

STUDYING PHYSICIANS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Concept of perception

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. It describes the ability to understand the true nature of something. In humans it is a process whereby sensory stimulation is translated into organized experience.

Importance of medical representatives in pharmaceutical marketing

Medical representatives are the backbone of any pharmaceutical company. They are the link between the company and the physicians. It is his responsibility to convince the prescribers to prescribe the products of his company. For this he offers literatures, gifts, and free product samples to the prescriber. They provide the physicians with scientific and clinical information. It is his duty to keep the physicians updated about new products, the purpose for which it is intended to be used, the possible side effects of it and all other

prescribing information. They also keep them informed about the ongoing research in his company. It is he who enquires the physician about his experience in using the company's product and actions to be taken in case of any complaints. He can also act as an advisor to the physician in case any adverse drug reaction is reported.

Changing trends in sales promotion of pharmaceutical marketing

Promotional activities for product are considered as life blood of all marketing strategies. It helps in increasing the sale of drug. In pharmaceutical marketing, product promotional strategies are mainly focus on inducing physicians' prescription. In today's scenario Pharmaceutical companies are facing cut-throat competition and they are applying several new methods of product promotion to promote their brand. In this process, they spend heavily on advertising which leads to increased price of the product. Pharmaceutical companies are promoting their product through medical representatives, journals and direct e-mailing to the physicians.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. Analyzing physicians' perception towards medical representatives
2. To identify the nature and extent of relationship between the physicians and the medical representatives

and its effect on the behavior of physicians

3. To identify and analyze the influencing factors in medical representatives
4. To analyze effectiveness of verbal communication of medical representatives against the visual aids
5. To identify whether the drug information from internet sources can replace the medical representatives
6. To analyze which age group of medical representatives are most efficient
7. To analyze whether female medical representatives are more influencing than the male

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY:

This study is important in the following areas-

The companies train their medical representatives in a way which is beneficial to them. This study will help the company to strive and change the strategy of training of medical representatives to increase the overall productivity of the company. This study will help the physicians to gain maximum benefit from the medical representatives regarding their knowledge of drugs within short span of time. The physicians have a very busy schedule and they can hardly afford to spend more than 5 minutes on each medical representative. With the help of this study the medical representatives

will aim to deliver the physicians only the required information which is expected out of him. Thus he will try to make the best possible use of the physicians' precious time. This study is also important for academic purpose as it will reveal and encourage further studies to be carried out in this area.

METHODOLOGY:

1. Determining sample size by application of market research software (statistics calculator software).

- a. Best estimate of the population size in the area (physicians) = 1500
- b. Best estimate of the rate in the population (%) = 50
- c. Maximum acceptable difference (%) = 7
- d. Desired confidence level (%) = 85
- e. Required sample size = 98

2. Preparation of questionnaire:

Open and close ended questions were prepared to analyze the perception of physicians regarding medical representatives.

3. Sampling unit:

The prepared questionnaire was administered from tertiary care hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and govt. hospitals in the area of North Karnataka state of India

4. Data analysis:

Percentage analysis method was used to analyze the collected responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

It was observed that 70.4% physicians spend less than 5 min with each medical representative. 74.5% physicians were of the opinion that they attend 1-5 medical representatives daily. The maximum range which a physician attended was 6-10. Good communication skill was considered as the influencing factor by 48.9% physicians; whereas 'knowledge' was given high ranking by 24.1% physicians. A few of them believed positive attitude and personality to be significant. 59.2% physicians opined that medical representatives provide ample information about new products. 53.1% physicians denied that medical representatives provide sufficient product samples. 50% physicians believed verbal communication to be more effective than their visual aids. In such a modern technological era 47.95% physicians alleged that drug information from internet sources cannot replace the medical representatives, whereas 33.7% believed that both of them are required for them to be updated regarding drug information. 67.3% physicians recommended that medical representatives should change their detailing style on subsequent visits. 61.2% physicians were of the opinion that medical representatives were not able to clear their doubts about the products. 26.5% believed that they were able to do so only on their next visit. Regarding the age, 59.2% physicians were of the opinion that medical representatives of age group 26-30 were the best in their work. 73.5% physicians believed that female medical

representatives are less influencing than their male counterpart

CONCLUSION:

From above study it was observed that majority of physicians (70.4%) spend less than 5 min with each medical representative, it indicates that medical representative has to convince physicians within less than five minutes. 74.5% physicians attend 1-5 medical representatives daily. As good communication skill was considered as the influencing factor by 48.9% physicians, pharmaceutical companies can focus their training mainly on communication skills for their sales force. It is observed that 53.1% physicians denied that medical representatives provide sufficient product samples, by taking this in account we can conclude that pharmaceutical companies can provide more samples to physicians.

Above study shows that 50% physicians believed verbal communication of Medical Representative are more effective than visual aids; it indicates that pharmaceutical companies should concentrate more on developing verbal communication of medical representatives. Majority of physicians (67.3%) recommended that medical representatives should change their detailing style on subsequent visits. 61.2% physicians were of the opinion that medical representatives were not able to clear their doubts about the products at first visit. Majority of physicians were of the opinion that

medical representatives of age group 26-30 are the best in their work. 73.5% physicians believed that male medical representatives are more influencing than their female counterpart.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

From above conclusion we would like to recommend-

1. Medical Representative has to convince physicians within less than five minutes, therefore he has to put his efforts to convince physicians within short span of time.
2. Pharmaceutical companies should train their medical representatives in verbal communication.

3. Medical representatives should change their detailing style in every subsequent visit.
4. Medical representatives should possess detail knowledge about the product so that they can clarify physicians' doubt on the spot.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY:

- The sample size considered in this study is restricted to 98. It is not universal representation; therefore results derived from this study should not be generalized