

# A Review on Promotional Techniques in Pharmaceutical Industries

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**Abstract-** *The promotional techniques always help to increase sales especially in pharmaceutical industry hence, it is important to explore the various techniques and tools followed in pharmaceutical promotion. The paper is written in the spirit of a review article. The topic relevant to the field of pharmaceutical industry is discussed here. The aim of the paper is to give brief introduction to the various techniques of promotion. There are many types of promotional techniques which are grouped into two type's traditional and pharmaceutical promotion in 21st century. Advertisement in journals, books, professional publications, Sponsorships, Personal selling, Branding, Electronic detailing, Email marketing, Electronic direct to consumer advertisement are the common method of promotional tools followed in the pharmaceutical industry. This paper will act as a base for the pharmaceutical and marketing researcher for further study on marketing and identified the gap in this article for further research.*

**Keywords-** Promotion, Pharmaceutical industry, Marketing, traditional methods, Promotion in 21st century.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The management process that incorporates the activities which direct the movement of goods and services from producer to the consumer on mass production physicians and the general public, mindful of up to date and existing pharmaceutical brands in a profitable way is known as pharmaceutical marketing which mainly implements sales promotion, the branch of marketing that include bestowal sample, comprehensive product literature, complaint management programs, and events/meetings for physicians. World Health Organization (WHO) and International Federation of Pharmaceutical and manufacturing association (IFPMA) defines promotion as all informational and influential activities undertaken, systematized, or subsidized by manufacturers and distributors to encourage the prescription, recommendation, supply, administration, or consumption of its pharmaceutical product(s) through all media, including the internet.

Consumer product industries are different from the pharmaceutical industries. Consumer product industries follow a promotional strategy that encompasses message and media strategy, branding through which a company passes across the benefits of its product and service to its target customers whereas in pharmaceutical industries' physicians are the chief players as they decide which drug a patient will purchase because prescription drugs constitute the primary sources of revenue for the pharmaceutical industry. Drug promotion has a significant manner on the rational use of drugs, drug price-control mechanisms, the manufacture, availability, and use of essential drugs, the equity of drug distribution, and the cost of health care thus it becomes a public health issue of concern. According to Alastair Matheson, Pharmaceutical marketing is a curse to science, corrupting to medicine, wasteful to economies, and detrimental to patients because pharma itself has never truly acknowledged its underbelly of secrets, half-truths, corruption, power, and death and it flaunts the language of ethics when doctor relies more on promotion, prescribe less appropriately, prescribe more often or adopt new drugs more quickly. Hence, there are many rules and regulations, notably among them is the draft pharmaceutical policy which states that doctors are lured to recommend a particular brand. The drugs and cosmetic act and rules (1940, 1945) regulates the contents to print on the label by the pharmaceutical companies whereas the drugs and magic remedies act of 1954 control the direct-to-consumer advertising and prohibits any advertisement of a drug and educational conference which are used to circumvent and play the trick. Lack of drug promotion results in loss of sales which leads to less innng of resources for research and development and eventually puts the brake on drug discovery and development. Hence, pharmaceutical companies invest large sums of money promoting their products because it helps to increase sales.

Pharmaceutical companies use a multifaceted tactic for drug promotion. For ease of understanding, they are divided into two types,

### 1. Traditional pharmaceutical promotion

Advertisement in journals, books, professional publications. Sponsorships

Personal selling  
Branding

## 2. Pharmaceutical promotion in 21<sup>st</sup> century

Electronic detailing  
Email marketing  
Electronic direct to consumer advertisement

## II. TRADITIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL PROMOTION

The pharmaceutical industry is still implementing the traditional marketing strategies in which the industry has revolved around the vigorous product marketing of the prescription drugs that the decision-makers will make money. Traditional pharmaceutical marketing and promotion gain more reputation because it is imperious to figure relationships with the physician and further prescribe pharmaceutical products from sales representatives and encourage the common man to buy only recommended products.

### **Advertisement in journals, books, professional publications.**

Advertising in pharmaceutical journals is one of the most operating techniques used by pharmaceutical companies to assist their products to physicians as it serves as the main source of medicines information to doctors. During the previous four years of new medicines on the marketing, pharmaceutical companies may get approximately US \$2.43 for each dollar spent on pharmaceutical journal advertisements for medicine which increases to higher than the US \$4 after that period. Pharmaceutical advertising in pharmaceutical journals has been criticized for being poor quality; hence an effective regulatory system is required to ensure that information provided in pharmaceutical journal advertising is hold up the quality use of medicines as information provided in journal advertising has the potential to change doctors prescribing behavior which is crucial for the patients. Robert Osborn states that “Advertising in the medical publication is highly regarded by pharmaceutical marketers because it can generate rapid awareness based on its cost and efficiency which increases prescriptions.

### **Sponsorship**

Companies are primarily keen on sponsoring group activities by making direct payments to the doctors in various indirect ways i.e., for clinical trials, national and international conferences and symposia sponsorships, free medical camps, and opinion leaders for healthcare professionals are likely to

lead to more sales. Research sponsored by the drug industry is more likely to produce results favoring the product made by the company. According to the results of clinical drug trials that are funded by pharmaceutical companies are favorable to the products of the sponsoring company. In 2016 pharmaceutical companies paid physicians and teaching hospitals \$58.95 million for disease awareness education and education not related to specific products. Some manufacturers acknowledged that they fund unbranded informational demonstrations to promote disease state awareness to health care professionals. Pharmaceuticals can influence physicians and patients through professional workshops, seminars, and conferences to seek more attention towards the product, which is a great chance to interact with physicians directly and get appropriate advice which becomes more feasible to tune in with professionalisms and to apply this marketing to a wider audience of physicians and also free samples of products are handled out directly to the patients wherein they can use it without any risk which is one of the traditional sponsorship methods and remain widespread. The receipt of industry-sponsored programs is associated with an increased rate of prescribing the promoted brand name medication and is likely to lead to more sales.

### **Personal Selling**

Personal selling is one of the oldest and most suitable methods of business promotion defined as a management process that involves the assessment of customer wants and needs, and the performance of all activities connected with the development, pricing, provision, and promotion of product solutions that satisfy those wants and needs. Therefore, personal selling is a communication process that helps salespeople fulfills customers’ needs. It has been an advantage that it incorporates real-world in-person communication plays a vital role in marketing pharmaceutical products to inform clients about the products offered in marketing and it is often used with representatives in marketing known as medical representatives who sell the pharma product through details about the product to the doctor. It also creates awareness and encourages the non-users to try the products of the firm which enhances the competitiveness of the firm, maintains a superior standing in the industry, and enhances profit maximization. According to a well-structured and continuous personal selling sustains a distinct marketing position. Thus, personal selling plays a vital role to increase the sales of the pharmaceutical industry. But the disadvantage is that personal selling is a high-cost endeavor because people serving as the medium of communication are expensive to need the usual resources of salaries, benefits, supervision, training, and soon. According to a mascot, to promote the products in the market, pharmaceutical companies have to primarily depend on

personal selling. There is an influence of personal selling on prescription behavior, if medical representatives have established good relations with physicians, there are more chances of doctor's prescription for the promoted certain drug or brand which automatically increase sales. The core business of every pharmaceutical company is manufacturing, marketing, and distribution of pharmaceutical products but the sales lead of the products is mostly generated by the contribution of medical representatives. The survey among physicians and pharmacists reveals that medical representatives are physician's most preferred marketers-controlled information source.

### **Branding**

According to Moss (Schilling and Moss, 2004), a brand is a name that will register the product in the consumer's mind. A normal product delivers tangible, whereas a brand offers additional values that are both tangible and intangible benefits which help to sustain the brand against generics after patent expiration. During the 1980's a product suffering patent loss could still expect to have 60% of its sales turnover 12 months later and in the 1990's, that figure dropped to 40% and in certain cases, it has been further exceeded. Hence a strong base of loyal consumers is required to maximize return on investment. According to Aakes 1991, Kapferer 2001, to sustain sales after the patent has expired, the brand should be in a better position. To lengthen the life of the product after patent expiry, companies must use corporate branding techniques as it would be beneficial to associate the company name with good ethics, corporate social responsibility, and another non-profit organization the company may support. Building loyalty, credibility, and trust with consumers is paramount in creating longer-term success. Brand name contributes significantly to consumer purchase decisions especially in the area of product identification, selection and positioning, and product differentiation, to differentiate their products from companies using packaging symbols, trademarks, and logos among others. There are many benefits of branding in the pharmaceutical industry that help in enhancing the image of the products which increases the sales of the products.

### **III. PHARMACEUTICAL PROMOTION IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

To bridge all the gaps in the limitations of traditional marketing, the use of digital marketing strategies is proposed by the pharma industry, engaging all the stakeholders towards maximizing incomes and gaining more market share. In addition to that, the ongoing development of internet-related technologies provides new opportunities for pharmaceutical

manufacturers to influence consumer expectations of health care and prescribing practices with the quality use of medicines and evidence-based education. There is a strong opportunity to integrate online and social media with traditional marketing strategies to meet the expected business objectives. Direct marketing involves the use of the internet, which is defined as the conveyance of messages via mail, the internet, and similar routes directly to consumers is used broadly by healthcare organizations to attract and inform current and prospective health and medical offerings opportunities. Examples of direct marketing include straight mail marketing, telemarketing, and internet marketing which includes e-detailing.

### **Electronic Detailing**

Electronic detailing (e-detailing) is a new communication channel introduced by the pharmaceutical industries to promote pharmaceutical products to physicians which is a recent trend because it increases the effectiveness of promotion of prescription products to a physician in a less expensive way than traditional detailing. E detailing was limited to the US when it was introduced in 1996, but after that many countries adopted this technique and now it is popular in many developed nations. Medent Media has identified two main types of e-detailing, virtual live e detailing and scripted e detailing. Virtual live e detailing is defined as the face to face-based video conferencing between a physician and a pharmaceutical representative where the video image of the representative is displayed while audio communication is conducted over the telephone or microphone. Pharmaceutical companies describe the physicians with the help of the vendor to participate in e detailing programs. Another type of detailing is scripted e detailing which consists of a series of interactive screens with multimedia information that enables the physicians to learn about the promoted product including research evidence, clinical practice guidelines, prescribing information, and patient advice. It consists of a well-structured message that is five to ten times extended than the normal face-to-face sales rep call, but at a lower cost and shows authentic increases in the prescribing of the drug.

If one pharmaceutical company wants to launch an e detailing program, an email newsletter about the product information is sent to a targeted physician group through a vendor. They also target physicians through the mail, email, or by their PSRs. Target physicians create a personal account with an invitation number from the invitation received and then the participants can watch the interactive presentation, e detailing, or speak directly with a PSR through video e detailing.

## Electronic Direct to consumer advertisement

Direct to consumer advertisement is defined as any unsolicited promotional endeavor by a pharmaceutical company to present information about medicine or medical services to the public in the popular media that includes television, radio advertisement newspapers, magazine advertisements, billboards, and direct mailings. In the early 1990s, some drugs manufacturers began targeting consumers as there is an increase in their own health care decisions. Since then, DTC advertising has become a popular promotional tool. Patients' demand medicine increases due to which physicians prescribe demanded medicines but were indecisive about the choice of the treatment and correctness of prescribing may grieve but the sales of the medicine increases.

There are currently several types of direct to customer (DTC) advertisements. One kind is the "help-seeking ad," in which medical information is provided to encourage patients to contact their physician but products information is not mentioned. Another category is the "reminder ad," in which the product's information is mentioned but the indication is not mentioned. The third type is the "product claim ad," which includes the efficacy or safety claims of a drug. Since the FDA released new guidelines on direct-to-consumer advertising in 1997, the prevalence of direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs has increased exponentially and each category of advertisement should be subjected to different FDA regulations. Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs (DTCA) is legal in 2 industrialized countries, the United States and New Zealand and it is not legal in India. However, patients today increasingly flock to websites to find health-related information including those related to drugs. Hence, internet healthcare websites have rendered this law as merely a paper-feast.

## Email Marketing Systems

One of the most widely used systems by many pharma companies. This system can be used for sending information related to various products and brands in detail to HealthCare professionals. Pharmaceutical direct mail is the perfect way to educate and persuade physicians and enables companies to directly interact with consumers because it showcases your company's brand offers detailed information and benefits about the product. There has been a massive growth in direct mail campaigns over the last decade representing 11.8% of advertising expenditure. Direct mail allows an organization to use its resources more effectively by allowing them to send publicity material to named persons within its target segment.

There is a positive impact of covid 19 on email marketing. Lockdowns and social distancing norms due to covid 19 have reshaped the role of reps and other face-to-face communication. In this situation, an email marketing campaign can share important information with Health care Professionals and the general public who is a wonderful potential audience for pharma email marketing because pandemic generated panic, fear, and worry among them. Hence, they are looking for relevant and timely information from credible sources. These circumstances grant the way for email marketing which provides a powerful means for promulgating information related to the pandemic, preventive measures, medicines, treatment methods, vaccines, etc.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Pharmaceutical promotional strategies are the key to successful pharma marketing. Pharmaceutical promotion has both informative and persuasive elements which are more effective at broadening the market, educating consumers, persuading physician contact, increasing drug treatment, and encouraging adherence among existing users hence promotion is very important to expand the sales of the pharmaceutical companies. This study has also explored the various techniques and tools of promotion followed in the pharmaceutical companies. We hope that practitioners can benefit from our analysis in order to better understand the various techniques and tools of promotion. The paper will act as a base for the pharmaceutical and marketing researcher for further study on marketing and identified the gap in this article for further research.

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