

Comparative Analysis of Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies in view point of Sales Promotion and Advertising in the Specialty Division of Pharmaceutical Sector: A Modern Perspective

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Advertising and Sales Promotion, Medical Practitioners, Key Opinion Leaders, Push and Pull Strategy, Pull Strategy, Intrinsic Motivational Factors

ABSTRACT

The empirical study of sales and promotional strategies is one of the avenues through which each major organizational group tries to enter and grow in the era of fierce competition, impulsive markets, and the remarkable potentiality of the Indian pharmaceutical sector. As a result, current companies are attempting to survive while also being willing to increase their profitability. The aforementioned research, which is being conducted in Belagavi, aims to concentrate on two distinct product promotion strategies: advertising and sales promotion. The pharmaceutical industry uses these strategies to boost product sales and gain a competitive edge on other industries in the future. Using the concepts of the Four Pillars—Medical Representatives, Medical Practitioners (GPs, CPs, and CPs), Field Managers, and Chemists—this article aims to exemplify the advertising and sales promotion tactics of pharmaceutical companies.

Having gone through this article, one would learn about the prevalent performance of the pharmaceutical industry based on a comparison of sales promotion and advertising. One would also be able to determine which approach would be best to gain a stronger hold on the market given the competition.

Introduction

An Indian Pharmaceutical sector has grown significantly, from \$1 bn in 1990 to over \$30 bn in 2015, with an export turnover of \$15 billion. The country ranks 3rd worldwide as far as volume of production and value as 14th rank. Accounting for around 10% of the world's production. India ranks 4th at generic production and 17th at export value of substantial APIs and dosage forms. The Government of India initiated the sector's development by creating a separate Department in 2008 to manage policy, planning, development, and regulation. Key features of the industry include a strong export market, large domestic pharma companies, a competitive market with second-tier Indian companies, Indian players developing expertise in biologics capabilities, multinational companies investing significantly in India, low production and R&D costs, innovative scientific manpower, world-class national laboratories, increasing balance of trade, an efficient source for generic drugs, and a center of excellence for clinical trials due to the diversification in the population (n.a., Pharma Industry Promotion, 2025).

India, the largest global provider of generic drugs and affordable vaccines, has a thriving pharmaceutical industry with a 9.43% CAGR over the last 9 years. The

industry includes OCT Medications, generic drugs, bulk drugs, vaccines, contract research, bio similar, and biologics. India has the highest number of FDA-compliant pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities and 500 API producers, accounting for 8% of the worldwide API market. The Indian pharma sector supplies over 50% of global vaccine demand, for generic demand 40% in the US, and all medicine in the UK is about 25%. The industry is expected to reach a market size of around US\$ 65 bn by 2024, US\$ 130 bn by 2030, and US\$ 450 billion by 2047. India is among the top 12 biotechnology destinations worldwide and the 3rd largest destination in Asia Pacific. The government aims to elevate the sector to US\$ 50 bn by 2030 (n.a., Indian Pharma Industry's Expected Growth, 2024).

Literature Review

The study reveals that 76.60% of consumers intend to visit a drug store to buy branded pharmaceutical products, while 23.30% intend to buy generic products. This difference is statistically significant at a 5% level (A.Suresh Kumar, 2018). The Indian pharmaceutical industry, generating 2700 crores annually and employing 27 lakh people, is experiencing 7-8% annual growth, with experts predicting 11% growth in 2020 (Aakash Patel, 2021). The global pharmaceutical industry, characterized by fragmentation and competitiveness, is experiencing a 6-8% annual growth rate, with 60% driven by price increases. The generic market is expected to thrive, potentially boosting export prospects for developing nations (n.a., DIAGNOSTIC STUDY REPORT PHARMACEUTICAL CLUSTER AT INDORE (MADHYA PRADESH) , 2021). The achievement of a business in a market is largely determined by the relationships between the company, customers, and competitors. The domestic pharmaceutical market is primarily driven by the growing prevalence of the chronic segment, requiring a crucial supply chain (Shashank Sharma, 2015). Pharmaceutical marketing faces globalization, competition, and market dominance, requiring strategies like price, promotion, people, product, physical evidence, and process, with innovation improving performance and Green Marketing promoting ethical marketing (Kalyani Rajput, 2022). The pharmaceutical industry is leveraging digital marketing to streamline campaign strategies and grow rapidly, but outdated methods are often poorly managed, requiring effective strategies to save resources (Rahul Maurya, 2024). Green marketing in India can reduce myopia, benefit organizations and the environment by targeting premium segments, recognizing green users, and converting to green pillars (Shruti Goyal, 2022). The paper introduces a 10 Ps framework for integrated care marketing, highlighting its role in facilitating adoption. It provides insights into reconfiguring the marketing mix from various perspectives, contributing to the interdisciplinary field of healthcare marketing (Lim, 2020).

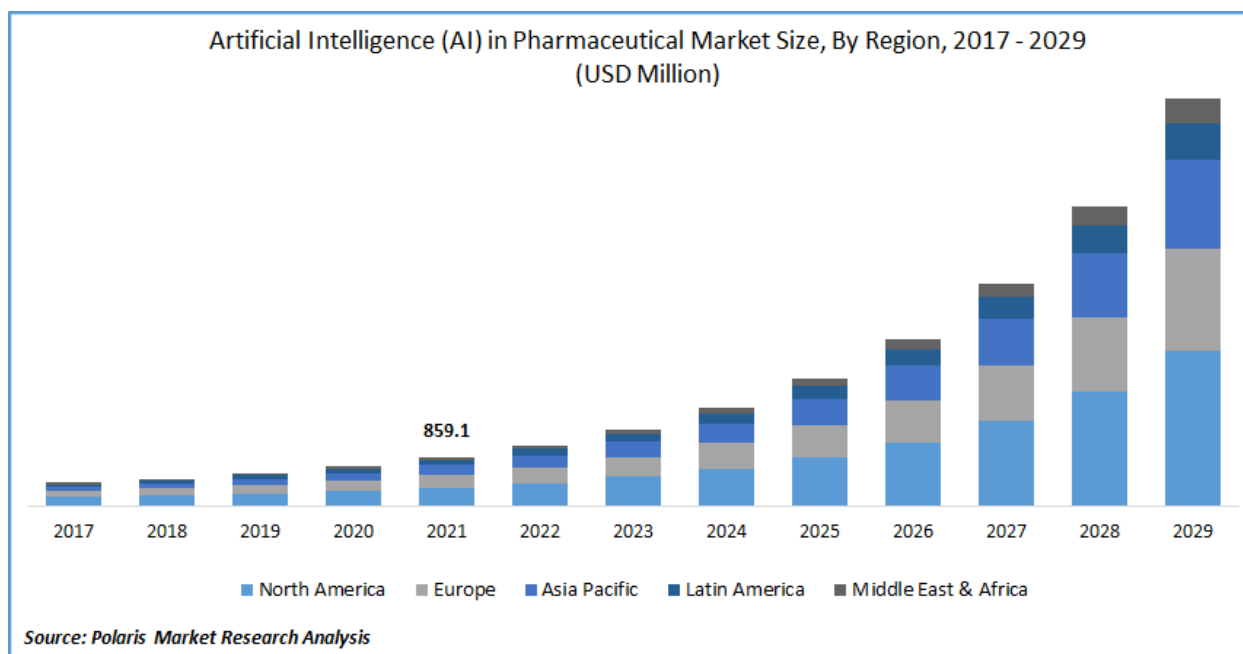
The study highlights the impact of factors like sales personnel activity, personal relationships, product quality, and company reputation on Iranian physicians' prescription behavior, emphasizing the need for marketers to understand their needs (Abbas AlbarqAmal, 2021). Digital marketing is crucial in the pharmaceutical industry, offering convenience, cost-effectiveness, and prompt delivery. It involves direct marketing, discounts, payment options, and prompt delivery, with effectiveness primarily observed in blogs and Facebook accounts (Pattabiraman Vivek, 2024).

Understanding Pharmaceutical Marketing

Pharmaceutical marketing is a specialized field that focuses on improving patient outcomes through patient-centricity, scientific foundation, and ethical considerations. It involves key stages such as customer insight, competitive analysis, market research, product positioning, messaging, and brand identity. Marketing channels include

traditional channels like sales representatives, medical conferences, and medical journals, as well as digital channels like websites, online portals, social media, email marketing, and digital advertising.

Challenges in pharmaceutical marketing include strict regulations, ethical considerations, reaching busy healthcare professionals, measuring ROI, and adapting to digital transformation. Key trends in pharmaceutical marketing include digital marketing, data-driven marketing, patient-centricity, omnichannel marketing, and AI-powered tools. By focusing on these aspects, pharmaceutical marketers can effectively reach healthcare professionals and educate them about new medications and therapies



(n.a., Understanding Pharma Markrting, 2024).

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in Pharma Industry

IMC as a strategic approach ensuring all forms of communications and interactions the company does have with its customers and prospects are consistent and synchronized. In the pharmaceutical industry, IMC plays a pivotal part in promoting new drugs, educating healthcare professionals, and building brand loyalty (na.a, 2019).

Key Components of IMC in Pharma

Target Audience	✓ Healthcare Professionals (HCPs): Doctors, pharmacists, nurses, etc. ✓ Patients: Individuals with specific medical conditions. ✓ Payers: Insurance companies, government agencies, etc.
Communication Channels:	<i>Traditional Channels:</i> ✓ Sales Representatives: Direct interaction with HCPs. ✓ Medical Journals: Publishing articles and advertisements. ✓ Conferences & Symposia: Educational events for HCPs. <i>Digital Channels</i> ✓ Websites & Online Portals: Providing information and resources.

	✓ Social Media: Engaging with HCPs and patients. ✓ Email Marketing: Targeted email campaigns. ✓ Digital Advertising: Online ads to reach specific audiences. ✓ Digital Advertising: Online ads to reach specific audiences.
Message Consistency	✓ Key Messaging: Developing clear and consistent messages across all channels. ✓ Brand Identity: Maintaining a consistent brand image and voice.
Data-Driven Approach	✓ Market Research: Understanding target audience needs and preferences. ✓ Campaign Measurement: Tracking key metrics to evaluate effectiveness. ✓ Data Analysis: Using data to optimize campaigns and improve ROI.

Challenges and Considerations in Pharma Industry

Strict Regulations: Compliance with laws and regulations regarding advertising and promotion.

Ethical Considerations: Balancing marketing efforts with patient safety and well-being.

Reaching HCPs: Getting the attention of busy healthcare professionals.

Measuring ROI: Attributing sales and market share to specific campaigns.

Digital Transformation: Adapting to the evolving digital landscape (n.a., Ethical considerations in healthcare marketing: best practices for achieving ROI responsibly, n.a).

Illustrations of IMC at Pharma

Launch of a New Drug: A coordinated campaign involving sales representatives, medical conferences, digital advertising, and patient support programs.

Disease Awareness Campaign: Educating the public about a specific condition and the available treatment options.

HCP Education Program: Providing online training modules and webinars for HCPs on a new therapy. By effectively implementing IMC, pharmaceutical companies may build stronger liasions with HCPs and patients, improve brand perception, and ultimately drive better health outcomes (Mazzi, 2024).

Advertisement and Sales Promotion in IMC in Pharma Industry

Advertisement

Pharmaceutical product advertisements have to be honest. Regarding its contents and their proportion, no incorrect remark should be made. It should include comprehensive information on the mechanism of action, applications, genetic name, dosage form, route of administration, side effects, toxicological treatment, effects, precautions, and contraindications. The aforementioned claim ought to be accurate, supported by evidence, and true. This resolution regarding pharmaceutical product promotion was passed by the World Health Organization. There are several limits on advertising in the ethical pharmaceutical industry, just like there are for any other product. Customers (patients) are not permitted to utilize medications without a valid prescription from a

doctor. According to the Drug and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, most pharmaceutical items and their direct marketing are forbidden. However, any of the direct advertising strategies may be used to promote general/home remedies, pain relievers, inhalers, Iodex, antiseptic creams, and other goods that don't require a prescription to buy (Girimaji, 2013).

Sales Promotion

Any business's primary goal is to make as much money as possible, and only by increasing sales can this be accomplished. A variety of sales marketing strategies may be used to maximize sales. Other than publicity, sales promotion, advertising and personal selling include marketing initiatives that encourage customer purchases and dealers' efficacy, such as window displays, exhibits, demonstrations, and more. The development, use, and distribution of tools and strategies that support advertising and personal selling are the focus of sales promotion. Direct mail, catalogs, trade exhibitions, sales materials, samples, premiums, window displays, and other tools are all used in sales promotion. Its goal is to increase customer interest in and sales of certain brands. Prospects are included in the decision-making process in both personal selling and advertising. "An additional stimulus is provided by sales promotion (A, 2022)."

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study primarily concentrate on:

1. To compare the tactics used for pharmaceutical product sales promotion and advertising.
2. To find out how medical professionals and medical representatives react to the tactics used by pharmaceutical firms.
3. To determine how pharmaceutical drug chemists and medical representatives would want to be promoted.

Research Methodology

This article is created using surveys and data collected from both primary and secondary sources. This study is grounded on a descriptive research design using a purposeful sample since it is conducted using pre-existing knowledge about the population. After then, the selection process is conceded out based on the population's percentage. The study's sample size consisted of 64 respondents divided into four groups: 20 doctors, 12 chemists, 20 medical representatives, and 12 field managers make up the first four groups.

Data Analysis

A self-administered questionnaire that included the, open-ended Likert Scale Method, closed-ended, multiple-choice, dichotomous, ranking, and rating items was used for the study. The surveys were distributed to medical representatives, chemists, doctors, and field managers. This leads to an analysis of the data.

A i) Data Analysis from Medical Practitioner's Perspective:-

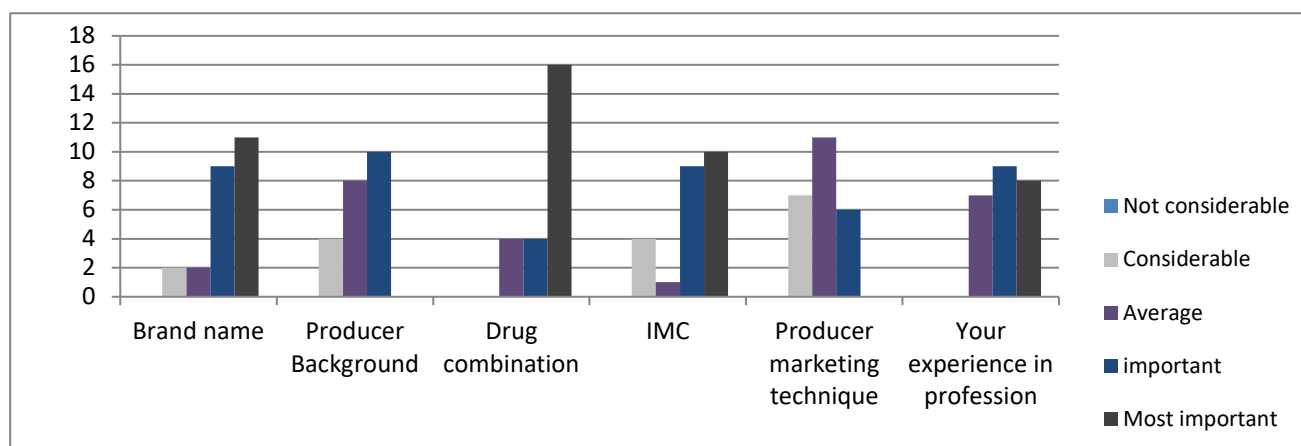


Fig. 1. Factors promoting Pharmaceutical Brands from the perspective of Doctors

The poll found that 55% of physicians recommend generic drugs to patients since they are less expensive and non-toxic. Medical representatives are the source of assurance for medicine promotion, according to physicians, and they are quite skilled at describing the brand. With the exception of the two physicians already stated, they are adamant that the three most crucial factors in marketing pharmaceutical companies are 1) medicine combination, 2) brand name, and 3) their own professional expertise. Despite this, the doctors use MR's marketing expertise to highlight the benefits of medications and incentives in their IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) to the companies.

A-ii) Responses received from Medical Practitioners about IMC applied by Medical Representatives to promote their drugs.

Table No.: 1

The importance of the drugs	8
Promotion of the name of the pharma company	5
Presentations & gift for promotion	1
Emphasizing to the brand of their company	1
Analyzing the patients & suggesting the drugs	3
Making you to promote their drugs through their marketing skills	4

B) Data Analysis from the point view of Medical representative:-



Fig. 2. Factors promoting Pharmaceutical Brands from the perspective of Medical Representatives

As to the poll, 60% of MRs believe that a substantial amount of brand marketing depends on medication-related practices and presentations, along with communication, attention to detail, and drug understanding. Doctors do take a gamble when suggesting new drugs (brands), the poll found. The corporation is more involved in fieldwork and lab visits, even while the brands are being marketed. Businesses are offering MRs financial incentives including performance-based pay raises and other benefits, which motivates MRs to aggressively promote pharmaceutical brands, according to the poll.

C) Data Analysis from point view of Field Managers:-

Table No.: 2

Gifts	5
MR Training	2
Schemes	3
Seminar and so on	2
Packages	0

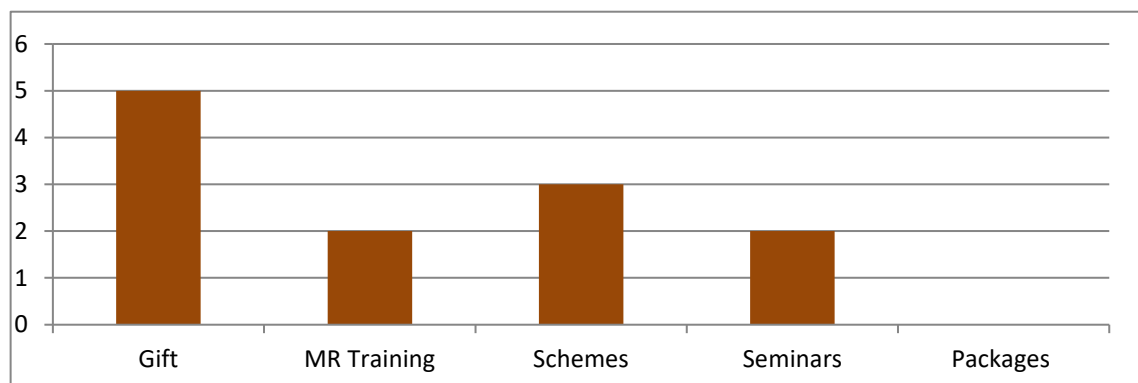


Fig.3. Responses Obtained from the Managers for the promotion of Pharmaceutical Brands

Since MR is a key component of pharmaceutical marketing's promotional methods, he plays a crucial part in the promotion of pharmaceutical goods. With this mindset, supervisors want MR to be very skilled, have good communication abilities, and know how to apply marketing tactics. Managers advise that MR be given comprehensive training on medicine and product expertise as a result. A poll indicates that the most fair ways to pitch a business to a doctor are 1) gifts and 2) schemes. 3) Seminars, conferences, urging doctors to further their education, expanding the route of distribution, and MR's ability to connect with doctors outside of his personal connections. (From the manager's perspective).

D) Data Analysis from the point view of Chemists:-

Table No.: 3

Packing	2
Price	4
Brand name	6

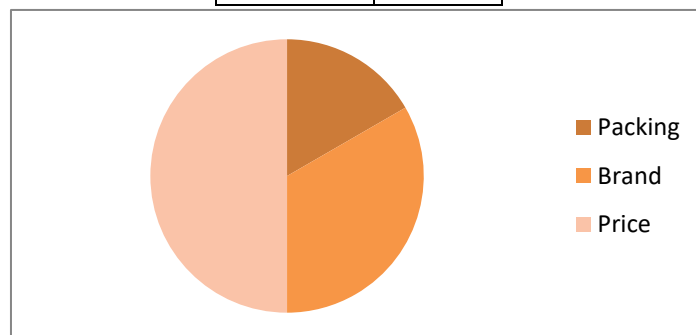


Fig. 4. Responses Obtained from the Chemists for promotional strategies from the point view of Patient

The brand name is the primary element that entices consumers to purchase the pharmaceuticals, followed by price and packaging, according to a survey that found 80% of chemists maintain branded medications on their shelves. According to scientists, doctors advise that the primary selling point for prescriptions is the drug's chemical makeup and efficacy.

E) The Response Obtained from the Chemists for promotional strategies from the point view of Doctors

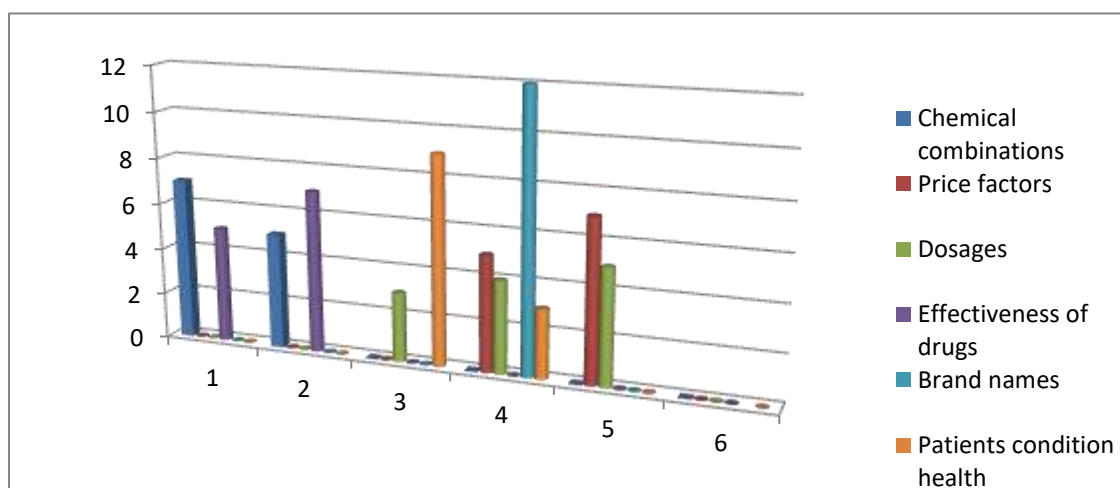


Fig.5. Response Obtained from the Chemists for promotional strategies from the Doctors perspective

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6
Chemical combinations	7	5	0	0	0	0
Price factors	0	0	0	5	7	0
Dosages	0	0	3	4	5	0

Drug's Effectiveness	5	7	0	0	0	0
Brand names	0	0	0	12	0	
Health condition of patient	0	0	9	3	0	0

Table No.:4

According to the above diagram and chart, which show the results of a survey conducted among chemists from the viewpoint of doctors, 100% of the chemists surveyed ranked brand fourth in terms of drug effectiveness and chemical combination. This indicates that doctors are more concerned with patient tolerability and drug efficiency.

The above referred Analysis is summed up in Tabular Form as:

Sr.No	Respondents of Survey	Parameters for Promotional Strategies
1	Doctors	Drug Combination & IMC
2	Medicals Representatives	Drug concerned to Doctors practice and Intrinsic Motivational factors
3	Field Mangers	Offerings and MR's Rapport with Doctor
4	Chemist	Brand Name, Price and Packing Patients Point of View and Combination and effectiveness of Drug Doctors Perspectives

Table No.: 5

F) Data Analysis from the perspective of advertising (Questions asked to Doctor)

Table No.:6

Category	Detailing	Sponsorship and Gifts	KOL
CP	15	-	-
GP	-	2	-
Senior CP	-	-	3

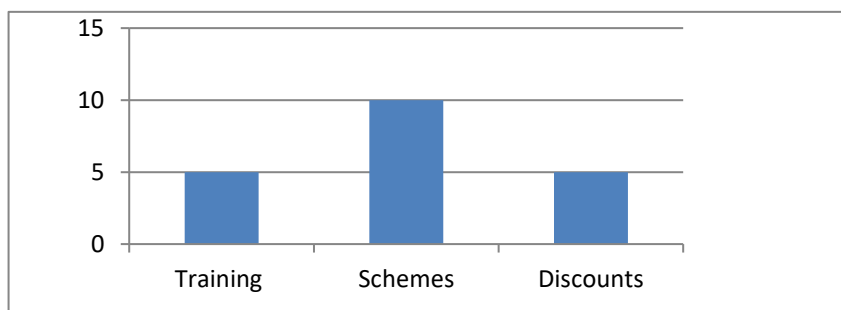


Fig. 6. Views of Consultant Physicians, General Physicians and Senior Physicians from Advertising Perspective

According to the survey, 75% of doctors (the majority of CPs) lean toward thorough detailing since they believe it facilitates understanding of molecules, products, and their combinations as well as patient tolerability. 10% of doctors (most general practitioners) who lean toward sponsorships and gifts come next. It has been shown that 15% of

Senior Physicians (CPs) have a preference for research and study, with the goal of serving as Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) for the molecules and brands.

G) Data Analysis from perspective of sales Promotion (Questions asked MRs, Chemists)

Table No.:7

Category	Training	Schemes	Discounts	Benefits to the Channel Members	Incentives to the MRs
MRs & Chemists	5	10	5	40	40

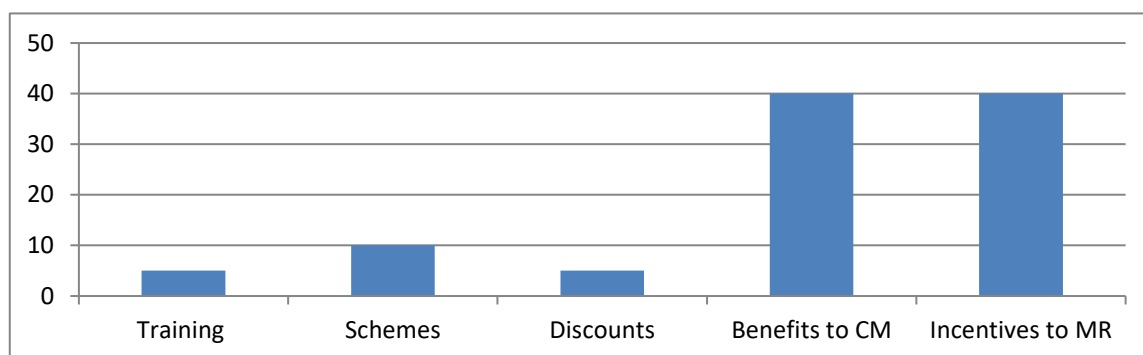


Fig. 7. Notions of MRs and Chemists from the perspective of sales promotion

According to the survey, 40% of respondents viewed sales promotion as beneficial to the distribution channel, and 40% of MRs viewed incentives as a crucial component of sales promotion. It is evident to suggest that sales promotion facilitates the distribution channel. Training came next with a 5% response, followed by schemes with a 10% response and discount at 5%.

Outcome of the Proposed Study

Since doctors are the primary prescribers of the brands, advertising is suggested in this study as a type of mass media communication aimed at influencing the target population and driving the brand's sales. Sales promotion, on the other hand, is defined as mass communication aimed at educating and influencing the distribution channels that support brand inventory clearance and market demand. From the standpoint of physicians, it is therefore crucial to specify and address Key Opinion Leaders in advertising. On the other hand, benefits to the channels of distribution and incentives to MRs have an advantage over other choices in sales promotion.

Suggestions

The suggestions are predicated on the conclusions reached after analyzing the structured questionnaire and the respondent's response.

- Increase focus on drug combination and anti-side effects for better prescription support.
- Adopt aggressive IMC for better brand recollection.
- Increase the training program for MRs to 3 months.
- Provide incentives like salary increments and monetary benefits to motivate MRs.
- Emphasize Soft Skills training, scientific materials, and fair discounts to chemists.
- Focus on Key Opinion Leaders Approach and detailing over gifting and sponsoring.
- Prioritize sales promotion in schemes, offerings, incentives to MRs, and benefits to channels.
- Offer sales technique and negotiation skills training to MRs.
- Promote both advertising and sales simultaneously, but focus more on sales promotional techniques.

To put it briefly, the promotion of strategies should be based on the following ideological perspective:

Promotion of Health and Healthy and Successful Pharma Industry



Promotion of Medical Practioners Confidence



Promotion of Patient Health



Promotion of Profitability



Promotion of Brands

Array of Strategies with Ideological Perspective

Conclusion

In accordance with the current circumstances, most pharmaceutical companies are employing extremely aggressive advertising techniques in an effort to gain the greatest possible market share, adhering to the principle that "ONE MARKET AND MANY PLAYERS, AND SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST." Everyone wants to be present in the market with increased profitability and sustainability, and today's pharmaceutical companies are doing well. As a result, the industry has adopted the mindset that one must be present in the market by all means, regardless of whether one is a newcomer or an established player.

Advertising and sales promotion are two distinct promotional tactics that the majority of pharmaceutical firms are now using. In this case, the responders are medical professionals since MRs and chemists are elements of sales promotion, while consultants, general practitioners, and senior doctors are the main factor of advertising. Sales promotion as incentives and offerings to the distribution channel generate Pull Strategy, while advertising as detailing and other related components contribute to Push Strategy, which in turn drives the pharmaceutical industry's performance. Therefore, the aforementioned explanation may be summed up as:

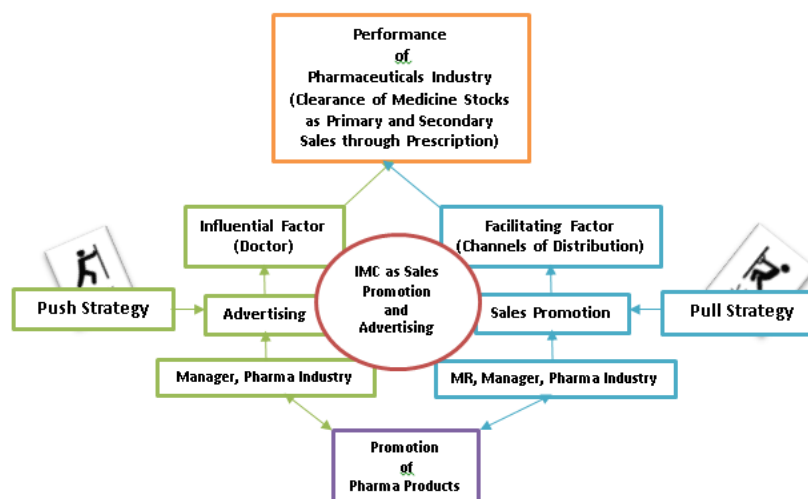


Fig.8. Model – Push and Pull Strategy in IMC of Pharmaceutical Industry as Input and Output

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