



"A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF PHARMA PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES ON PHYSICIAN'S PRESCRIPTION BEHAVIOUR"

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ABSTRACT:

The primary goal of pharmaceutical firms is to earn profit by providing medicines which are require for treatment of the patients (end users) who are suffering from certain medical problems (need).Unlikely other industries the pharma companies cannot directly satisfy the patients(consumers) with the help of innovative marketing strategies. On the contrary the strategies are effectively used for the physicians(customers) who are legitimate and authorised prescribers of medicines for ultimate consumers.Hence,it is essential to influence the doctor's prescription behaviour/habit and to make them prescribe the desired medicines the firms provide gift itmes,free samples,forjin conference and their registration with staying arrangement in luxurious restaurants ,medical books, Journals and magazines and continues medical education.etc.

KEY WORDS: Marketing strategies, Pharmaceutical firm, Customer, Consumer, need, foreign conferences.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of sending message through a medium and the process is completed when desired response or feedback from receiver reaches to sender. Marketing require effective communication between consumer and respective company.**1**

Pharmaceutical Market is a complex system which includes a no of stakeholders who have their interest**2**

Pharmaceutical Market differs from other general market. Pharma market consist of doctors who have legal right to prescribe the pharma product for the patients who approach them for their treatment and who are ultimate consumer.**3**

Gonul et.al. also stated that Pharmaceutical Marketing strategy is different from other business strategies in other sectors of business .Strategies are designed directly for end users.But in the pharma Industry the doctors play very important role acting as a intermediary and prescribing a product to end users.**4**

. The WHO Organisation defines drug promotion as all informational & persuasive activities by Manufacturers & distributors, the effect of which is to influence the prescription,supply,purchase or use of medicinal drugs.

The term " Promotion " means those informational and marketing activities ,the purpose of which is to induce prescribing,supply or administration of medical products.

It includes the service of Medical Representative and other sales promotional efforts like provision of drug sample ,Journals,Participation in international conferences and so on.**5**

HISTORY OF INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL:

In 1930,in Calcutta the first pharmaceutical company started knowing “ Bengal Chemicals &Pharmaceuticals”. Nowits one of the leading Govt.Owned drug manufacturing company ranking five.

In 1970 Pharma Market was not existed as how it is today emerged as one of the big market contributing to GDP significantly.The Industry has 4th rank in terms of Volume and holding 13th in terms of Value.It is doing well in the field of formulations,Bulkdrugs,Generics and Biotechnology etc.

CURRENT STATUS:

Today in India Pharma Industry ranks first of science based Industries having tremendous and wide capabilities in the field of drug manufacturing &technology.The Industry is growing at the rate of 8-9% annually & estimated to be worth \$ 4.5 billion .The sector specialised in technology,quality and range of medicine manufactured.

The Product of Industry ranges from simple headache pills to sophisticated antibiotics and also complex cardiac compound.

The growth of Indian pharma Industry growth tremendously since 2008-09 in the field of exports.The Indian pharma Industry has grown from a Rs.1,500 crore turnover in 1980 to approximately Rs.1,00611 in 2009-10.

PHYSICIAN TARGETING PROCESS:

Pharmaceutical Companies Target those physicians who are leading in the market. Leading physicians refer to those physicians who check more number of patients in a day. As a result, whose quantity of prescriptions are more and give a good business to the pharma firm.

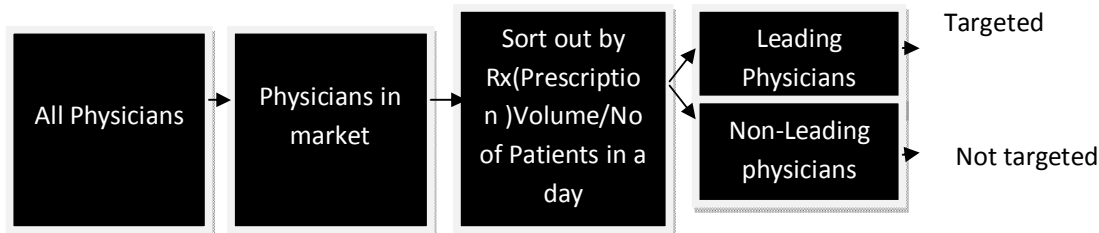


Fig: Physician targeted process.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Pharma Industry plays a vital role in the development of our economy. It is the best possible solution to India’s economic development. The objectives of pharma Industry also coincide with the national objectives. The Pharma Industry has served the society for last several decades and achieved its objectives in many ways. Moreover, over the past few years the doctors are under influence of the Pharmaceutical firms and prescribing irrationally and inappropriately that affecting patient’s health.

In the light of above discussion the researcher would like to carry out the study entitled as “**A Study On the impact of Pharma promotion strategies on physicians prescription behaviour**” The output of the study is likely to provide a valuable input to the Government, Healthcare welfare organisations and Physicians.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the various marketing strategies i.e marketing factors influencing physician’s prescription behaviour through literature review.

METHODOLOGY:

The data for this research paper collected from secondary data i.e Research papers, internet and books.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The Researcher has classified the literature review on the basis of the different pharmaceutical strategies (tools) used by the Pharma Companies to influence the doctor's prescription behaviour.

1. FREE DRUG SAMPLE

Code of marketing Canada has defined sample as "A limited pharmaceutical products distributed to physicians without any charge to treat patient"**6**

Medicines are chemical substances having desirable and undesirable action ,affect on normal body functions,increase or decrease enzymes etc.**7**

One who would prescribe should be trained in major subjects like pathology, human physiology and anatomy, pharmacology and other concerned areas of study. It means the legitimate prescriber who has authority to prescribe should be medical graduate and qualified person.**8**

Distributing free drug sample is very common and widely used practice of pharmaceutical companies in United States. The retail value of free drug sample in united states increased four times from 1996 to 2004.(\$ 4.9 billion to \$ 16.4 billion.) **9**

The study also through a light on sample distribution practice of pharma companies. In United States the budget of pharma drug promotion increased four times with a span of eight years.**10**

The study carried out by StrossFJ.finds negative aspect of free drug sample as it leads to poor prescription habit of physicians.**11**

This study is also not positive which provides the same fact that offering of free samples by pharma companies does not lead to any benefit to patients as it makes poor prescription habit rather than relying on the evidence based guidelines.**12**

2) Gifts:

Gift giving by medical representative may effect on perception and feelings of physician.They associate their feelings with gift even though it is small one. .Finally it makes doctors to change its clinical judgement and prescribe the product irrespective of its quality.**13**.The study concluded that the physicians prefer educational gifts e.g. Medical Journal, medical books, case records as all enhance their clinical experience. But at the same time they feel accepting gifts like pen, pencils and calendars are not harmful. So they can be acceptable.**14**

This study also pointed rightly on the role of reciprocity. Once someone accept gifts then one has to be grateful as it creates obligations. Then something must be return and repaid to companies if there is personal exchange of gifts.**15**

The promotional strategy of pharma industry includes different kinds of drugs ranging from non expensive items like pen, pencils to expensive foreign trips for international conferences.**16**

Anything that pharma companies offers to physicians is a part of promotional efforts where smaller gifts like note pad, pen and pencils are delivered from time to time but at the same time foreign trips for holidays, international conference participation with registration and lunch, dinner at expensive and luxurious resort.**17**

3) CONTINUOUS MEDICAL EDUCATION:

Bowman and pearle studied how the doctor's prescription pattern has changed when companies have funded for continues medical education programme .Overall its clear that the doctors favours those companies' products which help them in CME.

The continues medical programme sponsored by pharma industry biases programme content and it affects physician behaviour. The study concluded that commercial supported CME's have impact on physicians prescription behaviour. The physicians who attended company sponsored education programme are more likely to prescribe the product after the event.**18**

In recent past,the pharma industry sponsoring for contionous medical education(CME) has increased in the US.The commercial funding of pharmaceutical companies to contionous education programme distort the objectivity of programme.The programmes are carried only to influence the prescription behaviour of physicians.**19**

The scientific objectivity should be at the centre of continues medical education programme rather than promotional and marketing efforts to persuade physicians, influence prescription habit and generate sale for an organisation.**20**

This study revealed conflict of interest in medical profession when continues education programme are fully funded and sponsored by pharma companies which organise programmes, invite company speakers, company favouring medical literature or material or having organisational products ads inside the material, lunch or dinner arrangement at expensive resort and luxuries staying arrangement. **21**

4) Payment / Financial Support

The study finds out the truth in United States healthcare system where the senior medical researchers or other leading clinicians and such physicians who would be considered as "medical thought leaders" have financial relationship with pharma drug companies. This study put forth a fact that near about 60% of research and development in biomedical area is funded by private bodies.So being paid there is conflict of interest and medical practioners are biased as far as prescription of medication is concerned.**22** When the money or gifts given to physicians (the people who should have public trust) that affects their conduct and clinical judgement. Then the person would be involved in the business of bribe.**23**

Not only the physicians but all the professional who are in the work of public trust must be away from conflict of interest. If once the financial interest the physicians want to exploit then definitely they are violating their professional duties and responsibilities and losing public trust also.**24**

The financial relationship between physicians and pharma industry strengthening day by day in recent years.The financial relation include variety of activities like direct cash payment,personal investment supported by company finance etc.Naturally it all may make the physicians to prescribe of organization from which received the benefits.**25**

Pharma companies have developed financial relation with medical practioners to promote their medicinal products. The companies may provide financial support to the healthcare practioners activities and their research or to their other institutions. After receiving payments the physicians have to repaid all this by prescribing of their interest which lead to conflict of interest and physicians creditability will come under scanner.**26**

CONCLUSION:

The strategy of Pharmaceutical Industry leads to a norms of reciprocity. When something is given it creates a sense of gratefulness or indebtedness and the person will try to reciprocate by returning something. Its human tendency. When the gifts are given in the form of pen, pad or medical books/journals and foreign conferences by pharma companies it creates a sense of obligations on the part of doctors and they would try to favour by prescribing medicine of respective firm.

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