



TO DETERMINE THE PHARMACEUTICAL PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES AFFECTING PHYSICIAN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PHYSICIAN AND MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVE IN PUNJAB

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Abstract

Pharmaceutical industry is one of the rapidly growing Industry globally. It is exploring new ways of promoting products to the Physicians who are the key decision makers for prescribing Drugs to the end customer which is Patient. Pharmaceutical Industry is spending huge on promoting drugs to the Physicians in innovative ways so as to influence the physician. The study was conducted to find the impact of various Promotional Strategies adopted by Pharmaceutical Companies for influencing Physician Prescription and the Physician's perspective about these pharmaceutical strategies in the area of Punjab. A qualitative study was conducted for determining the various Promotional strategies and the Physician's Perspective in Punjab. Interviews were conducted and Open-ended questions were asked to 50 Physicians and 50 Medical Representatives. The main conclusion was that the Physicians develop perception about Pharmaceutical Company based on the Engagement activities with the Physician, Product Knowledge of the Medical Representative and the way the Drugs are promoted to the Physician (sharing about the benefits and the side effect profile of the drug) and these were found to be the most effective marketing strategies of the Pharmaceutical Industry for promoting Drugs. The Medical Representatives were also of the same opinion except for the influence of incentives on the Physicians prescription which was not considered as important factor by the Physicians.

Index Terms – Physician, Pharmaceutical Promotional Strategies, Medical Representative

I. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the fastest growing Pharmaceutical market globally. Indian pharmaceutical Market has expanded dramatically in the last few years with the revenue generation of US\$ 20 Billion in 2010 and is expected to grow at CAGR 9-10% by 2021. The industry ranks 3rd largest in terms of size, rank 14th in terms of its worth globally (Ankush,2017) and 4th Largest producer of Generic Drugs. The Pharmaceutical companies are spending huge on Sales and Marketing of the products rather than Research and Development. The Marketing strategies of the Pharmaceutical companies revolve around the Physician who is the key stakeholder in their business and is responsible for writing prescription of their Drugs. The recommendation of Medicine is an important factor in raising expenditure in Health Services (Forder,1995). 62% of the Physicians believed that sharing proofs related with the benefits influence the Prescription pattern while 88% believed sharing Scientific Knowledge with the Physicians can influence their prescription pattern (Avon et al,1982). The Marketing Strategies are personalised as per the need of the Physician, whether Physician requires Patient support programmes, academic activities, Sponsorships. Companies follow the OPPI code of Pharmaceutical Practices 2012 for ensuring appropriate interaction with the Physicians.

2.Review of Literature

The competition is increasing day by day as more companies are coming up in the market with their brands and survival of the fittest is the key, means the one who responds timely only survives. In this competition Physicians are the key stake holders for the Pharmaceutical Industry. Physicians are the ones who decide what to Prescribe to the patients. So all the Marketing Strategies are made keeping in mind the Physician as the key Stake Holder (Waheed et al, 2007)

The Physicians in the private sector value more personal selling and educational promotional tools as compared to the DM's who value scientific promotional tools in comparison to MD and PG diploma Drs when the influence of various promotional tools on Physicians was studied (Taneja, 2008).

The study of the factors manipulating the Physician Prescription concluded that the way by which the salesperson promotes trade names by using various promotional tools was found to be the most effective (Shamimululhaq et al.,2014).

The Physician prescription is influenced not only by effective advertisement but is also affected by the class of information provided (Kerr et al, 2003).

The extreme advertising and endorsement of a Drug Gabapentin resulted in its increased usage in unapproved indications. The study was conducted to find the impact of various promotional practices on the on prescribing behaviour of Physicians (Steinman at al., 2007)

3. Research Methodology

Qualitative method was adopted and the data was collected from Physicians who prescribed drugs and Medical Representatives who facilitated the sale of Drugs, in order to get an unbiased result. Open-ended interviews were conducted with 50 Physicians and 50 Medical Representatives. 28 Physicians were specialists and 22 Physicians were general practitioners, 31 Physicians were from Private/ Corporate hospitals and 11 were from Government hospitals and 8 were having their private practice. 15 Medical Representatives were from Multinational companies and 35 of them were from Indian Companies. 17 Medical Representatives were having experience of less than 1 year while 20 of them has experience between 1-10 years and 13 Medical Representatives were having experience above 10 years. Open-ended questions were asked to Medical Representatives on how do they promote the Drugs to Physicians and to which promotional strategy do the Physicians have better acceptance.

The Physicians were asked about how do they get the information about any drug, how do medical representatives promote the drug and any strategy adopted by the pharmaceutical companies which they think is the most effective way of promoting the drug to Physicians; whether gifts and incentives influence their prescription pattern or the fellow Physicians of their area influence there prescription pattern ; Do the product knowledge of the Medical Representative leaves a positive impact on the Physician and influences there Prescription pattern. All these questions were asked to know the Physician's Perspective.

4. Objectives

- 1) To find the most effective Pharmaceutical Strategy from the perspective of Physician
- 2) To find the most effective Pharmaceutical Strategy from the perspective of Medical representative

5. Findings

5.1 Sharing information about the Drug and Brand reminders

Physicians shared that they came to know about the new drugs through launch meetings which are organised by the Pharmaceutical companies for either launching a brand or launching old brand for new indication. They use innovative ways of launching new Drugs by providing Standees in the clinics and hospitals and also organising meetings for discussion of those brands. This happens for the speciality segment however for the general pharma they use the flip cards or ipads for detailing followed by continuous reminders both by general pharma drugs and the speciality drugs. Medical Representatives share the safety and efficacy data with Physicians. According to Physicians the Medical representatives rarely mention about the Drug interactions and adverse drug reactions however few of the multinational Medical Representatives share the same. Physicians shared that the Medical Representatives often waste their time and are intrusion in their clinical practice so most of the Physicians have either kept days on which they will meet mostly in case of specialist and few Physicians like General practitioners have kept first 3 or 4 Medical Representatives. Physicians feel that that the time spent with Medical Representatives can be utilized for seeing patients however some Physicians see value in visit of few Medical representatives who either assist Physician for their work by being a part of some screening camps or doing some engagement activities with the Physicians where Physician see some value. Also General Practitioners encourage Medical Representatives to meet them as they find value in the samples they give to Physicians and they consider these samples as Brand Reminders too.

The Medical Representatives shared that the information related to the Drugs are shared by them either through LBL(Leave Behind Literatures) or by using iPads as it is believed that the visual input leaves a longer impact on the minds of the Physician.

Previously small gifts like pens, Prescription pads, minor medical equipment's were used as Brand reminders but due to change in the MCI guidelines Pharmaceutical Companies have stopped doing them.

5.2 Engagement Activities

The Medical Representatives from Multinational Companies shared that the Pharmaceutical Companies have made it mandatory for the Medical Representatives to do some engagement activities with the Physicians as per the need of the Physician. Some of the Physicians require Screening Camps to be organised where the patients are screened Free of cost and later on visit the Physician for the disease detected. This can vary from screening for Diabetes to a severe disease like cancer. Pharmaceutical Companies have been actively doing these camps as the Physicians as well as Medical representatives both see a value in doing such activities. Another activity done by Medical Representatives include the Referral Meetings which is usually done by specialists so that the disease specific patients are referred to them by the General Practitioners, the target audience for these type of activities are usually General Practitioners. Few multinational Pharmaceutical Companies have categorised their activities into Promotional and Non-Promotional Activities. Promotional activities are the ones where the intent is to promote their Drug to the Physician and the Non-Promotional Activities are the ones where the intent is to create awareness about the disease and not the Drug. Creating awareness about the Disease is also considered important by the Companies as Disease Awareness will only promote early detection of the disease and if detected early few diseases can be even cured which ultimately benefits Patients, Physicians and Pharmaceutical Companies as well. Few Physicians organize National and International Conferences where Pharmaceutical Companies sponsor in a big way depending upon the business they are getting from the Physician who is organizing conference. Pharmaceutical Companies can sponsor travel and stay of the Physician only if they are faculty or presenting Research Paper or Poster presentation there. Few Physicians have made societies to get funding for the activities from Pharmaceutical Companies as due to strict MCI guidelines it is becoming difficult for Physicians to get funding for their activities.

5.3 Patient Support Programs

Both the Indian as well as Multinational Companies have Patient support Programs for sharing the financial burden of the Patient. For the non-affordable patients Companies have Support Programs depending on the Annual earning of a patient. Multinational Companies offer more support to the non-affordable patients by evaluating if they actually are having low income and the benefit is going to the right patient however some companies have a common support for all the patients whether affording or non-affording. Some companies provide

coupons to the patients for the tests which are very expensive like the mutation tests that are being done, the Pharmaceutical Companies either share a part of cost of test or provide entire test free of cost.

5.4 Digital Information

Pharmaceutical companies now prefer to go for the digital information sharing with the Physicians as shared by Medical Representatives and the same is preferred by young Physicians, but the elderly Physicians prefer to go with the hard copies. The detailing is happening through iPad both by National and Multinational Companies. Due to increase in the acceptance of the digital information by Physicians, the Pharmaceutical companies are now promoting Drugs through Apps developed for promoting Drugs and also sharing the required information over mails. Few companies are running Disease Awareness Campaigns by using Social Media so as to reach not only to Physicians but also reach the masses.

5.5 Incentives

Physicians do not consider incentives as a major factor affecting the Physician Prescription however the Medical Representatives consider it to be an important factor affecting the Physician Prescription.

5.6 Literature, Updates and Journals

Physicians find value in getting either online access of the Literatures and journals as they need to be updated with the recent advances happening globally in their field. Patients are becoming aware about their disease, they collect all information about the disease and possible treatment options before visiting Physician so the Physician also need to be updated about any recent advances happening. Pharmaceutical Companies provide literatures and Journals to which they have access to the Physicians.

5.7 Quality of the Drug

Physician strongly believes that quality of the Drug is an important factor affecting the Physician Prescription. Physician uses those generic drugs with which they had good experience in terms of efficacy and safety.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The key purpose of performing the study was to find out the various Pharmaceutical Strategies used by Pharmaceutical Companies and getting the Physician Perspective on that. In order to get unbiased results interviews were conducted with both the Physicians and Medical representatives. Physicians consider Engagement activities as the most important value addition to them however they consider the Product Knowledge of the Medical representative as another important factor which can influence their prescription as in case of new products being launched in the market which is new to even the Physician, the clarity on the Adverse effects or contra-indications and other related information must be available with the Medical Representative. The quality of the Drug is also another important factor that is considered before prescribing and the confidence is developed only having the hands-on experience with the drug. Drug promotion should be done by not only highlighting the efficacy part but also the side effects and the contra indications part should also be shared in the calls. Brand reminders are also considered important however few Physicians consider it as wastage of their time. The Medical Representatives are also of the same opinion as that of the Physicians except for the incentives where Physicians consider incentives to be the not so important factor affecting Physician Prescription as compared to the Medical Representatives are of the opinion that incentives are the important factor affecting the Physician Prescription.

7. Limitations

The sample taken is small and the data has been collected from the area of Punjab. The results cannot be generalised and a wider study need to be done. The Consumers were not interviewed, they are also an important part as they are the final decision makers for purchasing the Drug but the same was not captured in this study. Also the incentives to the Physicians as an important motivating factor for prescribing can be further studied on.

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