

## **PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES LEVERAGING DIGITAL CHANNELS TO PROMOTE BRAND AWARENESS AMONGST DOCTORS POST COVID-19**

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### **Abstract**

The research paper probes into the fact of why the digital channels make for a much better platform for promoting the medical brands. A literature review was conducted on the same to make sure proper level of information is available to the researcher in the first place. It was chosen that interview questions would be used to collect data in this research process. This is because the researcher needs a vast level of information on the topic of the same. The interview questions, with the participant of the research process, would help the researcher gather valuable information about brand awareness.

### **1. Introduction**

Through the use of digital channels, the possibility of conveying a message or ensuring efficiency in the workflow system increases. This is even more applicable during the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and during times where COVID 19 has wreaked havoc on the human society. Through use of the channels, it is possible to be in touch with more people, whether the target audience is the mass or a specific group of people. One of the pre-requirements of the situation is the ability of the professionals to handle equipment that help them connect with their professional counterparts. In the day and age, one of the main goals for the pharmaceutical companies is to maintain a high level of reputation that would not be scarred through any malpractice or negligence. The rise of the pandemic has given the opportunity of negligence to rise as well. However, the reputation of the companies in the market would not be dependent on the factors that have intervened in the current situation. It would depend upon the same variables as before. The only difference in such an occasion is that the company would have to act swiftly and make their required arrangements so that it plays a role in handling the pandemic.

#### Research Questions

- How does the use of digital channels fare better than using other channels to spread awareness amongst the medical fraternity?
- Does digitization of communication ensure that it would have a better outcome and better effect on the lives of the target audience?
- What are the strategic points of this type of communication and how are they better suited to the rules and structure of digital media channels?

### **2. Review of Literature and Concepts**

The first area that has to be highlighted when the discussion of digital channels is concerned is that how the adaptation to digital channels have proceeded over the years. The adaptation has taken place in not only the change of technology and the installation of new devices. Those are

the elementary objects in the scheme of things. The main factor that it has brought about a change is the mindset of the common public. In the earlier days, the knowledge among the common public regarding the field of medicines was through the journals. These journals would mostly be available in the libraries among numerous other journals and periodicals. The brand recognition among the common public was not discussed in the media, newspapers or among the common discussions (Alamsyah, Sofyan, Aprilliyanti and Aini, p. 3814, 2017). The public did not have a number of choices as far as the brands in medicine or for that matter, in any field was concerned. The competition among the brands was not very high so that it would force them to use tactics and technology to gain an upper hand over the limited brands to compete with. Most of the medical information that the public received during these times would usually come from the journals (Paul, p. 305, 2019). Another source of knowledge was the radio channels that were made for this particular purpose. Many of these channels would not last for a long time because their demands would fade away within a short period itself. There would not be a lot of takers for the information that were spread through these medium. It required extensive knowledge about the topic itself that was not available to a large

majority of the people around that time. The level of knowledge is not commonly found among the people even today (Bilgin, p. 135, 2018).

Moreover, the techniques of brand promotion that were undertaken in case of the medicine brands themselves were not good enough to create an engagement with the audience itself. Most of the brand promotion techniques were bland and they did not contain enough material that would have given them a proper image in the media. All of these would not be a part of the problem in case of the new day and age. The people have much more suitable access to media and the pharma companies use this access to continuously engage with them. This is only possible because there is a general consensus among the people that more they learn about the modern ways of technology, the more they would be able to deal with problems (Molinillo, Japutra, Nguyen and Chen, 2019). The old systems have been replaced with new systems. In the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the old systems are irrelevant. The people are learning the process to cope with the new trends of the modern era. Hence, this is one of the reasons that makes the use of digital channels a must to increase and improve their brand awareness. They have to use it even for the medical professionals apart from the public.

One of the main reasons behind the change is the fact that in human lives and experiences, the old continuously makes way for the new. This is especially true for brand promotions. Since the brand promotions exist because of a competition between the brands, it gives rise to better and wittier creative display from the brands themselves. Every brand tries to outdo the other one through more creativity (Xi and Hamari, 2019). This is highly relevant in the post COVID world. The better a brand is able to deliver or convince the target audience that they are sincere about their performance regarding the pandemic and the spread of disease among mass, the better reach it will have among the masses. It would create a high level of trust among the target audience who are in a dazed and confused state at the time of the pandemic. They would need to be assured that the brand they are looking forward to in the current situation would have the safety measures among their highest level of priority. More creativity would pave a long way for the trust to survive in such a situation (Suresh, Chaudhuri, Fowler and Reisenwitz, p. 22, 2020). The more the platforms, the more there is the opportunity to display creativity. This is why digital channels are highly critical for brand promotions at these times. Not only they can reach out to a larger number of people, they can also reach out to anybody at any point of time. This again can be alluded to change in the media that has been witnessed for decades and more. Previously the media promotions generally concerned with making the common public stick to their products.

There were not many brands. Just a few brands here and there would compete among one another with the aim of having more customers (Kotsi and Slak Valek, p. 369, 2018). The audience engagement was not a highly known phenomena in promotion at that time. This made the general behavior of the brands towards the target audience lackluster and not really up to the mark. The changing times have brought about a change in the attitude and outlook of the brands.

Today, the brands would in the first place, want the common public to be more engaged and more knowledgeable about the effects of the pandemic. However, one of the things to be taken notice of in this instance is the fact that the ethics of selling products compels the brands to make sure that they do not use the pandemic to their advantage to gain an upper hand over the other brands and their products (Khosravizadeh, Vatankhah and Maleki, p. 1137, 2017). For example, none of the brands can promote through claiming that their products are better than the products of their competitors in the times of the pandemic. They can however promote that their products are helpful in the times of pandemic because of certain reasons and mention the reasons in their advertisements. The ethical standard among the brands also exist today because there is a high level of knowledge and awareness among the common public about the brands and the ethics that comes along with the activities committed by the brands. If there is a product that claims such a thing, there would be many ardent customers, who, through the awareness of the activity, would want to dissociate with the brand itself. This is because in the new day and age, any action undertaken by a public body are put under the scanner in the first place. If it is found to be performing something that does not fall within the ethical standards, the brand or the product would be brought down in the first place. The level of awareness among the public has also increased. However, this also leads to a situation where the brands would have to re-evaluate themselves (Rezkiyah, Hariyanti and Al Rasyid, p. 64, 2017). This is because, misinformation can be easily spread through digital channels and a lot of people would be a target of that misinformation. There can be agendas that are run against companies with political intention to lessen the popularity of their products. These are the areas that need to be kept in mind by the brands. It is necessary for the brands to make sure that the misinformation is countered properly and the brand does not take drastic steps in this situation. That can also lead to another situation that would be highly influential and negatively consequential for the pharmaceutical company.

### 3. Research Methods

#### Data Collection

In any research process, the data collection process ensures that the researcher is committed to work on finding material that are relevant to the study. It requires a high level of knowledge and application on part of the researcher to make sure that the research activity would be conducted and the results that come out of it are relevant in the context (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Young, p. 148, 2018). The research process also includes the review of literature where the researcher has to make sure that the pieces of literature is studied properly and the concept of the topic is established. In many of the cases, it might happen that the literature review is the core of the data. This is categorized as secondary data collection. However, the primary data collection which is an activity designed by the researcher in the process, gives the research more objective and makes the researcher more connected with the application of the topic in the real world (Maramwidze-Merrison, p. 14, 2016). There are numerous types of data collection. They are listed as follows:

- **Report Generation:** Data reporting deals with finding and using numerical data that would be used in the research project. The numerical data is available from other sources. They can be journal articles, hospital reports, reports from organizations and others. Through the data collected in these reports, the researcher carries forward the research process. Here, the important thing is for the research to interpret the data in a proper manner. The data that is available from outside sources would not be directly relevant for the research conducted in the first place. The researcher would have to make sure that the data is properly used and there are no errors on the interpretation of the data. If that is done, there would be numerous problems in the research process. In the end, the validity and reliability of the research would come into question.
- **Questionnaire:** In a questionnaire, the most important thing is that the researcher would have to include participants for the research process. These participants would then be asked a number of questions and they would have the opportunity to provide the answers for them with options available. In most of the cases, the answers to the questionnaire are not open-ended answers. If they are close ended, it would give the opportunity to the researcher to collect proper data for the research process. One of the most important aspects of this data collection process is the fact that it takes much less time to collect the data. The participants of this research process would not have to invest a lot of time and energy to complete the research process.
- **Interview:** In an interview, the role of the participants is supreme. The researcher has to make sure that the participants would have a high standard of knowledge about the topic of the research and would be able to follow up in the research process properly. For that, the researcher has to make sure that the screening of the participants has to take place properly (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield and Kingstone, p. 624, 2018). Without proper screening process, it is not possible for the research to have a valid and reliable set of data. The most significant part that speaks volumes about this research process is the fact that there would be a high level of information available to the researcher as a result.

Out of the three, the decision in this particular research was to choose interview process. It is necessary to collect data that would provide a high level of understanding about the topic. It is only proper that the researcher would choose interview process in this particular research. The research needs a high-level of information about brand awareness and impact of brands.

#### 4. Research Ethics

Research ethics becomes an issue when there is a misunderstanding between the researcher and the participant. The ethical standards that should be used for researches of these types should not be neglected by the researcher in the first place (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson and Kangasniemi, p. 2957, 2016). For example, if the participant asks for her identity to not be revealed in this particular case, the researcher would be obliged to do so. The researcher would also need to be aware that he does not delve into any situation where he would ask for confidential information from the participant of the research process. If this is done, it would be considered a highly unethical activity from the perspective of the researcher. The

#### 5. Results and Analysis

The following questions were posed to the participants of the research process by the researcher. Many of these questions consisted of follow-up questions that addresses the topic of the research in a proper manner.

1. Do you think the use of social media has been helpful in the life of people? Can you describe the same from a marketing perspective?
2. Has digital marketing changed the whole realm of the process of marketing? How has brand recognition been influenced by the presence of digital marketing?
3. How do you think the brands influence the common public? What are the tactics that are employed by the brand managers and the people associated with it?
4. What do you think about the increase in the number of brands for every type of product? Has it made sure that the practices by the brands are fair to a larger extent?
5. What are the cautionary measures that is needed for medical brands? How does the doctor's role come into play in such a maneuver?
6. For a brand that is not easily recognized in the market and it goes through a makeover, what is the most suitable medium in the market that would help it in doing so?
7. Do you think the competition between the brands give the feeling to the customers that they are mistreated by the brands? Do you think they have the trust level on the brands as the brands propose?
8. What are the previous techniques used by the brands when the mediums were not well developed? How has it changed over the course of the last 3-4 decades?
9. What do you think about the factors that would go through the mind processes of the audience during the times post pandemic? Are the brands of medical industry able to do anything about that?
10. Are the medical brands able to work through times of pandemic and are they successful in ensuring that in the era of pandemic, they are present to provide the required support to the common public?

Through this interview, it was known that the factor that plays a role in the influence of digital media are the ways that the brands can express their creativity. The digital media platforms are numerous and they are also influential on the minds of the people (Gianduzzo, Gardiner, Rashid, Young, Frydenberg and Kelly, p. 25, 2016). They have the ability to create an effect in the minds of the people that other forms of brand promotion do not. This paves the way for the medical brands to represent themselves in the market in a proper and valid manner. Without the inclusion of the digital channels, it is not possible for the medical brands to spread the awareness to a maximum number of people. It would be a difficult situation for the brands as well as the brand managers since they would leave out the most attractive and influential channels of the media to engage the public. The interview has revealed that the digital channels play a large role in the situation where the mood of the public includes fear and anticipation. In such a situation, the general public would trust the ethical conduct of the brands even if it might be fact that for some of them, the ethical image of the brands has reduced over the years (Shriedeh and Abd Ghani, p. 7, 2017). They trust the fact that brand engagement ensures the brand has a proper and reliable connection with the common public. That would be useful for the trust building between the two parties during these times.

## 6. Conclusion

It is important to gain knowledge about the effects of the medical substances that are used by the general public. It is important for the common public to be aware of these matters. Also, during and after the times of the pandemic, the common people would have much more awareness of the harm that can be caused due to the use of such products. However, the brands would have to use proper techniques and proper channels to make sure that their promotion about the same products would be satisfactory. The effects of digital channels make the promotion through such routes much easier and convenient for the brands. They would have to make sure the image of the brand is properly maintained among the common public. The features that make the digital channels much more effective than other channels in this case revolve around the display of creativity and information sharing. The information sharing along with messages of making more and more people aware of the situation is possible only through these digital channels. No other platform gives the brands the same level of opportunity to connect to their target audience with a proper message during these difficult times.

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