

An Evaluation of the Morality of Herbal Medicine and Spiritual Healing Advertisement in Ogoja Local Government Area

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Abstract:- The thrust of our argument in this paper is to examine the method of publicity and ethics in the setting of herbal treatment and traditional healing. For a clearer purpose and the determination of this research, the concepts morality and ethics shall be used interchangeably. By making use of qualitative analysis of some cases of adverts pinched within some street corners in Ogoja Local Government Council in Cross River State, the research claim that, the convincing methods being put in place for the creation of public awareness by those in herbal remedy often cause damages to those who patronize their products than one can perceive.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Ogoja local Government in Cross River State, Nigeria, the pressure created by the reality of economic and party-political climate coupled with the commonness of fatal diseases such as Toothache, Malaria, HIV/Aids, Tuberculosis etc, back the patronage accorded to herbal medicine practice. The implication of this is that, the patronage of this kind of medication has climbed to a cutting-edge level in Ogoja over the last rare times. In the strength of the foregoing, one author Oladepe in his research, observe, “that there exist a universal recovery occurring in traditional medicine a decade ago or at least probably because of the heavy amount of well-known artificial drugs in orthodox or Eurocentric medical treatment of various ailments and its failure to ascertain the causes of these various diseases are developing resistance to the recognize and identify drugs” (Olapade, 1998:6). Apart from the above assertion, in Ogoja, “the idea of witchcraft has been associated with traditional medicine healing; therefore, it is being viewed with negative and derogatory meanings”. All this resulted from nothing but “Western standards of Africa worldviews where the fabricated explanations of African concepts have remained imbedded on the thinking processes and human objectives of modern Africans thereby raiding them of their knowledgeable sureness and mental identities with regard to posterity”. Regrettably, the result of the above stated have almost affected a number of traditional medicine practitioners and as well overextended their thinking pattern and furthering it through their misguided advertising tactics.

We pointed out at the beginning of this research that, the huge political, economic changes in Ogoja since the advent of political independence in Nigeria, have been the reason behind the major part of the pressure on the post-colonial states to make provision for adequate health care for everyone. The above variations have brought about this transformed economic challenges in the region. Consequent upon the above stated, a greater number of individuals took a decisive position to patronizing herbal treatment in Ogoja; “the value and effectiveness of herbal treatment and otherworldly provisions have once again be noted” (www.panafricanmedjournal).

The sudden change on what unfolded, was the brain behind the manifestation a fresh set of traditional medicine practitioners from different geographical area that made up Ogoja has emerged. They laid claim to the fact that, they are well-researched, gifted and educated. The appraisal made by an eye witnessed account, for example, shows that between 30% and 50% of the inhabitants within Ogoja, presently depends on the efficacy of herbal medicine. This sector has become their first contact for advice and treatment of health issues. There is Such an increased in demand of traditional medicine services in the different clans in Ogoja. This has not only influenced the experts from within the region, but from as far as all neighboring environments.

Recently, the rate of competition among traditional medicine practitioners in Ogoja, on the increase and this has led to even employing all manner of publicity available to them in order to induce potential buyers and as well withstand the aggressive rivalry from other practitioners. Resulting from these actions, majority of those engaged in this profession have been found wanting and caught up in ethical and moral dilemmas. This research underscores the point that, there is a deliberate attempt by most of the physicians to crucify adequate moral marketing strategies in the altar of mediocrity, that is, shunning official strategies. The implication of this is based on the fact that, most of the practitioners have not been able to compete with their counterparts in other places of within the region. In the strength of the foregoing, the overring factor now is profit making rather than the urge to provide services.

II. HERBAL MEDICINE AND SPIRITUAL HEALING: AN EXPOSITION

With profound efforts and all sense of thought, in this section of the research, it eminent that we do an exposition of the meaning of herbal medicine and spiritual healing and thereafter proceeds to their history of marketing practices. From a lay man's understanding, the above concepts have not been easy to define with accuracy. According to Australian Journal of Herbalism, *"herbal medicine is that medicine made exclusively from plants; it refers to using a plant's seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark, or flowers for medicinal purposes. It is the oldest and still the most widely used system of medicine outside of conventional medicine in all cultures in the world today. It is important to note that herbal medicine is also known as botanical medicine or phyto-medicine which means using a plant's seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark, or flowers for medicinal purposes"* (<http://www.nhaa.org.au/index.php>). This branch of treatment is gaining a focal point. This is so because of the advancement in analysis and quality control along with advances in clinical research shows its value in the treating and prevention of illness. On the whole, there are still researchers who are not very sure of what specific element that is particularly used in making the condition of a patient to improve. The fact remains that, the whole herbs contain many components, and they may work together to produce a beneficial effect. The effectiveness of a particular herb depends on many factors. The nature of the climatic condition environmental texture, and soil quality, all contribute to the growth of the various plants, especially during harvesting and processing.

On the other hand, spiritual healing is easier to define than herbal medicine because of the technicality involve. According to Grayson (Grayson,1997:11), "majority of the people try to equate spiritual healing to be the same as divine restoration, but not true in some case. Faith healing is parallel with spiritual healing because the later has to do with an undisputed certainty in some great God or some vast power". Sometimes it takes the form of a spiritualist, an entity that is empowered to produce exceptional, magical effects in the world of the person who believes in him. These are some of the major reason why the definition of spiritual healing becomes difficult to pin down with accuracy, therefore it becomes argumentative. However, Grayson asserts that "the underlying principle of spiritual healing is that in the spiritual mind healing process, one does not deal with unquestioned belief in any holy person, religious rite, sacred place or object. Instead, the dealings are directly with the truth of being which should be perceived metaphysically as part of the underlying reality of Life". The implication therein, in the above assertion is that, in the process of spiritual healing, the abstract inner patterns of consciousness inevitably appear as an outer world of experience, thereby making one conscious of the truth that life belongs to God, or the Great Spirit. It is this realization that enables one to perform spiritual healing.

Reflecting critically on the true meaning of both herbal medicine and spiritual healing above, one will realize that they show a broad range of characteristics and elements that make the two to seems interwoven and therefore, hardly distinguished from each other. As such, there has been no standard definition for spiritual healing and herbal medicine as both terms can refer to widely varying practices, and there are many ways in which they overlap. In line with the above stated and for the purposes of this work, that both terms are used to refer to traditional medicine.

In Ogoja Local Government Area, and as elsewhere in the world, "the custodians of traditional or herbal medicine and spiritual healing are both personified under the cultural heritage of the tribe, whereby it is assume to be the total sum of all understanding and mode of operation practiced by traditional healers in diagnosis, prevention and elimination of physical, mental or societal imbalance". The acquaintance or practices can be explainable or may not be possible. What lies behind the whole reality is that the information/practice is being transferred instinctively from one generation to another through the oratory form, literature, observable phenomenon or even through mystical ways.

➤ We choose to agree with Pretorius who asserts categorically that herbal medicine practitioner/traditional healer is as:

"someone who is recognized by the community in which he lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetable, animal substances and certain other methods based on social, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as the prevailing knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding physical, mental and social-wellbeing and the causation of disease and disability in the community" (Pretorius, 1992:7).

III. A BACKGROUND TO THE ADVERTISEMENT OF HERBAL MEDICINE IN OGOJA

We are going to establish this background from the general perspective of Sub-Saharan Africa, with its lengthy practice of advertising herbal medical. The past history of Ogoja reveal that, advertising was normally done using the oral method of expression from the mouth. It was carried out by the practitioners and as well by the consumers and neighbors. As such, herbal medicine advertisement, though now is particularly not a novel and single marvel to Ogoja, but is echoing as in other countries in the region and beyond.

In Ogoja, language used for the advertising approaches worked out by herbal medicine healers have brought about a low level of patronage which have culminated into the publicity of herbal and spiritual healing services with an excess disagreement. The nature of discussions and debates further compounded the advertising discourse itself which many business ethicists raw conclusions that is psychologically forcing, misleading, crafty and lack moral values. Furthermore, the history of the development of the

herbal medicine in Ogoja, is a long one. In addition to that, the use of herbal medicine and spiritual healing techniques also faces the same problem. But in terms policy making, this culture has always suppressed traditional medicine's advertising and use in favor of conventional/scientific medicine. This is because traditional medicine has always been related with witchcraft. It should be noted that in these culture, colonial systems' health care inheritance remains a problem with their bias towards allopathic health care. In fact, the discussion on the legality of traditional healers has been highly combative because of the complex political, legal, cultural and social results of the practice. From the perspective of political history, the expatriate administration and regimes perplexed by failure to establish and provide proof and distinction between traditional healing and witchcraft in legal battles outlawed both (traditional healing and witchcraft) for legal and administrative convenience.

Several media reports have emerged over time to worsen make matters. This has brought about the misunderstanding in thought against herbal medicine physicians. These reports were about those individuals who were murdered for magic and witchcraft intentions under the instructions of herbal medicine physicians. One author corroborated this point when he noted that, "Witchcraft beliefs embrace a wide range of ideas, practices, and motivations, but in their various forms they usually share the idea that the power to inflict injury and benefit could be exercised through unobservable, supernatural means". (Mutungi, 1977:16). Within Ogoja, offensive and bad expressions have been associated with witchcraft and herbal medicine. Regrettably, several of the herbal medicine physicians in the recent cities have further stretched and validity the misinformed thought process through their dishonest publicity strategies.

Most spiritual healers within Ogoja, for instance, have a general acceptance of the myth of unethical commercial activities i.e., "a trust which asserts that both business and ethics are always in parallel and cannot work together" and that they are earthly opponents. This belief system is further instituted by making use of dishonest publicity methods. most of these immoral publicity strategies that have unashamedly penetrated Ogoja local Government Area. There are some misleading arenas where we have several opinions on the issue of Herbal medicine and spiritual healing which seems to forcing, cunning, deception and other such problems associated with its publicity. The rate at which these practices have been in manifestation is becoming increasingly alarming.

IV. MORAL ADVERTISING IN MEDICAL PRACTICE: TOWARDS ENCOURAGING DECENT ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN HERBAL HEALING ADVERTISING IN OGOJA

In all sphere of human endeavour, medical science included, there are laid down principles for all those involve in business to follow. Considering the above assertion, Fieser on his part noted that, "trades have moral obligations beyond what the law sometimes requires. This is to say business is supposed to be unscrupulous and driven by the sole need for personal success. But it should consider the customers' values, interests and needs" (Fieser J, 1996:17). This is opposing to what is emerging in the advertisement of herbal medicine in Ogoja. Rather than follow Fieser's proposal as stated above, the practitioners of this brand of services are patented by excessive unethical harms. The rate at which emotional compulsion, misinforming, exaggerated competence, false guarantees, and false testimonials and the use of rhetoric, has become associated with these practices flout and dramatically compromise the basic principles of both business and medical ethics and spiritual healers' reputation in the society. In what follows, detailed accounts of public moral wrongs abound in Ogoja.

The strategy used to create public awareness in Ogoja through advertisement of herbal medicine is been branded with ethical wrong of overstated capability. The situation here is that the healer promises to cure all manner of illness and difficulties but when given the opportunity in real terms, he or she doesn't possess the required capacity or knowledge to accomplish such feats. The overstated capability becomes a convincing approach that is being use to publicizes herbal medicine. The end point of it all is that, it raises the healer's profile, credibility and competence. In such corrupt advertising approaches, the advertisers claim trustworthy through showing that he has hands-on acumen and also exhaustive information of medicines and/or spiritual powers. The advertisers normally spread all this trustworthiness in the presence of potential clientele by categorically and clearly outlining the clinical symptoms of diseases, with the view of showing the public that they have thorough knowledge of pathology and could diagnose the patient's diseases even before interacting with them. Below are some of the adverts sampled in Ogoja Local Government during the course of this research: Irregular Ejaculation: Are you a "1-minute man"? Get ejaculatory powder for you not to ejaculate quickly that will enhance your relationship with and your women, lessened libido/sex drive: Libido enhancer to make you strong and stabilize your relationships, erectile dysfunction: This may be due to aging, diabetes, relationship stress hormones or physical problems. A new Herbal Chinese mixture it takes 20 minutes before sex to give you rock hard erection permanently, Penis Pro-Enlarger: Have you failed from pills, creams, surgeries, pumps and false promises? Come try the new Chinese remedy and gel, rubbed 2 times daily for 1 week to the big cock you ever desired.

Looking at the logical contents of all the above stated adverts weaken the strength of conformist medicine by highlighting overstated capability of shrubs over systematic medication. By way of given us false information about oneself, the practitioner obviously intends to amplify their trustworthiness making one to feel he is well educated and equipped. And as well, thorough and highly experienced person. But in actuality, he has nothing to prove that, he has any professional degree or competence. By making allusion to countries like Malaysia, China, from which their products, mixtures, creams, gel and powders are sourced, the advertisers make a gaze towards convincing prospective customers that their medicines are authentic as they come from countries which are well-known for producing effective herbal medicines. All these claims tend to underscore the herbal practitioners' insatiable quest for acceptability and credibility directed towards convincing or winning the minds of prospective customers. As such, adverts of this nature result in psychological coercion on the part of prospective customers who sometimes will have exhausted the use of scientific medicine.

The truth on ground is that, there is lack of evidence in terms of making practical facts available to support such claims as those made above. In other words, no empirical or scientific evidence to prove that the advertised treatment will result in permanent healing without side effects or allergies is made available to prospective customers. Worse still, there is no evidence for the audience to prove that the healer can cure a myriad of diseases and conditions. It is in the face of this uneasiness that one can critically questions the moral acceptability of such claims. This paper therefore advances the argument that by making exaggerated competence, the healer does not only transgress against the moral precept of advertisement which stresses truth, but compromise his/her moral legitimacy in the society. Also, the advert violates, (Grice PH, 1975:19). By the quality of this saying, a discussion or conversation which involve by extension issues in advertising discourse, it is good to avoid lies and as well guide against unjustified propositions. The point to note here is that, those whose conscience have been affected by these advert placements should be encouraged to condemn such adverts. This is to serve as a moral deterrent t curtail the behavior and character of those engaged in the publicity of herbal medicine in Ogoja.

A similar most controversial advertising approach being engaged by those who are into the business advertising of herbal medicine and spiritual healing in Ogoja is untruthful assurance and incompetence. Here, some techniques that seems to be persuasive are use in inducing the confidence and emotions of potential buyers who have suffered the stress of being subject to the technique in the conventional marketable world. This observation was notice in Ogoja, untruthful assurances come in the form of wrong possibilities to potential buyers.

V. EVALUATION

“Documented lies can sometimes take the place of the truth”. Having realized the effectiveness of ‘healthy and well packaged falsehood, majority of those involve in the general publicity of herbal medicine within Ogoja Local Government Area, make use of site catching engravings and attractive linguistic labels to confuse and win over the emotional intelligence of those who give in their time to listen to them. The quest for public acceptance from their targeted audience has culminated into rhetorical titles from the part of those involve in advertisement of this nature. After branding themselves with different using such title, the practitioners went as far as creating a demarcation between themselves between and those real knowledgeable fellows in more sophisticated medical practice in charge of the wellbeing of man. The resulting consequences of the above stated is that, legitimate titles are being conferred on this brand of individuals suggesting that, they are well educated in terms of diagnosis. To critics who understand this brand of people under this study, their claims are always dubious, especially when compared with the well trained and mainstream medical doctors whose educational certificates, and the establishments where they acquired them is obvious. The deliberate act of misinformation as exemplify above has led to people losing confident. And we all know that, in the business of advertising, the issue of misinformation is a not only a public offence but also against official behaviour. The disparaging views of one author against the problem of misinformation is that, “the advertiser should always tell the whole truth about the product he wants to sell and should judge the message not by what it says but by what the reader is most likely to think it says” (Norris J, 1980:22). The idea of manipulating the public while advertising our products or trying to mislead a potential buyer is uncalled for. The decision to patronized a brand of product should be taken personally without any psychological or physical pressure.

The last advertising trick sample in Ogoja within the period of this research was the use of untruthful endorsements and laying claims the sources of their herbs. People who claim through their testimonies to have been healed by the practitioners were observed in contents of street corner adverts, electronic and print media. Far reaching sources of herbs were also given. The motivation behind the deployment of testimonies and mentioning far reaching sources of herbs is to create legitimacy, credibility and to instill confidence in prospective customers. Another observation was that, the people who give these testimonies normally provide their personal names and most of them were from low density suburbs. This was possibly meant to create the impression that the ‘poor’ prospective customers can also end up living in low density suburbs if they visit the practitioner.

The profound justifications towards the foundations of herbal medicine to be sacred and the testimonies provided by people in terms of healing are all false. If the legitimacy of the claims as provided by the witnesses were found worthy, then no negative utterance could have been pass against them. The issue of bandwagon effect which aim at invoking an unusual scenario always show up in herbal medicine. The idea of trying to coax the beleaguered listeners to participate in an agenda irrespective of their financial status, health and social condition is judge to be problematic. Challenges associated with the method of advertisement here is that, public opinion is judge to be trademark.

Another fundamental problem associated with herbal medicine advertisement is that, most of the practitioners claim to be more superior in terms of having the technical know-how than their contemporaries. This is done by making derogatory statements about their fellow opponent in the business. So, our argument here is against false testimonies and the issue of blasphemy. It is considered to be unethical to outclass one's counterpart through the use of outrageous means of publicity of the practitioners of herbal medicine within Ogoja Local Government Area.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has revealed that in contemporary Ogoja Local Government Area, advertising is used in many realms. Though, most often within the world of commercial transactions. The challenges encounter within advertising in herbal medicine as pointed out above, has to do with morality of human behavior. Considering the data collected and analyzed, the unprincipled mode of operation as put in place by herbal medicine physicians to publicized their products is prone with errors. Part of the reason why we have presented this argument is because of the demonic bearing and pejorative implications about the practice of herbal medicine and divine remedy. The unprincipled methodology employs in the publicity of herbal medicine as found within every corner of the streets in Ogoja has been found wanting. To compound the problem created, the lack of scientific investigation that dig deep into further research and study is obviously lacking in herbal medicine publicity. The demonstration provided in this research is to underscore the fact that, the rising occurrences that is characterized by improper advertising of herbal medicine has culminated into a whole lot of challenges in Ogoja. This lack of efficiency found in medical research should be curtail in the world of commercial transaction or humanity will perish. Profoundly, our position in this research is that, moral and ethical postulation should provide some framework for any business transaction and that ethics as a branch of philosophy should form the bedrock of all human endeavours. The worth and strength of this research, can be found in its pursuit to see to it that practitioners in spiritual healing and herbal medicine uphold ethical principles in ways that illuminate understanding of their practices.

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