

**BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER REFERRAL OF SELECTED PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS IN MASAKA TOWN, NASARAWA STATE NORTH CENTRAL OF NIGERIA.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study investigate brand positioning strategies and customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria. The study adopted research quantitative approach, explanatory type and survey method. The study population comprises twenty five (25) respondents of the selected pharmaceutical firms, non-probability sampling technique through 4-point Likert- scale questionnaire was employed and, the study also espoused descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient. The result from the study indicated that brand perceived quality strategy has positive impact on customer referral, brand price strategy has positive impact on customer referral, brand availability strategy has positive impact on customer referral and brand packaging strategy has positive impact on customer referral. The study concluded that brand positioning strategies impacted positively on customer referral. The study recommended that, Managers of pharmaceutical firms should employ more brand positioning strategies and also pharmaceutical firms should position its brands in the mind of prospective customers to increase its sale volume and market share*

**Keywords:** *brand positioning strategies, customer referral*

**INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, business oriented organizations set out effective strategies to clutch the attention of the target market to actualize its corporate objectives. Brand positioning strategies play significant role in reaching out the target audience, brand poisoning drive customers to purchase a specific brand of product or service. From the marketing viewpoint brand positioning is an element that create an emotional response for brand identification and recognition lead to customer brand loyalty, repeat purchases and customer retention. According to Igwe (2016), brand refer to product or service that is publicly distinguished from other firms products or services that it can be easily communicated to the target market. Positioning entails tactical procedure that firms adopted to regulate the place that an organizational offerings should occupy in a given target market relative to other customer alternatives and, positioning is very important for introduction of new product or service, it assist organization including consumers to comprehend how new offering fits into the set of available market (Muhammad& Abdul,2015). In split of Stavros (2013), described brand positioning strategies as tactical means to influences customers purchasing decisions in a manner that consumer perceive a brand as unique, true attributes to meet consumer's needs. Brand positioning strategies is the activities that firms performed to position its preferred products or services in the mind of the customer relative to its rivalry (Thomas,2015).According to Mita *etal*,(1989) cited in Akpabio and Oladele (2015),brand positioning strategies refer to the activities of designing the firm's offering and image to occupy a separate place in the mind of the target market and, the objective of brand positioning strategies are to find the brand in the mind of customers (Mita *etal*,1989) cited in (Akpabio & Oladele,2015).Akpabio and Oladele (2015),further outline effective brand positioning strategies employed by organizations such as brand perceived quality strategy , brand price strategy, brand packaging strategy brand availability strategy to enhance customers satisfaction, brand loyalty, customer retention, customer repeat patronage, and customer referral. Mita *etal*, (1989), describe referral as process of promoting products or services to new customers through referrals, usually word of mouth. Notwithstanding the cumulative level of health-related information

obtainable on the online platform, it still seems that many health care consumers need help in considerate product information as consumers are seen to be disordered and occasionally frightened when accessible with drugs that are disliked and yet to be knowledgeable (Luxton, 2015) cited in (Goodie-Okio, 2022). It has not lined out the indication of unwell performed pharmaceutical firms notwithstanding, some of these firms adopted the strategies. The predominant little presentation may also not be unrelated with organizational incapability to teach brand positioning strategies in their marketing plan. These expectations are based on the principles that brand positioning strategies assist organizations stand out even in violent rivalry as it is effective in creating awareness, building interest and activating the acceptance of products as pointed out by (Mohr, 2017) cited in (Goodie-Okio, 2022). Brand positioning strategies assist consumers to generate information about a brand even from his/her family, friends and close associates. This establish trust and afterward acceptance of products. Based on the preceding, the study seek to establish the effect of brand positioning strategies on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since pharmaceutical firms are developing very fast, the level of rivalry is also growing. In order to increase its sales volume, market shares and profit level, pharmaceutical firms are to be more tactical in ensuring how its products or services are be consume by the target market. Successful and lucrative processes by pharmaceutical firms request that such strategic blue-prints must be attractive enough to provoke customer patronage. Pharmaceutical firms are occasionally faced with strange problems in positioning and promoting their products or services. In Nigeria today, pharmaceutical firms are facing intense rivalry on how to out-rival one another. With a high rate of customer expectations and increased in ecological effect the industry countless of factors have been used to explore patronage of products or services, but peculiar problems tackle pharmaceutical firms are inability of positioning its products or services in the mind of target market.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study aim was to examine the impact of brand positioning strategies on customer referral of selected Pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria. The Specific objectives include:

1. To determine the impact of brand perceived quality strategy on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.
2. To analyze the impact of brand price strategy on customer referral of selected Pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.
3. To investigate the impact of brand availability strategy on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in MasakaTown, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.
4. To find out the impact of brand packaging strategy on customer referral of selected Pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

Questions examine in this study are:

1. To what extent does brand perceived quality strategy impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria?
2. To what extent does brand price strategy impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria?
3. To what extent does brand availability strategy impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria?

4 To what extent does brand packaging strategy impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms?

### Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses of the study are as follows:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Brand perceived quality strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Brand price strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** Brand availability strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** Brand packaging strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

### Literature review

#### Brand Positioning:

Every customers have different ideas, mindset about brands or products including services with different expectations. Brand positioning signifies the growth by which marketers try to create a figure in the minds of their targeted market for their product. Brand positioning refer to features of product and brand communicated to the mind of the target customers (Muhammad & Abdul 2015). Brand positioning refer to the set of relationships that the consumer has with a brand (Batra, Myers & Aaker 1996) cited in (Stanley, 2012). According to Pearce and Robinson, (2003) Cited in Stanley (2012). Brand Positioning is a procedure of expressing a marketing mix that finds a product and/or service in the mind of the customers.

#### Brand perceived quality strategy

According to Sitanggang (2019) cited in Akpabio, and Oladele (2021), brand positioning by perceived quality has to do with the brand attributes or the customer benefits. Brands are usually positioned along two or more attributes or features. This involves setting up a distinguishing brand idea or characteristics so that customers are willing to make purchases even if it requires lining up on a line and paying more money for the desire of getting their favourite brand made with every manner of taste and finished off exactly the way they prefer it to be tasted (Khan *et al*, 2018) cited in (Akpabio & Oladele, 2021).

#### Brand price strategy

Every customers understanding about brand price that higher the brand price the healthier the quality of brand. Customers usually observe that if a brand is costly the cost of creating higher, it is assumed by the customer that it is of a good quality (Andaleeb, 2017) cited in (Akpabio & Oladele, 2021).. Every product quality attach with a given price, therefore brand price is value worth for a product or services determine by the firm (Sengupta,1990) Cited in (Stanley,2012).A customer opinions products or services in a class at dissimilar levels of price offering, different values of quality and chooses which level is most appropriate for a specific need. Customers have different prospects of quality at diverse levels of social flexibility and thus offer the chance for price quality satisfaction and positioning (Batra & Aaker, 1996)

#### Brand availability strategy

Successful business oriented must provide availability of brand for its customers, availability of brand inspire customers' to repeat purchase from a specific firms, because customers believed in availability of brand in any giving period of time. Availability of brand made trustworthy firms to generate more income and also achieve its goal and objectives (Akbar *etal*, 2017). Brand availability is not purposely for having items fully available 100% of the time but rather having items available when the customer needs it (Andaleeb, 2017).

### **Brand packaging strategy**

Packaging provides a brand or product identification. Packaging is the rudimentary need of every brand or product. Without packaging the brand or product cannot be stowed or moved from one location to another. Therefore, packaging is the procedure of providing a defensive and enlightening covering to the product in such a way that it protects the product during material handling, storage and drive and, also provide useful information to all the concerned parties about the content of the package. Brand packaging comprises placing brand or product in containers or covering them with wrappers (Lee, 2017). Philip Kotler (2001), defines packaging as an activity which is concerned with protection, economy, convenience, and promotional considerations.

### **Customer referral**

Generally, referral in marketing perspective is the technique of promoting products or services to new customers through referrals, usually word of mouth potentials (Berman, 2016). Referral in marketing refer to process of maximizing word-of-mouth potential to introduce new customers to the business and, it is initiated by firms to incentivize existing customers to introduce new customers (Ryu *etal*, 2020). Businesses involve referral marketing purposely inspire their customers to inform their friends, family and associate about the firms preferred product or services through Word-of-mouth (Christian, *etal*, 2013).

### **Theoretical foundation**

The following theories anchored on the study

#### **Brand positioning theory**

The researcher underpinned the study on positioning theory. Positioning theory was originated in 1980 by Bronwyn Davies. Theory state that, positioning is the process of identifying, defining, and managing the insight pertinent audiences of a specific firms preferred , products, services, or idea (Harré, *eteal* 2015). Manhas, (2010), opined that, understanding the potential customer's mental insights of brand is the core midpoint of brand positioning, that every customers has brand desire and preferences, the adopted strategy by firm must be position in the mind of prospective consumer so that it stands for rivalry and approximates more closely to what the consumer wants. The theory further, explained that, brand positioning, as a marketing activities that shape and maintain a particular brand's image based on major features and relative competing brands-in the consumer's mind'. Tactically, that brand positioning forces the firms to describe the strengths and shortcomings of a new or existing brand to identify the position which the brand will occupy in consumers' minds in terms of significant features to the target audience and to specify how the variable of the marketing mix will be used to maintain the chosen brand position. Igwe (2016), on the study brand management, concept, theory and practice, the study, asserted that, brand positioning refer to the activity of creating a brand offer in such a way that it occupy a distinctive place and value in the mind of target market, that brand positioning comprises identifying and determining points of similarity and difference to ascertain the right brand identity and to create a proper brand image.

#### **Consumers**

#### **perception**

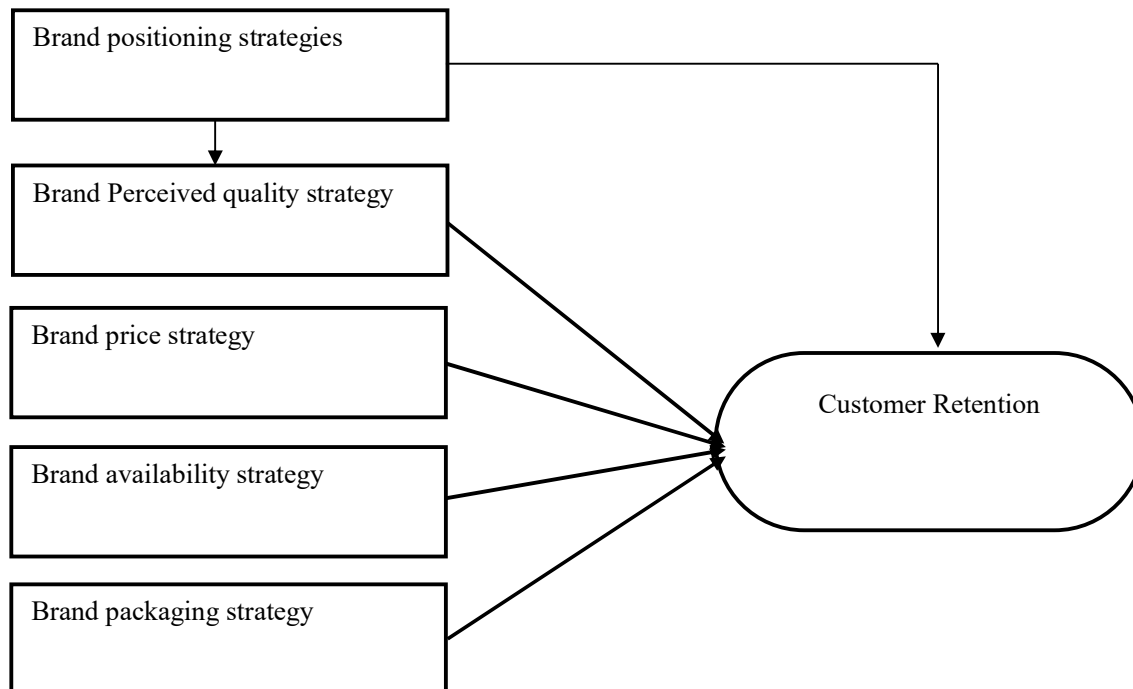
#### **theory**

Consumer perception is an idea that clarify why consumer behaves a certain way and what consumers believes in, in different aspects of life. (Blank, 2015) Blank, (2015) Identifies consumer perception theory: self-perception, price perception and perception of a benefit to quality of life as three areas of consumer perception theory. Hanna and Wozniak, (2013), Explains perception as a process of collecting and interpreting feelings to complete and an understandable concept. And further mention that in the past research was only focused on evaluating responses through examining the five senses, while in the present drawing perception using smell, sight, taste, smell and touch is not enough. Although they still believe that senses. For consumers these benefits could be convenience, health or safety or any category that elevates the experience they are looking for as that specific product category. So when companies understand what benefits the consumers are

looking for, they could leverage of their capabilities and focus on communicating these benefits and hopefully.

### Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework was developed to guide the study.



**Fig 2.1:** Conceptual framework of Brand positioning Strategies and Customer Referral.

### Research Method

This research was an explanatory type and quantitative approach using a survey method.

### The Study Population

The population of this study comprises twenty five (25) staff and customers of three (3) selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria, and the Pharmaceutical firms include: Life Camp Pharmacy Limited, Delas Pharmacy Limited and God is Able Pharmacy limited.

### Method of Data Collection

The main sources of data is Primary source via self-administered questionnaire. Secondary sources was used to generate some vital information on the subject matter.

### Sampling Technique

Non-probability sampling was used to collect data from twenty five (25) customers who were brand mindful and do frequently buy items of different brands.

### Sample Size

The sample size is twenty five (25) random staff and customers of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria.

**Instrument of Data Collection**

The instrument for the data collection is a Self-administered Questionnaire,

**Validity**

Content and face validity was adopted by the researcher to draws an inference from test scores.

**Reliability Test**

**Table 3.1: Cronbach's Alpha Test for Reliability Statistics**

<b>variables</b>	<b><i>Cronbach's Alpha</i></b>	<b><i>N of case</i></b>	<b><i>N of Items</i></b>
Brand percieved quality strategy	0.78	25	3
Brand Price strategy	0.83	25	3
Brand Avialabilty strategy	0.79	25	3
Brand packaging brstrategy	0.81	25	3
Customer referral	0.84	25	3

**Source,** SPSS window output, 2023

**Method of data analysis**

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses.

**Data Presentation, Data Analysis and Results**

Data collected were analyzed in descriptive statistics - tables and percentage for respondents' demographics and inferential statistics.

**Demographic Analysis**

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<b><i>Table 1: age bracket</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency Percentage</i></b>	
25- 35 years	10	40
35 - 45 years	7	28
45- 55 years	8	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study,10(40%) were 25- 35 years, 7 (28%) were 35 - 45, years, 8 (32%) were 45- 55 years.

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<i>Table:2 Gender</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
Male	8	32
Female	17	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study, 8(32%) were male and, 17(68%) were female.

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<i>Table 3 : position</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
Manager	5	20
Nurse.	13	52
Pharmacist	7	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study, 5(20%) were Manager, 13 (52%) Nurse, 7 (28%) were pharmacist.

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<i>Table 4: Duration of</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
2-4 years	8	32
4 -6 years	5	20
6-8 years	12	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study,8(32%) were 2-4 years, 5 (20%) were 4 - 6 years, 12 (48%) were 6-8

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<i>Table 5: Marital Status</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
Widowed	2	8
Divorced	2	8
Married	10	40
Single	11	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study, 2(8%) is Widowed 2 (8%) were Divorcee, 10 (40%) were Married, 11(44%) were Single.

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<i>Table 6: Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
FSLC	2	8
WAEC	8	32
NCE/OND	9	36
HND/B.SC	6	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study, 2(8%) were FSLC 8 (32%) were WEAC, 9 (36%) were NCE/OND HND/B.SC, 6 (24%) were HND/B.SC..

**Respondents' Demographic Data**

<i>Table 7: Income level</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	
40,000 - 50,000	7	28
50,000 – 60,000	8	32
70 ,000- above	10	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Survey Data, 2023**

The above table signify that, from the total 25 respondents participated in the study, 7(28%) were 40,000 - 50, 000, 8 (32%) were 50,000 – 60,000, 10 (40%) were 70, 000-and above.

**Table 4.8: Correlations**

	<b>Brand percived quality strategy</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
<b>Referrals</b>		
Pearson correlation	351 .000	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	25	25
N		

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

P<.05= S

P>.05= NS

**Table 4.9 : Correlations**

	<b>Brand price strategy</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
<b>Referrals</b>		
Pearson correlation	-.175 .002	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	25	25
N		

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  
 P<.05= S  
 P>.05= NS

**Table 4.10 : Correlations**

	<b>Brand availability strategy</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
<b>Referrals</b>		
Pearson correlation	0.110	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	
N	25	25

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  
 P<.05= S  
 P>.05= NS

**Table 4.11: Correlations**

	<b>Brand packaging strategy</b>	<b>Referrals</b>
<b>Referrals</b>		
Pearson correlation	0.077	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.001	
N	25	25

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  
 P<.05= S  
 P>.05= NS

**Discussion of findings**

**Test of hypotheses**

**Decision rule:** Null hypothesis should be rejected when the significant value is below 0.05. Null hypothesis should be accepted when the significant value is greater than 0.05.

**Test of hypothesis 1:**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Brand perceived quality strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa, and State North Central of Nigeria. The result from table 4.8, reveal that brand perceived quality strategy has positive impact on customer referrals. (r =>351, p< =.000).The null hypothesis one was rejected at .05 alpha levels.

**Test of hypothesis 2:**

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Brand price strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria .The result from the table 4.9, reveal that brand price strategy has positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms. (r =-.175, p< =.002). The null hypothesis two was rejected at .05 alpha level.

**Test of hypothesis 3:**

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** Brand availability strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected Pharmaceutical firms in Masaka town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria. The result from the table 4.10, reveal that, brand availability strategy has positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms. ( $r = >0.110, p < =.000$ ). The null hypothesis three was rejected at .05 alpha level.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** Brand packaging strategy has no positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms in Masaka town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria .The result from the table 411 reveal that brand packaging strategy has positive impact on customer referral of selected pharmaceutical firms. ( $r = >0.0779, p < =.002$ ).The null hypothesis four was rejected at .05 alpha.

### CONCLUSION

This study limitations was on deeper investigation on Brand Positioning Strategies and Customer Referral of Selected Pharmaceutical Firms in Masaka Town, Nasarawa State North Central of Nigeria. The findings found original viewpoints with reference to research and also put forward shrewd managerial implications. Obviously, this study was carried out in Nigeria, up-and-coming economy .The results reveal that brand positioning strategies (brand perceived quality, brand price, brand availability and brand packaging) impacted positively on customer referrals. This declaration supports previous domino impacts in this examination flow, such as Muhammad and Abdul (2015) whose findings show that brand positioning strategies has positive impact on consumer standpoint.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis conducted and the findings inferred in addition to the literature review and responses from respondents, the following recommendations are considered important to know the effectiveness of brand positioning strategies which would perpetually lead to high customer referrals in pharmaceutical firms. Managers of pharmaceutical firms should employ more brand positioning strategies and also pharmaceutical firms should position its brands in the mind of prospective customers to increase its sale volume and market share.

### Limitations and Future Research

The study was specifically on selected pharmaceutical firms in Nasarawa Town State, North Central of Nigeria. Further research can be conducted on service firms such as Airline firms, fast food firms etc. The research was limited to the elements of brand positioning strategies and customer referrals. Conceptual framework can be transformed by seeing other variables like brand association, brand equity, brand personality, and customer loyalty.

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### SECTION A

Please respond to this Section Appropriately General Questions by ticking.

- 1 **How old are you?**  
(a) 25 -35 years (b) 35-45 years (c) 435- 55 years
- 2 **Gender: (M/F**
- 3 **present position**  
(a) Manager (b) Nurse (c) Pharmacist
- 4 **How long have you served?**  
(a) 2-4 year (b) 4 - 6 years (c) 6-8 years
- 5 **What is your marital status?**  
(a) Single (b) married (c) divorced (d) widowed
- 6 **Educational attainment**  
(a)FSLC (b) WAEC (c) NCE/ ND/Bed (d) B. SC HND (e) MBA/M.Sc
- 7 **Income level :**(a) 40, 000 - 50, 000(b) 50,000 – 60,000(c)70, 000- above

### SECTION B

#### QUESTIONNAIRES FOR RESEARCH ON BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER REFERRAL OF SELECTED PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS IN MASAKA TOWN, NASARAWA STATE NORTH CENTRAL OF NIGERIA

**SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree**  
**Please tick and indicate appropriately response from strongly agree to strongly disagree**

S/	ITEMS	S	A	D	SD
		A	3	2	1
		4			

	<b>Perceived brand quality strategy</b>					
1	Every product quality attach with a given price.					
2	Every customers understanding about brand price that, higher the brand price the healthier the quality of brand.					
3	Brand positioning by perceived quality has to do with the brand attributes or the customer benefits.					
	<b>Brand price strategy</b>					
4	Every customers understanding about brand price.					
5	Every product quality attach with a given price.					
6	Brand price is value worth for a product or services determine by the firm.					
	<b>Brand availability strategy</b>					
7	Successful business oriented must provide availability of brand for its customer.					
8	Availability of brand inspire customers' to repeat purchase from a specific firms, because customers believed in availability of brand in any giving period of time.					
9	Brand availability is not purposely for having items fully available 100% of the time but rather having items available when the customer needs it.					
	<b>Brand packing strategy</b>					
1 0	Packaging provides a brand or product identification.					
1 1	Packaging is the rudimentary need of every brand or product,					
1 2	Without packaging the brand or product cannot be stowed or moved from one location to another.					
	<b>Customer referral</b>					
1 3	Referral in marketing perspective is the technique of promoting products or services to new customers through referrals, usually word of mouth potentials.					
1 4	Referral in marketing refer to process of maximizing word-of-mouth potential to introduce new customers to the business.					
1 5	Businesses involve referral marketing purposely inspire their customers to inform their friends, family and					

	associate about the firms preferred product or services through Word-of-mouth.					
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**KEY NOTE:**

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree