

Promotional Methods Contributing to the Pharmaceutical Brand Building: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, there has been a paradigm change in India's attitudes on healthcare. In recent years, India, like other developing nations, has seen a steady increase in noncommunicable illnesses. Cardiac illness, diabetes, gastrointestinal and neurological system ailments are increasing. International health agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the government healthcare system have expanded their attention on these illnesses. Because of an overall improvement in the people's socio-economic situation and education level, there has been an increase in population awareness and treatment and advice-seeking behavior. This has increased pharmaceutical research and development as well as marketing. This study is empirical. It has been found that promotional methods are essential for the pharmaceutical industry and influence physicians to get good results. A sample of 211 respondents was surveyed to know promotional methods in the Pharmaceutical Industry and their level of effectiveness in influencing physicians to recommend medicines. It is found that there is a significant effect of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians to recommend medicines.

Keywords- Promotional Methods, Advertising, Medical Representatives, Pharmaceutical Industry, Physicians.

I. INTRODUCTION

India has a lengthy history of pharmaceutical development, and its structured pharmaceutical market is ranked 11th in the world. Many prominent global firms see the Indian pharmaceutical industry as a partner due to its market strengths. Even though a few behemoths control the pharmaceutical business in India, fragmentation is evident, with 20,000 registered entities contending for a part of the market. According to estimates, the Indian pharmaceutical sector meets over 70% of the country's need for various pharmaceutical goods such as pharmaceuticals, drug intermediates, formulations, tablets, capsules, and injectables. In terms of volume, the Indian pharmaceutical market is rated third globally. In recent years, Indian pharmaceutical companies have created a name for themselves in generics and vaccines.

The brand-building strategies in the pharmaceutical sector can be considered as the

combination of Promotion, Corporate Reputation, Nomenclature, and Brand Quality, as depicted in the chart below (Figure 1)

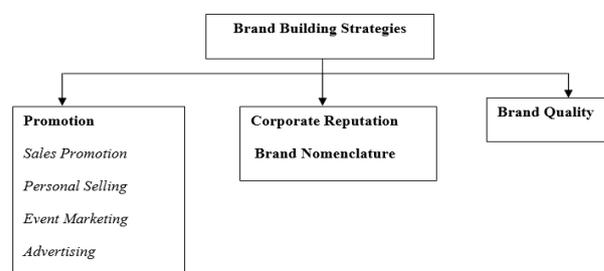


Figure 1: Different components of Brand Building Strategies

The communication strategies (promotional strategies) by pharmaceutical companies aim to bring the existing brand knowledge of physicians to the desired brand knowledge.



Figure 2: Role of communication in the enhancement of Brand Knowledge

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A drug sample is described as a predetermined number of medications provided free of charge for clinical evaluation by physicians and patient therapy (Warrier, Monaghan, Maio, Huggett, Rich, 2010). Medical representatives from the firm who visit the physician distribute medicine samples, particularly for the brand they need a prescription. Physician samples are a valuable source of brand recall. As previously discussed, pharmaceutical companies providing free samples to physicians significantly influence prescription behavior. The physician can directly check the therapeutic effectiveness of the medicine by trying it on the patient and can also help the physician enhance the physician-patient relationship. The physician may examine the therapeutic effectiveness and the worry about safety in terms of unwanted effects by soliciting comments from patients after asking them to utilize the free samples (Groves et al., 2003).

Furthermore, medicine samples serve as long-term reminders to doctors about the marketed brands. According to Costa (1983), distributing product samples is a rapid, secure, and selective technique of filtering brands into customer lives. They also saw it as a highly tailored technique that may boost brand recognition, trial, full-revenue purchase, and ultimate conversion even in the most brand-loyal regions. Small advertising stationery such as calendars, diaries, pencils, note pads, and other office equipment also affected physicians' prescription choices. Pitt and Nel (1988). Several empirical studies have indicated that drug samples or physician samples impact prescription behavior (Chew et al., 2000; Hall et al., 2006; Symm et al., 2006). Adair and Holmgren (2005) discovered that samples impacted prescription behavior, and physicians aimed to provide highly prescribed medications. Physicians prefer generic drugs for patients who do not have health insurance. However, there is no difference in prescription behavior for medically insured patients. Physician samples were deemed significant by 90 percent of those polled. Furthermore, Schumock et al. (2004) indicated that doctors believe that the availability of medication samples and the physicians' personal expertise with the treatments had the most significant effect on their prescription choice. In their research, Gaedeke et al. (1999) discovered that free samples offered by medical representatives are crucial to physicians, with the majority (65%) considering it highly significant.

III. EVENT MARKETING

Pharmaceutical firms invite doctors to medical symposia and conferences to learn about new medications, their uses, and potential adverse effects. In his qualitative research on the doctors' decision process for medication prescription, Campo et al. (2006) discovered that free conference participation affects drug choice in specific scenarios. Scientific publications, medical symposia, and conferences are regarded as reliable sources of information regarding newer medicines and formulations and their indications and adverse effects. Physicians consider conferences/symposia to be the most reliable source of knowledge. These pharmaceutical company initiatives are part of event marketing since they enable doctors to connect with the brands. These incidents also persuade the doctors to test a fresh brand, which he was not accustomed to writing about before. (Wood & Masterman, 2008). Pharmaceutical Medical representatives explain their different firms' brands to the physician. Detailing is the process by which a physician is given valuable and critical information regarding a brand's effectiveness, toxicity, and pricing of drugs. Detailing is a vital practice that may not always be entirely correct.

Narayanan et al. (2005) explored the function of learning in promoting new goods via marketing communication. They propose a paradigm in which doctors learn about the quality of newly introduced pharmaceuticals via marketing communication activities such as detailing and physician meetings initiated by pharmaceutical companies and through their own usage-based experience. This research discovered that detailing has a mostly indirect (learning impact) in the early phases of the product and a direct (persuasive) influence afterward. The physician may be obligated to prescribe the marketed brand if he or she visits the MR at frequent times. It is the most delicate promotional technique any pharmaceutical firm uses and has been used as the preferred medium for developing trust and valued relationships with physicians (Brand & Kumar, 2003).

The pharmaceutical business employs doctors' agents via persuasive communication and promotional materials to influence which brands or products they prescribe. Push methods successfully persuade doctors to prescribe the x goods offered by reps (Parker & Pettijohn, 2006). Several research papers have shown that medical literature may be used to influence prescription behavior. It was discovered that printed materials are viewed as the second most essential source of pharmacological information. Journal articles were shown to be the most helpful in determining new medicine's effectiveness.

According to Keller (2009), customers have a variety of attitudes about a brand, the most important of which is their assessment of the brand's quality. Aside from this, the other significant-quality factors are perceived value and product satisfaction. Brand attitude

may be defined as a consumer's overall opinion of a brand. Consumer brand attitudes provide the future foundation for actions and behavior toward a particular brand, and they are based on certain desirable features assigned to the brand. A pharmaceutical product's quality is defined as the degree to which it meets the required pharmacological characteristics and its capacity to treat the diseases for which it is prescribed. It also considers whether it will last for the set length of time, often known as a product's shelf-life. Ahmad, Sattar, and Vishnu (2014) The form in which the medicine is offered, such as capsules, pills, syrup, injection, is an essential aspect that influences its perceived quality. This is an essential consideration for doctors when giving medications to patients (Wazana, 2000).

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the various appropriate promotional methods in the Pharmaceutical Industry
2. To measure the effectiveness of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians for recommending medicines

V. HYPOTHESIS

H1o There is no significant effect of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians to recommend medicines.

H1a There is a significant effect of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians to recommend medicines.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample of 211 people from the marketing sector was surveyed to know promotional methods in the Pharmaceutical Industry and their level of effectiveness in influencing physicians to recommend medicines. The study is empirical, and the primary data was collected through random sampling. The Chi-square test was applied to reach to results.

VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table 1: General profile of the respondents

Variable	No. of respondents	Total %age
Gender		
Male	119	56.4
Female	92	43.6
Total	211	100
Age		
27-38 yrs	76	36.1

38-45 yrs	83	39.3
Above 45 yrs	52	24.6
Total	211	100
Occupation (marketing team)		
Market research analysts	47	22.3
Brand managers	59	28.0
SEO specialists	38	18.0
Digital marketing managers	41	19.4
Others	26	12.3
Total	211	100
Promotional methods		
Media	57	27.0
Building relations	49	23.2
Online communities	36	17.1
Freebees	42	19.9
Others	27	12.8
Total	211	100
Work experience		
0-8 years	77	36.5
8-12 yrs	89	42.2
More than 12 yrs	45	21.3
Total	211	100

Table 2: Promotional Methods Contributing to the Pharmaceutical Brand Building

SI. No.	Promotional Methods Contributing to the Pharmaceutical Brand Building
1.	Pharmaceutical companies are providing free samples to physicians through their medical representatives.
2.	Medical representatives promote the brand and distribute medicine samples to physicians.
3.	Small advertising stationery such as calendars, diaries, pencils, note pads, and other office equipment was offered to physicians.
4.	Pharmaceutical firms invite doctors to medical symposia and conferences.
5.	Scientific publications, medical symposia, and conferences are regarded as reliable sources of information regarding newer medicines.
6.	Promotion of new goods via marketing communication
7.	Pharma companies send promotional material to doctors and hospitals.

8.	Pharma companies sponsor "continuing medical education" to promote their brands.
9.	A "search marketing (SEO) strategy" were used to increase visibility on search engines
10.	Pharma companies are creating "compelling content" and "experiences" to encourage the interaction and participation of the users.

Table 3: Effectiveness of promotional methods in influencing physicians

Promotional methods	Level of Effectiveness			Total
	Not effective	Less Effective	Highly Effective	
Media	9	17	31	57
Building relations	5	25	19	49
Online communities	12	9	15	36
Freebees	14	7	21	42
Others	9	4	14	27
Total	49	62	100	211
Value of Chi-square				23.6407
Degree of freedom				8
p-value				.002

Table 3 shows the effect of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians to recommend medicines. It is found in the table that the p-value is below 0.05 (0.000); hence the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted that there is a significant effect of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians for recommending medicines.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Promotional methods are a variety of activities that influence the customers in all the fields. Marketing literature mentions that there is immense importance of promotional methods in the field of pharmaceutical marketing. Overall, pharmaceutical marketing considers the physicians as the customers or consumers because the actual consumer of pharmaceutical – patients are not the decision-makers in pharmaceutical. They follow the instructions of the doctors while buying the medicines. In this study, it was found that doctors are influenced by the promotional methods done by pharmaceutical companies.

It is found that several promotional methods in the Pharmaceutical Industry influence the physicians for recommending medicines, and the study concludes that there is a significant effect of applicable promotional methods in influencing physicians for recommending medicines.

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