent research in channel structure examines both macro and micro issues. The majority of the current research on channel structure focuses on one of two broad operationalization of structure: transactional form or bureaucratic form. Though it could be argued that the degree of relationalism also reflects the structure of the relationship, transactional form and bureaucratic form are the most widely accepted (Brent, 2007).

### 2.2.2 Physical Distribution

Physical distribution has been acknowledged as being an important component of channel management (Frazier, Spekman and O'Neal, 1988; Coughlan Anderson, Stern and El-ansary, 2006). However, relatively little attention has been paid to physical distribution function in channels research within the marketing literature. The general topic has received more emphasis in other literatures, such as in operations management, logistics, transportation, purchasing and information technology, with a general focus on how product orders can be efficiently and effectively processed, and then delivered to channel members and end-customers. Among the main areas of interest have been inventory management, the number placement, and design of warehouses or distribution centers, the use of technology to aide in processing orders, delivery options to customers, and customer payment methods (Innis and laLonde, 1994; Emerson and Grimm, 1996; Giannakis and Groom, 2004; Giunipero, Hooker, Joseph-Matthews, Yoo and Brudvig, 2008).

The lack of attention to physical distribution in channels research in marketing is unfortunate. Physical distribution functions will impact both channel organization and the manner in which channel relationships are coordinated over time. More clarity is necessary on the role of physical distribution functions within the general domain of channel management (Frazier, 2009).



### 2.2.3 The Role of Power in Distribution Channels

Channels of distribution can be viewed as social systems comprising a set of interdependent organizations, which perform all the activities (functions), utilized to move a product and its title from production to consumption (Stern and Neskett, 1969; Stern, 1971). Because of this interdependency there arises a need for some form of co-operation between channel members and co-ordination of activities. This co-operation and co-ordination is necessary in order to ensure predictability and dependability between members which will allow individual organizations to plan effectively. Also, conflict arises in channels, because members sometimes have incompatible goals, differing ideas as to the functions each should perform, and differing perceptions of reality. This conflict needs to be controlled so that it does not disrupt channel functioning (Wilkinson, 1996).

Power or, rather, the use of power by individual channel members to affect the decision making and/or behavior of one another (whether deliberate or not), is the mechanism by which the channel is organized and orderly behavior preserved. This is not meant to imply that organizations necessarily set out deliberately to organize the channel, but that this organization of the channel arises out of individual organizations adjusting their behavior to one another in relation to the power they each have and use. However, in some channels, firm(s) may assume a leadership role and make deliberate attempts to organize the channel, making use of their power. Power is the means by which cooperation between individual channel members' activities are coordinated and the means by which any conflict between firms is controlled (Stern and Neskett, 1969; Stern, 1971; Wilkinson, 1973).

### 2.2.4 Strategic Choice in Distribution Channels

Though the field of marketing, in general, has adopted a strategic perspective, one particular area, distribution channels, has been relatively slow to embrace this perspective. Besides research on the manipulation of power and influence attempts, little attention has been given to the study of channel strategies. The importance of marketing channel strategy decisions is highlighted by 1) their inherent long-term consequences and 2) the constraints and opportunities that they represent (Dwyer and Welsh, 1985). The development of relationships in a marketing channel often takes a great deal of time and effort. Therefore, any decisions made concerning these relations take on added strategic importance. Given this, the incorporation of strategic management theory is very relevant to the study of distribution channels (Brent, 2007).

### 2.2.5 Multiple Channels

The use of multiple channels of distribution is now becoming the rule rather than the exception, given the fragmentation of markets, advancements in technology, and heightened interbred competition, among other things. While multiple channels potentially increase the firm's penetration level and raise entry barriers, interbred competition and intra channel conflict may become major problems, leading to lowered levels of support in the firm's direct and indirect channels. Such possibilities remain largely unexplored. While John and Weitz (1988) and Klein et al. (1990) examined the use of multiple channels to a degree, only Dutta et al. (1995) have focused an empirical study on the construct. Their major finding is that augmenting an indirect channel with a direct channel improves the manufacturer's ability to manage the indirect channel (Frazier, 1999).

## 2.3 Distribution Channels

According to Allen (1993), channel of distribution is a tool that explains and clarifies the methods by which products are able to reach the final consumer or user. The final consumers are the persons who are the ultimate consumers, users or beneficiaries of the product or service provided. To Coyle et al (2003), a distribution channel consists 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. This encompasses a variety of intermediary firms, including those that we classify as wholesalers or retailers. Various types of distribution channels have been identified by authorities in this field.

### 2.3.1 Types of Distribution Channels

**Manufacturer direct to retail store:** This distribution channels deals with the manufacturer himself/herself either holding his/hers products in his finished goods stores or warehouse distributing them to depots or retail stores. Manufacturer to wholesaler and then to retail shop. With this distribution channel, wholesalers act as intermediaries between the manufactures and small retailers.

**Manufacturer through third party distribution:** With regards to the manufacturer through third party distribution, the company or organization performs all or some aspects of the distribution system like warehousing or transportation on behalf of the manufacturer.

**Factory direct to homes:** This distribution channel deals with the delivery of special items or products which do not need to be stocked. Here the manufacturer distribute directly to the doorsteps of the consumer.

**Factory to factory:** The last distribution channel is the factory to factory distribution channel. This channel covers raw materials, components and parts of certain products. Carter and Price (1993), go further to state that, it is becoming increasingly common for a manufacturer to use more than one channel for similar products, for example beer sales through public warehouses and supermarkets likewise Michelin tyres are distributed not only to car accessory shops and garages but as a fabricated part of new citron cars. Each channel enables the manufacturer to serve a different market.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

### 2.4.1 Bargaining Theory of Distribution

A critical factor in channel relationships between manufacturers and retailers is the relative bargaining power of both parties. This theory is useful in understanding how bargaining between channel members and demonstrate that the bargaining process actually affects the degree of coordination and that two-part tariffs is not part of the market contract even in a simple one manufacturer-one retailer channel. To theory shows how the institution of bargaining has force, and it affects channel coordination when the complexity of specific ability of the product exchanges (Daniel, 1998). The theory indicates how retailer power promotes channel coordination. Therefore the theory enabled the researcher to understand the conditions in which the presence of a powerful retailer might actually be beneficial to all channel members. The theory helps to recover the standard double-marginalization take-it-or-leave-it offer outcome as a particular case of the bargaining process. The theory helped the researcher to examine the implications of relative bargaining powers for whether the product is delivered "early" (i.e., before demand is realized) or "late" (i.e., delivered to the retailer only if there is demand). The theory indicates the implications for returns policies as well as of renegotiation costs and retail competition (Harrington, 2003).

## 2.5 Empirical Literature Review

Fengyi. Wu and Yuehhua. Lee (2009) in their study investigation channel power and satisfaction in a marketing channel. He study adopted case study design in Guangzhou province-china. It was found out that the competition faced by business organizations is no longer mere inter-firm competition, but also inter-channel competition caused by adapting to industry globalization. Considering this trend, this study found out that there was a correlation between distribution channel power customer commitment and satisfaction. The results provide non-coercive power had a positive and significant impact on the channel firms' communication and commitment, as well as the supplier communication and commitment had a positive and significant impact on the economic satisfaction and non-economic satisfaction of channel firms.

Atafar et al, (2011) in their study "Assessing the Effectiveness of Distribution Channel in Isfahan Zamzam Company in their research, they gathered data by interviewing the top marketing managers who have high experiences in marketing, finally the variables in the research assumptions been used to incorporate flow table model for measuring the Effectiveness of Distribution Channel in Isfahan Zamzam Co. The study revealed that Zamzam distribution channel was successful in product transportation, gathering market Information was effective in payment procedures but distribution channel of this company is not been effective in trade promotion programs and communication with retailers and wholesalers.

Torii et al (2004) On the Length of Wholesale Marketing distribution Channels in Japan. The study adopted case study design; data collection was conducted through the use of questionnaires and interviews. It was revealed that wholesalers enter distribution channels to capitalize on their private information about demand and supply. The channels become long only when such private information is valuable. Also, the result indicated that there was a close link between wholesalers' private information and length of the marketing distribution channel, based on analysis of panel data for five wholesale industries drawn from the last three decades of Japan's Census of Commerce. Specifically, it was shown that marketing distribution channels tend to be longer--that is, they have more wholesale steps--where wholesalers tend to be in close geographic proximity to the final demanders, where wholesalers tend not to be organized into distribution keiretsu by manufacturers, where regional variation in demand tends to be idiosyncratic, where producers advertise less intensely and distributors advertise more intensely, and where the density and heterogeneity of retail outlets is greater. All of these are factors likely to be associated with the value of wholesalers' private information.

David (2005) in his study "Distribution Keiretsu, Foreign Direct Investment, and Import Penetration in Japan" based in directed marketing channel known in Japan as distribution keiretsu are more likely than others to be headed by a primary wholesaler that is vertically integrated with the manufacturer, which for foreign manufacturers entails their directly investing in Japan-based wholesale subsidiaries. Briefly stated, vertical integration better aligns the non-

contractible wholesaler effort levels with the manufacturer's profit, but necessarily forgoes the inherent advantage of an independent wholesaler at market-widening efforts. This establishes a trade-off bearing on the decision to vertically integrate. Where market-widening efforts complicate the resolution of retail externalities, it can be better to forgo market-widening efforts altogether and instead focus exclusively on resolving the externalities, vertically integrating with the wholesaler in order to better administer a distribution keiretsu.

## 2.6 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction depends on the product's perceived performance relative to a buyer's expectations. If the product's performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If performance matches expectations, the customer is satisfied. If performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied and delighted. (Armstrong/Kotler, 2005). Low, Lee & Cheng (2013) posit that customer satisfaction is determined by the difference in the expectations of consumers for the product/service prior to purchase and actual product/service obtained following purchase. Kotler & Keller (2009) defined satisfaction as a feeling, pleasure or disappointment experienced by a person based on comparison of product perceived performance with expectation. It is based on evaluation of discrepancy in customer's expectation and performance of product or service after consumption. It can be summarized from the definitions above that, customer satisfaction is based on the pleasure a customer obtains after experiencing a service or consuming a product,

## 2.7 Issues in Customer Satisfaction

Customer relations are known as of a greater value in the service industries than in the production industry. Nicholls, Gilbert, and Roslow (1998) concentrated their research on measurements of customer satisfaction. Their research adds to the developed knowledge base in hospitality industry by examining the service satisfaction in 15 various industries. Nicholls, Gilbert, and Roslow identify viewpoint differences between supporters of the notion of service quality and proponents of the alternative of service satisfaction. Their research explores the relationship between satisfaction and quality. It also points out the instrument of measurement of customer satisfaction. Taking into consideration the increasing value of time in American culture, this research focused on the immediate service encounter, not on past experiences.

The research was accomplished by using personal interviews with service organization customers immediately after their service experience. The sample population included customers who were exiting from their experience of service. The survey that was offered to the customers included 29 statements that required respondents to report their satisfaction degree regarding certain service elements. The statements covered such aspects as service, organizational system, and security. The results from the responses outline the domain elements of the service experience that contributed to customer satisfaction. Research findings from the data demonstrated that "the highest public sector mean rating, 3.69, was less than the lowest private sector mean rating, 3.93" (Nicholls, et. al., 1998). According to the statistics from the research, customers' private sector organizations were rated higher than public sector ones. Customer satisfaction, being "consumers' reaction to their most recent experience of service," is an indicator of a company's success and profit, because the delighted customers usually return and become the best marketing tool for the organization (Nicholls, et. al., 1998). The research results can be used by managers of service organizations in identifying their companies. The benefits of measuring customer service in various industries raise awareness of special challenges in the customer service industry, enhance the use of customer service management, and identification of the best possible practices for quality service.

Anderson, Fornell, and Rust (1997) also emphasized the leading role of customer satisfaction and productivity for the company's success. Their research stresses that companies need to excel in both customer satisfaction and productivity, in other words in "quality" and "quantity," in order to gain business growth, positive word of mouth about the company, and as an increase in the company's overall profitability and image. The objective of the research is to find out whether there are situations with trade-offs between customer satisfaction and productivity, its purpose being an examination of the relationships between customer satisfaction and productivity. The literature review on this topic represents two opposite view points, one school stating that customer satisfaction and productivity are compatible since improvements in customer satisfaction can result in less handling of returns and complaint management, and at the same time lower the costs of future transactions, and the second school stating that increasing customer satisfaction results in growing costs due to the improvement of product attributes.

According to Pizam and Ellis in (1999), the concepts of customer satisfaction, and also furnishes organizations with relevant methods of value measurement of customer satisfaction. They also analysed global issues and main cultural differences in customer satisfaction. This research resulted in the development of nine distinct theories of customer satisfaction. Most of these theories "were based on cognitive psychology, some have received moderate attention,

while other theories have been introduced without any empirical research". Customer satisfaction measurement serves two roles for organization; it provides information and also enables communication with customers.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Methodology covers the type of data used, the sources of data, data gathering techniques, population and sample of study, sampling techniques and data analysis. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research design; this is followed by a discussion of population and sample size and the sampling technique used. Data sources and methods of data collection are also discussed.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Kothari (2009), research design constitutes the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. Research design is "the arrangement of conditions for collecting and analysing data in a manner that aims at combining relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure (Kothari, 2009). Orodho (2003) defined research design as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. The research strategy that used for the study is descriptive case study.

#### **3.3 Types of Research**

##### **3.3.1 Quantitative research approach**

Qualitative research approach is used when the data of a certain study can be converted into numbers and mathematically processed. The sample size of quantitative research are larger compared to a qualitative research. In a quantitative research the conclusions are drawn from the processed numerical data

##### **3.3.2 Qualitative research approach**

Qualitative research is used to gather an understanding of the primary reasons and motivations behind a case. Qualitative research uses small and focused samples of the sample population (Wyse 2011). Qualitative research method is used in this thesis because the data is not mathematically analysed

#### **3.4 Approach for qualitative research: Case study**

A case study is conducted to highlight a decision or decisions: why were they executed, how they were executed, and what were the results. A case study is an observational analysis used to understand single or multiple real-life phenomenon thoroughly. It is used to acquire an answer to 'how' and 'why'-questions (Yin 2009). Case study is used in analysing an issue in detail and brings about deeper insights and better understanding of the problem Tromp, et, al, (2006).

#### **3.5 Study Population**

The present study, the target population from which the researcher draw conclusion comprised of Makola Distributors, both sales personnel 'customers (end users) were included in another side. The population upon the preliminary visit to some distributors in Makola Market is about 50 people.

#### **3.6 Sample and Sample Size**

According to Saunders and colleagues (2009), population is "the full set cases from which a sample is taken". Likewise Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined population as a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. The respondents first were contacted face to face and explain the nature of the study. Their participation was sought. Twenty (20) participants including employees and customers of Makola Distributors participated in the study.

#### **3.7 Sampling Procedures**

Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study (Kothari, 2009) it is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of characteristics found in the entire group

In this study, the sample was selected by judgmentally/purposively and randomly sampling procedures. For the purposive sampling, respondents was chosen based on the researcher's judgment that they have desirable characteristics and could provide the required information. The simple random sampling was applied in selecting respondents from several departments in order to provide equal chances to employees of being selected for study. The



sample of 20 out of the population was drawn from Makola Distributors. This sample size was reasonable as the population is homogeneity.

Table 3.1: Sample of study

SN	Samples of Study	No of respondents
1	Customers	5
2	Makola Distributors	15
	<b>Total</b>	20

### 3.8 Data Collection Methods

#### 3.8.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires constituted a set of questions, which was prepared by the researcher in written form in order to collect required data. The questionnaire included both close ended and open ended questions. According to Tromp and co-workers (2006), questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data over a larger sample and there is no opportunity for interviewer bias. It is through this method that the researcher can get respondents' own words and well thought out answers Kothari (2003).

#### 3.8.2 Structured Interview

Interviews were conducted in order to collect additional information mainly qualitative which the questionnaires might not be able to capture and enable the researcher to collect sufficient data. Both structures and unstructured interviews were used to main respondents or informants. According to Kothari (2004), interviews are suitable for intensive investigations. On the same line Wellman (2001) stated that interviews are very useful because highly specified data can be obtained in a very short span of time and is also useful in providing a general overview of people's thoughts.

#### 3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected were arranged into a more workable framework that enabled the researcher to classify and organize them. In order to get desired results from the study, data collection was processed, and that is through, editing, coding, classification and tabulation. The research also used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to carry out analysis of data especially in computing relationship of variables. Descriptive analysis was used on respondents about factors.

#### 3.10 Ethical Consideration

The study used coding approach to identify and ensure anonymity of respondents. Furthermore, respondents consent was sought before questionnaires were administered.

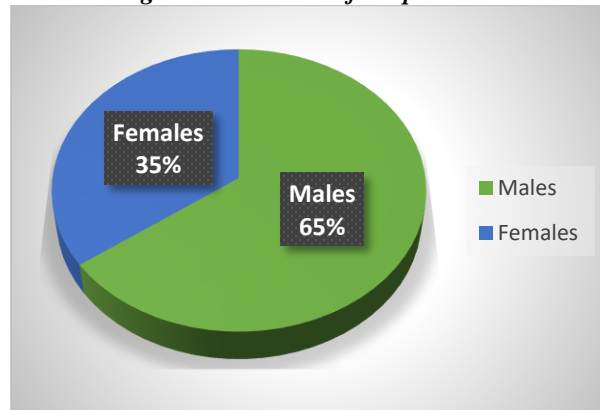
### 4. DATA ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from the field of study. The responses are illustrated in descriptive statistics, graphs, correlation and frequencies. It covers the demographic data of the respondents and various research question tested in the study.

**Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Males	13	65
Females	7	35
Total	20	100

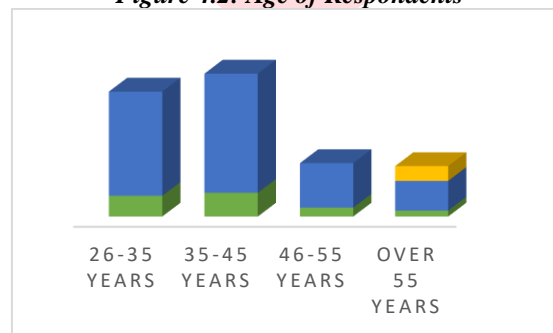
*Author's own filed work 2018*

**Figure 4.1: Gender of Respondents***Author's own filed work 2018*

The above figure revealed that, the respondents were 13 males representing 65% whilst 7 respondents representing 35% are females. It is evident that, most of the respondents at the makola market were men.

**Table 4.2: Age of respondents**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
26-35 years	7	35
36-45 years	8	40
46-55 years	3	15
Above 55 years	2	10
Total	20	100

*Author's own filed work 2018***Figure 4.2: Age of Respondents***Author's own filed work 2018*

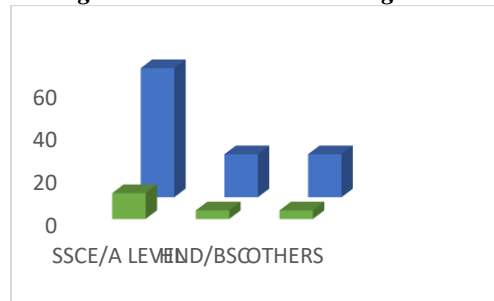
According to the above figure, 7 respondents representing 35% are withing the age of 26-35 years, 8 respondents representing 40% are between the age of 36-45 years, 3 respondents 15% are between the age of 46-55 years whilst 2 respondents representing 10% are over 55 years of age.

**Table 4.3: Educational Background**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Ssce/A Level	12	60
Hnd/Bsc	4	20
Msc/Mba	-	-
Others	4	20
Total	20	100

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**Figure 4.3: Educational Background**



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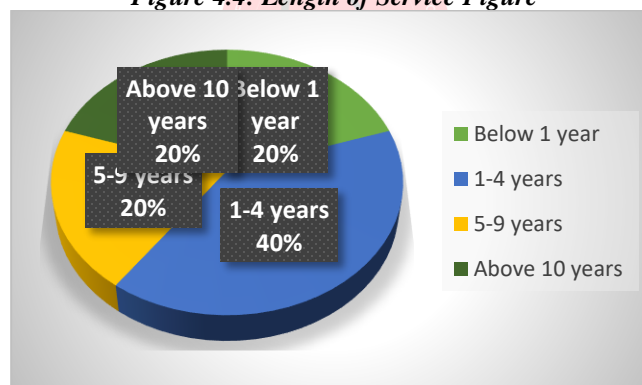
From the response, 12 respondents representing 60% have SSCE, 4 respondents 20% have HND and 4 respondents representing 20% have other certificates.

**Table 4.4: Length of Service**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	4	20
1-4 years	8	40
5-9 years	4	20
Above 10 years	4	20
Total	20	20

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**Figure 4.4: Length of Service Figure**



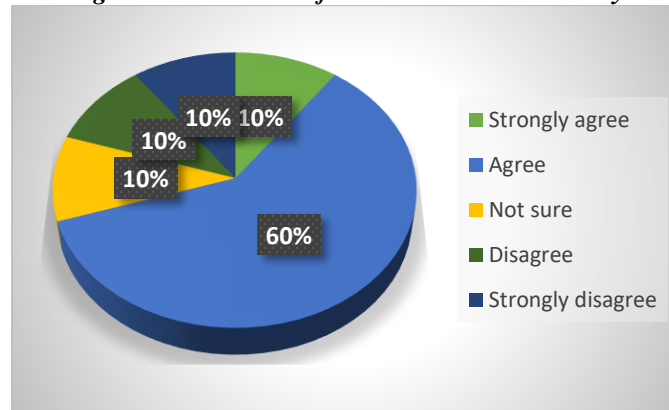
Author's own filed work 2018

In proportion to the length of service, 4 respondents representing 20% have served below 1 years, 8 respondents representing 40% have served from 1 to 4 years, 4 respondents representing 20% have served from 5-9 years whilst 4 respondents representing 20% have served over 10 years.

**Table 4.5 Product Information Flow/Availability**

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	2	10
Agree	12	60
Not sure	2	10
Disagree	2	10
Strongly disagree	2	10
Total	20	100

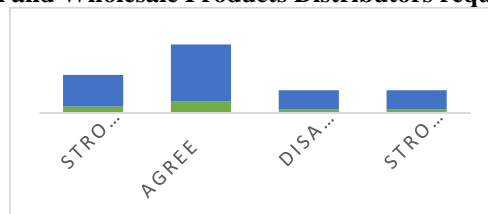
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**Figure 4.5: Product Information Flow/Availability***Author's own filed work 2018*

Taking into account product availability, 2 respondents representing 10% strongly agreed with the statement that Makola Market Distributors makes product information flow or availability in real time to customers in the downstream supply chain, 12 respondents representing 60% agreed, 2 respondents representing 10% were not sure, 2 respondents representing 10% disagreed and 2 respondents representing 10% strongly disagreed that Makola Market Distributors makes information flow available on products to customers.

**Table 4.6: Distribution Channel and Wholesale Products Distributors requirements Performance**

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	5	25
Agree	9	45
Not sure	0	0
Disagree	3	15
Strongly disagree	3	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

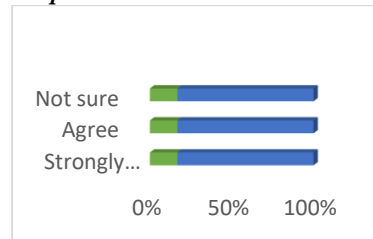
*Author's own filed work 2018***Figure 4.6: Distribution Channel and Wholesale Products Distributors requirements Performance***Author's own filed work 2018*

The data revealed that, 5 respondents representing 25% strongly agreed to the statement, distribution Channel and Wholesale Products Distributors requirements Performance, 9 respondents representing 45% agreed, 3 respondents representing 15% disagreed and 3 respondents representing 15% also disagreed.

**Table 4.7: Relationship between Customers and Wholesale Distributions**

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	7	35
Agree	11	55
Not sure	2	15
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>



*Author's own filed work 2018***Figure 4.7: Relationship between Customers and Wholesale Distributions***Author's own filed work 2018*

The analysis on relationship between customers and distributors, 7 respondents representing 35% strongly agreed, 10 respondents representing 50% agreed and 2 respondents representing 10% are ambivalent if relationship between the distributors and their customers is good.

**Table 4.7: Channel differentiation adopted by Makola Distributors.**

Channel Differentiation	S D	D	N	A	S A	T	%
Current market trends are used in application of most appropriate channel differentiation strategy in order to increase market share.	2(10%)	2(10%)	1(5%)	5(25%)	10(50%)	20	100
Need to reduce costs forms a basis for channel differentiation strategy as the firms aims to minimize the cost of distribution.	0(0%)	1(5%)	5(25%)	10(50%)	4(20%)	20	100
Convenience to customers forms a basis for channel differentiation strategy as the company aims to make the products affordable to customer in terms of accessibility	0(0%)	0(0 %)	(0%)	8(40%)	12(60%)	20	100
Our strategy for distribution channel is based on our understanding of customer's needs so as to satisfy them	0 (0%)	0(0%)	3(15))	12(60%)	5(25%)	20	100
Our distribution channel strategies are driven by our beliefs about how we can create greater value for customers	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(15%)	14(70%)	3(15%)	20	100
The firm makes attempts to understand the customer and recognizes the diversity of its customer segment thereby apply different distribution channel so as to satisfy their unique needs	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(15%)	3(15%)	14(70%)	20	100
Our organization sells some of our products through complementary firms all over the country so as to reach our customers' needs	2(10%)	2(10%)	1(5%)	5(25%)	10(50%)	20	100
We have increased the points at which customers can access our products as we have opened more branches, direct sales and use of intermediaries	0(0%)	1(5%)	5(25%)	10(50%)	4(20%)	20	100
Distribution channels adopted has enhanced the ability of the firm to generate, disseminate, and respond to market changes so as to remain competitive in the market	0(0%)	0(0 %)	(0%)	8(40%)	12(60%)	20	100

*Author's own filed work 2018*

In relation to table 4.8, channel differentiation adopted by makola distributors. Thus, 2 respondents representing 10% strongly disagreed , 2 respondents representing 10% disagreed, 1 respondent representing 5% is not

sure, 5 respondents representing 25% agreed whilst 10 respondents representing 50% strongly agreed to the statement, current market trends are used in application of most appropriate channel differentiation strategy in order to increase market share. . Taking into account the need to reduce costs forms a basis for channel differentiation strategy as the firms aims to minimize the cost of distribution, 1 respondent representing 5% disagreed, 5 respondents representing 25% are ambivalent, 10 respondents representing 50% concurred, and 4 respondents representing 20% were in strongly agreement of the statement.

Convenience to customers forms a basis for channel differentiation strategy as the company aims to make the products affordable to customer in terms of accessibility, 8 respondents representing 40% agreed that timely communication brings about effective supply chain, whilst a gigantic 12 respondents representing 69% strongly concurred to the above statement. Strategy for distribution channel is based on our understanding of customer's needs so as to satisfy them, 3 respondents representing 15% were not sure whether effective supply chain maximizes profit, 12 respondents representing 60% agreed to the fact the effective supply chain collaboration maximizes profit and 5 respondents representing 25% strongly concurred.

Again, the distribution channel strategies are driven by our beliefs about how we can create greater value for customers 3 respondents representing 15% are ambivalent, 14 respondents representing 70 % were in agreement whilst 3 respondents representing 15% strongly agreed. The firm makes attempts to understand the customer and recognizes the diversity of its customer segment thereby apply different distribution channel so as to satisfy their unique needs, increased market share as a result of effective supply chain collaboration. 3 respondents representing 15% are ambivalent of the statement, 3 respondents representing 15% also agreed that effective supply chain collaboration increases market share, whilst gigantic 14 respondents representing 70% strongly agreed.

Our organization sells some of our products through complementary firms all over the country so as to reach our customers' needs, 2 respondents representing 10% strongly disagreed to the above challenge, 2 respondents representing 10% disagreed, 1 respondent representing 5% are not sure, 5 respondents representing 25% agreed whilst 10 respondents representing 50% strongly agreed. We have increased the points at which customers can access our products as we have opened more branches, direct sales and use of intermediaries, 1 respondent representing 5% disagreed, 5 respondents representing 25% are ambivalent about the challenge, 10 respondents representing 50% concurred, and 4 respondents representing 20% were in strongly in agreement of the statement. Distribution channels adopted has enhanced the ability of the firm to generate, disseminate, and respond to market changes so as to remain competitive in the market, 8 respondents representing 40% agreed to the statement, whilst a gigantic 12 respondents representing 69% strongly concurred to the above statement.

**Table 4.9: Customer opinion on distribution channel**

Customer opinion	S D	D	N	A	S A	T	%
I am well conversed with products/services offered	3(15%)	17(85%)	0	0	0	20	100
Products/services are of very high quality	6(30%)	7(35%)	4(20%)	3(15%)	0	20	100
I get value for my money on products/services offered	0	8(40%)	5(25%)	7(35%)	0	20	100
The word 'WELL-MADE' highly describe the products/services offered	7(35%)	13(65%)	0	0	0	20	100
The word 'INNOVATIVE' does not describe the products/services	0	7(35%)	10(50%)	3(15%)	0	20	100
How important is convenience when choosing this type of product/service?	3(15%)	7(35%)	1(5%)	9(45%)	0	20	100

*Author's own filed work 2018*

According to the above table, I am well conversed with products/services offered, 3 respondents representing 15% strongly disagreed whilst overwhelming 17 respondents representing 85% disagreed to the statement on distribution channel. Products/services are of very high quality, 6 respondents representing 30% strongly disagreed, 7 respondents representing 35% disagreed 4 respondents representing 20% are not sure of the statement, and 3 respondents representing 15% agreed to the statement on distribution channel.

I get value for my money on products/services offered, 8 respondents representing 40% disagreed, and 5 respondents representing 25% are not sure whilst 7 respondents representing 35% agreed. The word 'WELL-MADE' highly describe the products/services offered, 7 respondents representing 35% strongly disagreed and 13 respondents representing 65% disagreed.

The word 'INNOVATIVE' does not describe the products/services, 7 respondents representing 35% disagreed, 10 respondents representing 50% are not sure and 3 respondent representing 15% agreed that The word 'INNOVATIVE' does not describe the products/services. How important is convenience when choosing this type of product/service?, 3 respondents representing 15% strongly disagreed, 7 respondents representing 35% disagreed, 1 respondent representing 5% is not sure and 9 respondents representing 45% agreed to the statement.

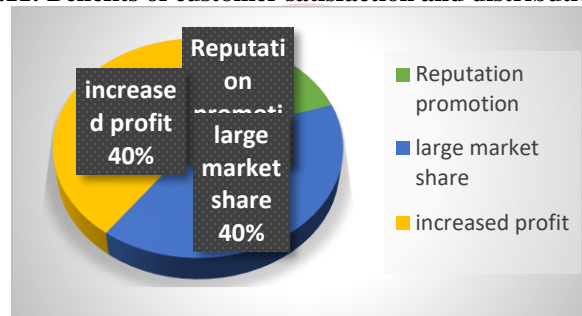
**Table 4.10: Customer Satisfaction**

Customer service	S D	D	N	A	S A	T	%
How satisfied are you with the Customer Service experience?	3(15%)	1(5%)	9(45%)	7(35%)	0	20	100
The process for getting your concerns resolved	7(35%)	13(65%)	0	0	0	20	100
Overall, your satisfaction or dissatisfaction rate with products/service	5(25%)	4(20%)	9(45%)	2(10%)	0	20	100

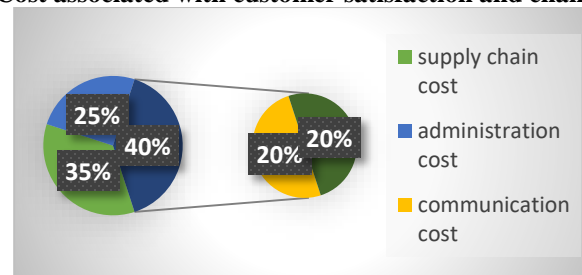
*Author's own filed work 2018*

How satisfied are you with the customer service experience, 3 respondents representing 15% strongly disagreed, 1 respondent representing 5% disagreed, 9 respondents representing 45% are not sure and 7 respondents representing 35% among others agreed. The process for getting your concerns resolved, 7 respondents representing 35% strongly disagreed and 13 respondents representing 65% disagreed to the statement.

Overall, your satisfaction or dissatisfaction rate with products/service, 5 respondents representing 25% strongly disagreed, 4 respondents representing 20% disagreed, 9 respondents are ambivalent and 2 respondents representing 10% agreed to the statement.

**Figure 4.11: Benefits of customer satisfaction and distribution channel.***Author's own filed work 2018*

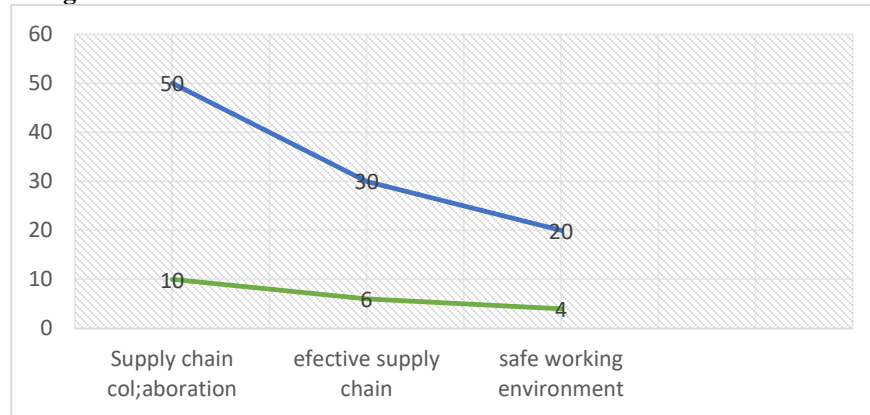
In light with figure 4.11, 4 respondents representing 20% said one of the benefits of customer satisfaction and channel of distribution, 8 respondents representing 40% believed that one of the benefits is gaining market share and 8 respondents representing 40% said the company will increase profit when customers are satisfied.

**Figure 4.12: Cost associated with customer satisfaction and channel distribution***Author's own filed work 2018*

To analyse the costs associated with customer satisfaction and distribution channel, it could be seen that, 4 respondents representing 30% are said communication cost hampers customer satisfaction and channel of distribution, 5 respondents representing 25% said for administration cost, 4 respondents representing 20% also said maintenance cost

and 7 respondents representing 35% also believed that administration cost hampers customer satisfaction and distribution channel.

**Figure 4.13: Effects of customer satisfaction and channel of distribution**



*Author's own filed work 2018*

Effects of customer satisfaction and channel of distribution. 10 respondents representing 50% said supply chain collaboration is an effect of customer satisfaction and distribution channel, 6 respondents representing 30% opted for effective supply chain whilst 4 respondents representing believed that safe working condition is an effect of customer satisfaction and distribution channel

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Findings

The general objective of this study is to assess determinant of customer satisfaction through marketing strategies with focus on selected wholesale distributors at the Makola Market in Accra. It was found that, the relationship between the Makola Distributors and their customers is good. The study revealed that, most of the personnel's working at the Distribution sectors have acquired their SSCE and yet to endeavour in their HND/Degree programmes. The study also revealed that, distribution channel and wholesale products, distributors requirements performance and good relationship management.

### 5.2 Conclusion of the study

In reference to the research objectives set, the researcher concludes that channel of distribution plays a positive role. Distribution Channel plays a very important role especially with respect to the food and beverage industry because if the product is not available on time consumers will switch on to other brands and the company will lose its market share and hence an effective distribution channel is the need of this industry. The distribution channel of Makola Distributors is effective and the Organisation enjoys high agreement from respondent in areas of benefits like easing processes, increasing the supply chain awareness, reducing total costs on distribution of products.

In this finding calls for Makola Distributors to further improve employees distribution knowledge on product features and benefits, brand meaning, value propositions, customer and competitor characteristics, marketing best practices, and personal selling and encourage employees to process and integrate such knowledge to enhance their capabilities. Again, relationship building will be vital in the attempt to ensure that transfer and integration of knowledge among channel members works effectively.

In industries where products tend to be undifferentiated and intensely distributed, products are non-complex along with homogeneous markets and significant end-customer expertise, product lines are extensive, and firm financial performance is constrained, knowledge sharing on physical distribution functions among channel members should pre-dominate, leading to high importance of physical distribution functions within channel management. Wholesale distributors expect improved and high physical distribution functions with channel management to improve creation of competitive advantage.

### 5.3 Recommendations of the study

Below are practical recommendations that will yield substantial results in boosting the role played by distribution channel.



1. Distributors should seek to adopt the most appropriate model that will aid them to achieve its objectives and reduce operational costs. Distribution channel should be geared at strengthening relationships between them and their customers.
2. Adoption and usage of information system adoption that will enhance data analysis accrue from distribution channel should be implemented. That is, the distributors should be in position to continuously weigh the benefits that accrue from application of distribution channel to ensure periodic redesign and improvement customers' satisfaction and Organisational performance.
3. Distributors should ensure strict adherence to their policies and guideline regarding the application distribution channel. That is the responsible persons should execute their duties in accordance with their policies to ensure performance.
4. Distributors should ensure aggressive marketing, regular visit to distributors, sales promotion and advertising to be made more frequent for brand building communications should be improved.

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