A Study Of Physician Behavior And Preference Towards Marketing Services Offered By Pharmaceutical Industry To Influence Physician's Prescription Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Indian pharmaceutical industry is growing at a steady growth rate of 8-9%. The Indian pharmaceutical industry can be divided into the organized and unorganized sector. Around 260 companies are in the organized sector which accounts for 90% share of the Indian pharma market and 20000 pharma companies contribute to rest 10% of the industry. Indian companies either came with off patented drugs or combination of two or more drugs in one pill. A competition between the organized and unorganized sector pushed all big players towards the chronic segment whereas the 'me to drugs' segment was either dominated by the unorganized sector or by the generic brands. Due to increase in competition both domestic and international, most of the pharmaceutical companies focused their efforts to strengthen their relationship with their customers. This trend continued and companies started sharing their profits with their customers. Now the customer for pharmaceutical industry, the doctor, is playing a dual role of shareholder and stakeholder. This shift of customer behavior is now governed by pharmaceutical companies with customer relationship management. Now all companies are having a separate department to identify and cater to the needs and wants of physicians to develop a base of satisfied and loyal customers. Customers are having a lot of offers from different companies which always shakes their loyalty. Sometimes, they give their commitment to support two or three companies for the same product/brand and are unable to fulfill the desired return expected by the company. Many of the surveys have revealed that a satisfied customer does not mean a loyal one. A customer can be satisfied but may not be loyal. Before analyzing the physician's behavior, we must aware of the set of factors which may influence the prescription behavior. There are three basic factors which may influence the prescription behavior of a physician independently or collectively. The list of factors is given in the Table no.1.(annexure).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

❀ To study the customer (physician) behavior towards services offered by the pharmaceutical industry.
❀ To study the impact of marketing services on physician's behavior towards prescribing a brand.

Figure 1 : Influence Of Factors In Prescription Behavior
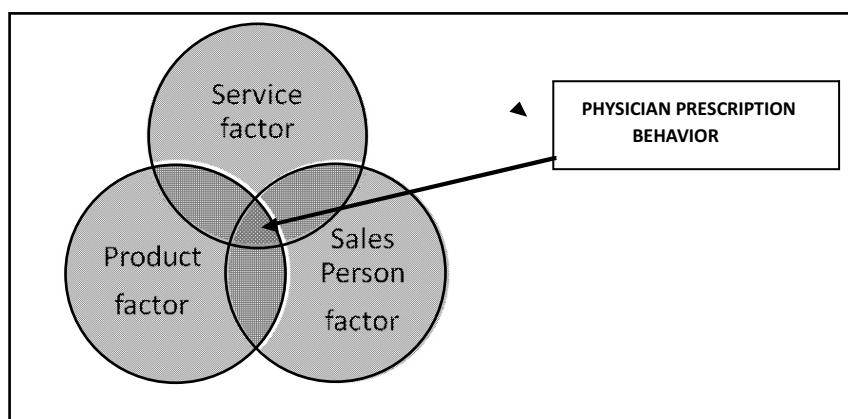
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Now, let us look into the details of behavior shown by the customers in terms of giving prescription and services demanded. Usually, four types of behavior are shown by the customers towards marketing services. This could be analyzed by the given matrix.

Table 1 : Customer Behavior Matrix

Services demanded by /offered to physician	Prescription support
Never	Never
Never	Always
Always	Never
Always	Always

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A group of 200 respondents were identified who were willing to participate in the study. This group consisted of both consultants and general physicians. Either they were self employed or were employed in hospital institutions. A questionnaire was designed to collect primary data. Respondents were given services' options to rank them as per their preference. 150 returned questionnaires were satisfactory to use them for further analysis. Data tabulation had been done question wise. Further cross tabulation was carried out for interpretation and analysis.

SAMPLE DESIGN

Samples were collected from physicians who were having a good number of patient visits every day. The criteria for selecting respondents was dependent on the company's representatives' visits to a particular physician. This study is having limitations of geographical boundaries in respondent's selection method. But the behavior of physicians is almost similar while receiving or demanding services from pharmaceutical companies.

CROSS TABULATION AND ANALYSIS
QUESTION NO.1: WHAT SERVICES YOU PREFER MOST FROM PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES?

Table 2 : Marketing Services Vs. Customer Category Matrix

Customer Category	Self	Institution	Total
	Employed	Employed	
Marketing Services			
Scientific information sharing	38	20	58
Promotional inputs	15	16	31
Physician samples	14	7	21
Total	**67**	**33**	**100**

INTERPRETATION

Out of 150 respondents, 58 gave 1st preference to information sharing. Self employed doctors are keener to get information sharing from the companies as compared to doctors employed in institutions.

Promotional inputs was the 2nd preference and physician samples ranked 3rd in preference. Rest of the respondents have shown interest in other services like high value gifts, CMEs, personal sponsorships etc.

QUESTION NO.2: WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A PERFECT MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVE?

INTERPRETATION

42% respondents gave 1st preference to product knowledge.Fulfilling commitments and prompt services are the other attributes which are expected by the doctors from field sales force.

They do not want repeated information sharing and it must be brief during discussion. "*Be brief and do not repeat*".

Table 3 : Customer Category Vs. Medical Representative Attributes

Customer Category	Self	Institution	Total
	Employed	Employed	
Mr Attributes			
Product Knowledge	36	27	63
Fullfils Commitments	13	15	28
Prompt Services	15	10	25
	64	52	116

QUESTION NO.3: WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE YOUR PRESCRIPTION HABITS?

Table 4: Customer Category Vs. Influencing Factors

Customer Category	Self	Institution	Total
	Employed	Employed	
Influence Factor			
Sales Presentation	32	25	57
Quality Of Services	24	16	40
Product Merits	13	11	24
	69	52	121

80.6% of the respondents were of opinion that a good sales presentation, quality of services and product merits influence their prescription behavior. Definitely a good sales presentation matters the most among other factors. But product merits also contributes in the long term basis.

QUESTION NO.4: WHICH ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE DO YOU PREFER THE MOST?

Table 5 : Customer Category Vs. Academic Services Assistance

Customer Category	Self	Institution	Total
	Employed	Employed	
Academic Assistance			
Books /journals	39	32	71
Seminar Participation	39	31	70
CME Contribution	6	3	9
	84	66	150

94% of the respondents were interested to receive academic assistance in terms of books/journals and seminar participation contribution from companies. Only 6% respondents showed interest in CMEs like activities.

QUESTION NO. 5: WHAT OTHER ACTIVITIES DO YOU PREFER THE MOST?

Table 6 : Customer Category Vs. Other Marketing Services

Customer Category	Self	Institution	Total
	Employed	Employed	
Family Trips/get Together	30	37	67
Activity For Community Health	41	24	65
Clinical Automation	10	4	14
	81	65	146

44.6% and 43.3% respondents showed their interest in activities like family trips and activities for community health respectively.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

❀ Out of 150 respondents, 58 gave 1st preference to information sharing. Self employed doctors are keener to get Information sharing from the companies as compared to doctors employed in institutions.

❀ Promotional inputs were the 2nd preference and physician samples ranked 3rd in preference. Rest of the respondents showed interest in other services like high value gifts, CMEs, personal sponsorships etc.

❀ 42% of the respondents gave 1st preference to product knowledge. Whereas fulfilling commitments and prompt services are the other attributes which are expected by the doctors from the field sales force.

❀ They do not want repeated information sharing and it must be brief during discussion. "Be brief and do not repeat".

❀ 80.6% respondents were of the opinion that a good sales presentation, quality of services and product merits influence their prescription behavior. Definitely, a good sales presentation matters the most among other factors. But product merits also contributes in the long term basis.

❀ 94% of the respondents were interested to receive academic assistance in terms of books/journals and seminar participation contribution from companies. Only 6% respondents showed interest in CMEs like activities.

❀ 44.6% and 43.3% respondents showed their interest in activities like family trips and activities for community health respectively.
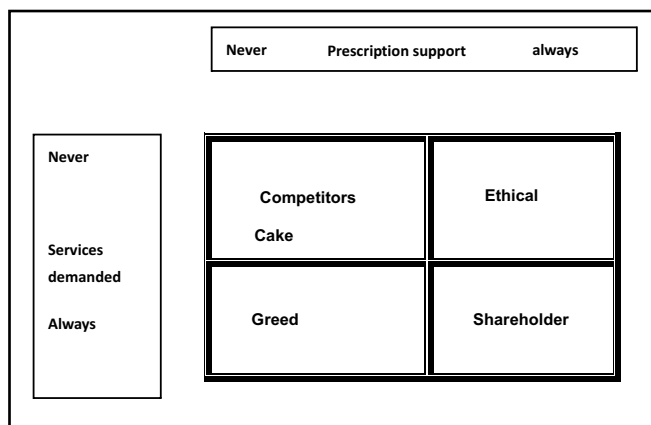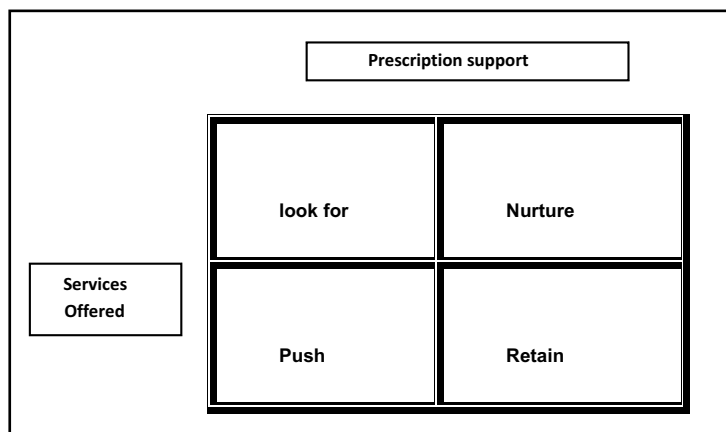
Figure-2: Behavior Pattern Matrix

Figure 3 : Strategy Recommended For Controlling The Physician's Behavior Towards Marketing Services Offered/Demanded

Quadrant 1: Do Not Leave For The Competitor, Try To Explore It

Quadrant 2: Ethical Behaviour Must Be Nurtured
Quadrant3: Greed To Be Pushed
Quadrant 4: Shareholder To Be Retained

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APPENDIX

Table 1 : Factors Influencing Prescription Behavior

Services factor	Product factor	People factor
General services offerings(promotional inputs)	Product (affordability, availability)	Product Knowledge transferability
Image of the company	Effect	Personality
Information material	Side effect	Frequency of visit
Patient services	Application(indications)	
Educational events		
Sample distribution		