

Healthcare and Hospital Promotions and Audience Reception

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Abstract

Indian healthcare system is believe to be one of the best in Asia. India has been emerging as a healthcare destination for many people living in other countries. Enhanced medical tourism in any country is generally a testimony to the quality of healthcare (Ayoubian & Hashemi, 2013). This increase in India's reputation pertaining to healthcare and hospitals has led to increase in the number of private hospitals. With these bloating figures, hospital advertising and PR has assumed heightened significance. This era of new economic realities has witnessed mushrooming of private hospitals along with PPP model in the healthcare sector in India. The growth 2000 onwards in-fact surpassed the previous growths manifolds (Kumar, 2015). The number grew consistently and thus increased the competition leading to corporatization of the Hospital Industry (Kumar, 2015). The hospital services were promoted like any other product or service which led to gradual criticism from all corners. The ethical dilemma related to whether hospital services should be treated as any other product started surfacing amongst the people. These moral and ethical dilemma are not just prevalent in India but are global (Bogianzidis, 2017).

This article focusses on the prevalent PR and advertising practices that are often criticized and seldom praised (Gaitho, 2007). Public Relations and advertising in general are considered to be manipulative in nature (Mukherjee & Nathawat-Aibas, 2017).

INTRODUCTION

Indian healthcare system is believe to be one of the best in Asia. India has been emerging as a healthcare destination for many people living in other countries. Enhanced medical tourism in any country is generally a testimony to the quality of healthcare (Ayoubian & Hashemi, 2013). This increase in India's reputation pertaining to healthcare and hospitals has led to increase in the number of private hospitals. With these bloating figures, hospital advertising and PR has assumed heightened significance. This era of new economic realities has witnessed mushrooming of private hospitals along with PPP model in the healthcare sector in India. The growth 2000 onwards in-fact surpassed the previous growths manifolds (Kumar, 2015). The number grew consistently and thus increased the competition leading to corporatization of the Hospital

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Industry (Kumar, 2015). The hospital services were promoted like any other product or service which led to gradual criticism from all corners. The ethical dilemma related to whether hospital services should be treated as any other product started surfacing amongst the people. These moral and ethical dilemma are not just prevalent in India but are global (Bogianzidis, 2017).

This article focusses on the prevalent PR and advertising practices that are often criticized and seldom praised (Gaitho, 2007). Public Relations and advertising in general are considered to be manipulative in nature (Mukherjee & Nathawat-Aibas, 2017). This perception has been strengthened over a period of time because of instances where the brands have crossed the ethical and sometimes legal lines (Luoma-Aho, 2015). The credibility issues amongst the masses has made brands more conscious and innovative in their communication strategies. The rise of the new media has led to more rampant public scrutiny, leaving very little margin for error. A small mistake from the brands can be fatal for the brand reputation, more so for the hospitals since it is about the life of the people (Hutter, 2019; Vinodhini & Kumar, 2010). The greater the stakes, more intense are the efforts leading to practices like exchange of gifts with the media personnel, offering services in lieu of partial favorable treatment, under the table exchanges, and much more. This is the perception of the critical school while a lot of praise is also heaped on how the hospital PR and advertising has created awareness about health amongst the masses and altered the health related behaviors.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- To study what media audience feel about healthcare and hospital advertising and PR
- To study the audience preferences amongst the healthcare and hospital advertising and PR

Population

Media Audience of Delhi

Sample Size

128 respondents

Sampling Technique

Purposive

Tool for Data Collection

Structured Questionnaire

Data Tabulation and Analysis

The table above shows that majority of the respondents prefer articles over advertisements. Advertisements may create awareness but articles (advertorials or any content based information focusing on issues) generate awareness along with knowledge.

The table above shows that majority of the respondents witness most frequent health based promotions (including ad and PR) on social media (43.75%) followed by 28.91% on print media. TV is third in the list of preference at 21.09% and radio is chosen by only 6.25% respondents. In some ways the trend in this result also shows the way people use media. Majority appear inclined towards social media followed by print, TV and radio coming last in the list of preferences.

Table 3 above shows what people witness the most in the different mediums. Articles are most visible with 47.66% choosing it, followed by advertorials (paid articles) chosen by 36.72%. Advertisements are least visible in different mediums as chosen by 15.63% respondents only.

The table above shows the type of promotion respondents prefer for knowledge and awareness. It is seen that majority 55.47% prefer leaflets while hoardings and posters are chosen by 12.50% respondents. Radio ad, print ad and TV ad are chosen by 10.94%, 10.94% and 10.16% respondents respectively.

The table above shows how the people perceive the influence of the new media on the levels of awareness and knowledge generated amongst the masses. Majority believe that new media has had highest influence with 35.94% choosing it. It is followed by 34.38% respondents claiming that new media has had high influence. Taking cumulative results, more than 70% believe that it has had high to highest influence. Very few including 7.03% chose

Table 1: Audience Preferences

<i>Audience Preference</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Articles	85	66.41%
Advertisements	43	33.59%
Total	128	100%

Table 2: Most Active Healthcare Promotional Medium

<i>Promotion most visible in (Medium)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Social Media	56	43.75%
Print Media	37	28.91%
TV	27	21.09%
Radio	8	6.25%
Total	128	100%

Table 3: Most Popular Promotion Type

<i>Most Viewed in Media</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Articles	61	47.66%
Advertorials (Paid Articles)	47	36.72%
Advertisements	20	15.63%
Total	128	100%

Table 4: ATL vs BTL Preferences

<i>Preference</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Leaflets	71	55.47%
Hoardings and Posters	16	12.50%
Radio Ad	14	10.94%
Print Ad	14	10.94%
TV Ad	13	10.16%
Total	128	100%

Table 5: New Media Influence

<i>New Media influence on Awareness</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Highest Influence	46	35.94%
High Influence	44	34.38%
Normal Influence	18	14.06%
Less Influence	11	8.59%
Least Influence	9	7.03%
Total	128	100%

least influence and 8.59% chose less influence of new media on the levels of awareness of the masses.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Some other major findings on the basis of the survey results include:

- Hospital advertisements in print are generally focusing on the hospital infrastructure through a soft emotional appeal.
- Hospital advertisements in TV and other audio-visual means are focusing on not only the infrastructure but also reflect the values and culture of the brand.
- Hospital promotions in social media platforms are generally testimonial based and focus on specific issues like COVID, Dengue and other similar issues.
- Leaflets, pamphlets and brochures are preferred as they create most issue specific awareness amongst the people.
- It is also perceived by the people that such below-the-line promotion brings the maximum behavior change.
- Majority of the respondents claimed that they have undergone checkups based on the information available on the promotional material.
- People like hospital advertisements that appear to be like public service message. The hospital advertisements that appear too commercial are generally not liked much by the people.
- On the contrary, many also believed that hospital advertisements and promotions tend to create confusion regarding which hospital to choose for a specific body related issue (disease).
- NABH accreditation is also part of many mainstream media based hospital promotions. It means that the hospitals try to instill trust amongst people about their quality through showing the accreditation.
- People also tend to form opinion about the doctors being used in the promotional material (on any media platform). They see such doctors as the star doctors of the respective hospitals.
- Advertorials are preferred over advertisements. Even though paid, they do pass on the knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Hospital and healthcare advertising is crucial for making people aware about health and fitness. It also makes people alert about their well-being and helps in early diagnosis of many fatal diseases. Overall, they also help in generating a desire amongst the people to lead a fit and healthy life. However, commercial advertisements and public service message based advertisements are taken and received differently by the people. People tend to feel good about the brands and hospitals that deliver people centric messages rather than commercially driven messages. Emotional soft appeals are what makes people inclined. People don't like to associate heavy infrastructure and machinery to something like hospital, rather they prefer to associate hospital and healthcare with emotions and soft emotional appeal. Hospital and healthcare promotion needs to be taken up more seriously and requires a new approach in the era of ultra-scrutiny through social media.

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