

Effectiveness of promotional tools used by medical representatives to generate product prescriptions from doctors with respect to Pakistan's Pharmaceutical Industry

by

Dr. Tariq Mehmood Dar

Director Marketing & Sales, Pharmaceuticals

Fellow of MBA, Faculty of Health/Hospital/Pharmaceutical Management,
DOW University of Health Sciences – Institute of Health Management, Pakistan

Email: drtariqdar@gmail.com

Abstract

Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry has proved itself a flourishing industry because it has been showing double-digit growth for the last couple of years. There are some mergers and acquisitions seen in multinational companies, but national companies stand firmly against multinationals and capture a fair market share. Medical representatives play a crucial role in the marketing and sales team of all pharmaceutical companies. He/she faces doctors, communicates products to them, answers the queries, offers them gifts or other obligations, takes feedback from doctors and chemists, takes care of his sales, monitors prescriptions and watch competitors, and informs head office on their any new move, tactic or new product. He/she selects doctors for any activity or obligation that the company plans. In this regard, monitoring prescriptions at the chemist level is essential, and a medical representative does the same. Medical representative narrates the products to doctors through product brochures or folders. He gives them product samples as a starter dose for their patients and gives them product new studies to build more confidence in the product. All the moves and tactics of medical representatives are establishing doctors' confidence in the product and getting maximum product prescriptions. Hence medical representative is the person who replicates company strategies and tactics in doctors' chambers. He is the person who selects different doctors for different product promotional tools according to their prescription generation ability. This research project talks about various promotional tools used by medical representatives to generate product prescriptions by doctors. This research project would show the medical representatives' point of view regarding the ability of the promotional tools in prescriptions generation. Moreover, this study will categorize some of the essential promotional tools that near to medical representatives are the most important in prescription generation by the doctors.

Keywords: Medical representatives, sales, product prescription, promotional tools, etc.

Introduction and Background:

Sales management needs all the fundamental factors required for management, i.e., Planning, Organizing, Leading, and Controlling. Selling is a process of motivating someone to buy products, services, or ideas, while sales is an outcome of selling. Pharmaceutical companies target doctors to prescribe their products through their sales team.

A pharmaceutical salesperson uses various tools in different effective manners to make his sales call healthy and productive to generate product prescriptions. Promotional tools are a good source of product reminders for doctors. This study analyzes the medical representative's perspective on the effectiveness of different promotional tools for product prescriptions.

Pharmaceutical selling:

In the Pharmaceutical industry, selling practice is quite different from FMCG, as the end-user is not the person involved in decision making to purchase medicine. The prescriber of the drug is the doctor & he is the decision-maker. The patient or the person who buys the drug is, in fact, the doctor's customer. So, the doctor's satisfaction is very much crucial for product prescriptions.

The job responsibilities of a medical representative are not like an ordinary salesperson, but he has to sell the essential feature of the product, the research involved in the development of that molecule, and the scientific knowledge which encourages doctors to prescribe the product (Awais, 2002).

The salesperson is the crucial element in the selling process. He is responsible for building a relationship of confidence with doctors and plays an essential role in improving patients' health status.

According to Yanis (2011), a medical representative's approach to doctors is based on relationships with doctors. Doctors pay attention only to those medical representatives they believed to have complete product knowledge and can answer doctors' queries. The real struggle starts with a medical representative when the doctor allows him to come inside his chamber. A medical representative has to describe his product to the doctor in a short time because near to doctors, their patients have the utmost value for them, and he has to tell them about the product with something out of the box tactic. If the doctor thinks that the medical rep has nothing new for him, the medical rep's visit will become over. Medical rep creates the difference through his detailing, communication, product knowledge, attire, senior visits. He has to do a genuine doctor call rather than a postman called. He must know the message clearly regarding his products.

Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry:

According to IMS November-2010, the total worth of Pakistan's Pharmaceutical Industry is 139 billion, with a growth rate of 14.7% over November 2009. Hence, the pharmaceutical industry is growing with double-digit growth.

In Pakistan, as well as other developing countries, there are usually two types of organizations selling pharmaceutical products (Awais, 2002):

- i. **Research-based companies (usually multinationals):** Produce and market drugs developed and researched by them.
- ii. **Generic companies (usually national companies):** Acquire raw material of already researched and marketed drugs around the globe and produce the finished products locally.

Product promotion in pharmaceutical industry:

Pharmaceutical companies promote their prescription medicines to doctors through personal selling. They provide essential information to doctors like drug prices, availability of

drugs at the nearby chemist, clinical research trial data and research articles, etc., through medical representatives. Medical representatives also provide product reminders and necessary obligations to the doctors. A knowledgeable salesperson, understanding of the customers and market are vital to make sales call productive.

Promotion mix:

Pharmaceutical marketing depends not only on manufacturing the right product and pricing it attractively; it also comprises appropriate communication with present customers. The pharmaceutical promotion strategy may consist of a mix of marketing tools, generally known as the promotion mix. Kotler (2002) defines the promotion mix as combining the definite merge of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations. Through this promotion combination, a company strives to create a difference from its competitors. Fundamentals of promotion mix are demonstrated in Figure 1.

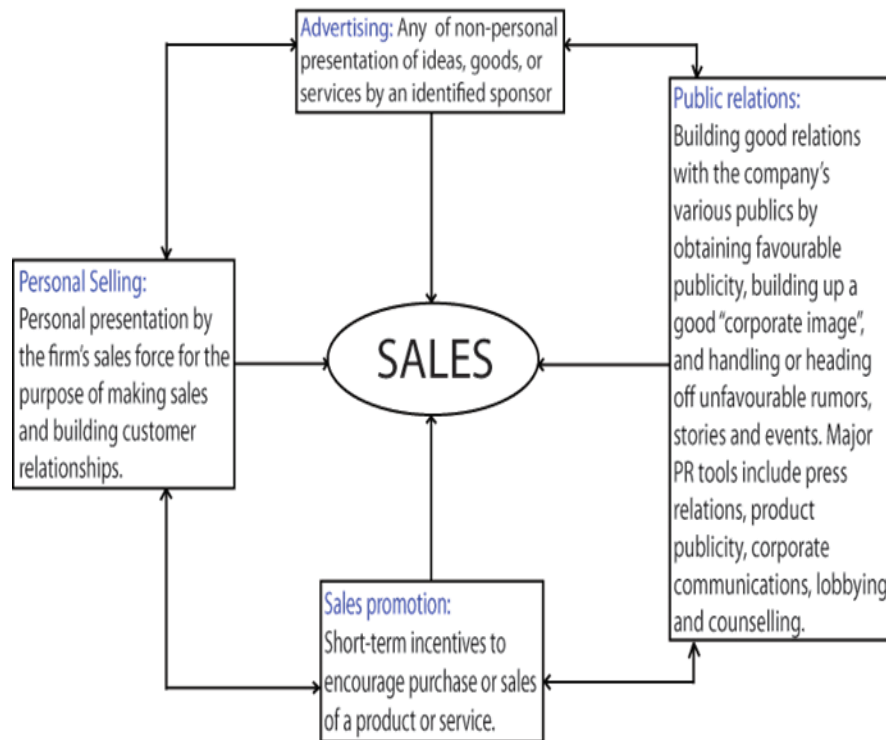


Figure 1: Elements of Promotion Mix¹

Each element of the promotion mix varies from one industry to another, depending on the nature of that industry and the type of customers. In the pharmaceutical industry, personal selling is an essential tool to follow. The pharmaceutical industry also does advertising in the form of product brochures, posters, or ads in medical journals. Following analysis of each factor makes it clear how a pharmaceutical company uses it.

¹ Source: Ayman (2007:28)

- i. **Advertising:** Pharmaceutical companies usually advertise their innovative new drugs in medical journals or magazines. The advertisement may be about a product or about the company itself.
- ii. **Personal selling:** Personal selling is a crucial element in pharmaceutical selling. Sales and marketing department tasks are to promote the company's products to doctors and get feedback from pharmacies for prescription and any new orders to make sales and build customer relations. Figure 2 illustrates the usual structure of the sales and marketing team of a pharmaceutical company.



Figure 2: Usual organizational structure of a pharmaceutical company²

According to Ayman (2007:29), a medical representative's job is to communicate with the Doctors through effective calls using brochures, promotional materials, clinical studies, and samples. The principle of these calls is to emphasize the advantages and uses of the product and build relations with target Doctors. The job of the marketing department (product manager and marketing manager) is to structure and design the sales call and promotional materials. They are also responsible for training the medical representatives on how to handle these promotional materials and how to do an effectual call.

- iii. **Sales promotion:** According to Ayman (2007:30), pharmaceutical companies use this tool in terms of bonus schemes on sales or discounts to pharmacies. These schemes may be an excellent source to motivate pharmacies to purchase products and give them priority in selling to customers.
- iv. **Public relations:** In the pharmaceutical business, public relations or customer relations are fundamental as doctors are prominent customers to be satisfied with

² Source: author's own work.

product prescriptions. Building up the right corporate image and fulfilling their ethical needs may be the basics of good relationship building.

According to Ayman (2007:30), pharmaceutical companies usually strengthen their relations with their customers through symposiums and workshops.

The Salesperson (Medical Representative):

The salesperson (medical rep) is the key to a personal selling strategy. The salesperson is an essential tie to the customers, i.e., they need to know the product inside and out, so that when the customer has a question or an issue with the product, it can be addressed immediately. Medical reps are market intelligence (because they know what other products are being sold and why). They also need to know the competitors' products so that they can give accurate representations of their products to the doctors, including all the core competencies present in his product. He has to maintain a robust follow-up on doctors for regular reminders. Hence, medical reps require lots of information to do their job well. A medical representative is more than just a sales agent. Their interactions with doctors give companies more information about what modifications need to be done to products than any other source. Medical representatives are also an excellent source to interact with chemists as a company representative. They make sure the proper availability of medicines at chemist outlets and the generation of the new order when necessary. He needs to monitor doctors' prescription levels and, at the same time, entertainment of prescription at the chemist level.

The Customers (Doctors):

Doctors are the target audience for medical reps. They are the drug customers, while patients or end users are drug consumers. By understanding customers' needs in a product, companies may provide perfect tools to the salesperson, which they can use to fulfill that need. By understanding what a customer wants, pharmaceutical companies can tune their sales team to be just that. The center of most marketing activities/obligations is doctors. Their satisfaction is essential for product prescriptions.

The Sales team motivation:

In personal selling, companies' salespersons are their best friends. Nevertheless, depending on the system companies have set up for them, they can also be their worst enemies. Determining an appropriate incentive system for a sales force can be the most challenging job companies will have. The key is to keep the sales force motivated, without any loopholes that they can use to take advantage of the system. Companies can reward the sales team based on short-term sales goals, long-term sales, repeat sales, under-budgeted expense reports, or a whole lot of other things. Retention of the skilled and knowledgeable salesperson is also significant to maintain the sales figures because sometimes customers (doctors) have an excellent affiliation with the salesperson, and this affiliation reflects the right figures in sales.

Selling pillars in pharmaceutical industry:

Pharmaceutical selling, like any other selling, stands on three key pillars (Awais, 2002):

- i. Knowledge: Product knowledge, Medical knowledge and Market knowledge (competitors' knowledge)
- ii. Skills in selling: Analytical selling skills,
- iii. Aptitude, Attitude, Passion

According to Awais (2002), practical and confident product knowledge is very important for medical representatives. They share and refresh the knowledge of their customers every now and then. A lot of people in the medical profession actually wait for the salesperson in order to get first-hand information about the medicines.

The following information about a prescription drug is very important to know by a medical representative to provide firsthand information about the medicines to the doctors (Awais, 2002):

- i. Product name
- ii. Composition
- iii. Indications
- iv. Pharmacological properties
- v. Dosage and method of administration
- vi. Side effects
- vii. Contraindications
- viii. Interaction with other drugs
- ix. Use in pregnancy and lactation
- x. Special precaution (if any)
- xi. Presentation
- xii. Price
- xiii. Availability

The following information is also important for medical representatives to identify:

- i. Product features and benefits
- ii. How this product is different from the rest (unique selling points)
- iii. Competitions and competitors' products (competitive edge)
- iv. Scientific evidence of all the claims in the shape of the published clinical data

Promotional tools used by a medical representative:

Promotional tools are the weapons of a medical representative, which helps him in generating product prescriptions. They are also the sort of building relationships with doctors. Medical reps have to use those tools intelligently when needed. The fundamental reason for using promotional tools is to satisfy the customer or fulfill his/her need(s), which is sometimes mandatory for the product prescription. Usually, research brands make their place through smashing clinical studies and the only presence in the market. However, generic product or me-too product needs aggressive reminders to the doctors for products or some motivating factor for the doctors which influence him/her to prescribe the medicine.

In this regard, one important responsibility of medical representatives is to gather information about the customer, including what needs have been fulfilled by other organizations and which one is still remaining. Fulfilment of need at the right time will oblige the customers for a longer period resulting in product prescriptions on more and more patients.

Following are some promotional tools a medical representative may use in the doctor's chamber (Girish, 2007: 7-8):

- i. Product Folder / Drop Card (for product/molecule studies)
- ii. Physician samples
- iii. Free drug camps for patients
- iv. Patients awareness flyers
- v. Molecule studies handout
- vi. Textbook as gift
- vii. A regular visit of Top management
- viii. Clinic gifts with product reminders
- ix. Personal gift
- x. Sponsorship for a personal tour (abroad or in-country)
- xi. Sponsorship for a medical conference (abroad or in-country)

The marketing department designs promotional tools and provides these to the sales team when required. Product-related tools like product folders, product samples, molecule studies, or patient awareness flyers are usually carried by medical representatives all the time during sales calls. Personalize gifts are also presented to doctors either regularly or sometimes on doctor's demand. A medical representative is a significant person in delivering promotional tools to doctors because, in return, he is responsible for asking the product prescriptions from the doctor. He is responsible for follow-up visits and returns on investment. So, it is essential to know his opinion & preference for the most important promotional tool in the generation of product prescription and the same I am trying to identify through this research.

Distribution & drug availability:

Doctors prescribe medicines, and his/her prescriptions are entertained at chemists' outlets. It is essential for pharmaceutical companies to make their prescription products available widely & adequately. Pharmaceutical companies either have their own distribution network, or they make sure to distribute their products at chemist outlets through authorized medicines' distributors.

The patient's return to the doctor with a claim of the unavailability of his/her prescribed drug could make the doctor annoyed. So it is imperative for the medical representative to make sure of the availability of drugs at the chemist before his doctor's visit.

Purpose of the study:

This research project aims to analyze the different promotion tools used by medical representatives and get their point of view about promotion tools' ability to motivate doctors in product prescription generation.

A medical representative performs different roles before and after entering the doctor's chamber. He visits the chemists regularly to analyze the prescription flow. He introduces products to the doctors and maintains strong follow-up through regular visits. He generally uses all the marketing & promotion mix tools to generate product prescriptions. The tools used by medical representatives are usually strategically designed by marketing personnel, including brand manager, business unit manager, or marketing manager. The expected outcome from the project and the possible value addition to me by understanding the following:

- i. Importance of promotional tools utilized by pharmaceutical companies while promoting products to doctors/physicians.
- ii. The most influential promotional tool for generating medicine prescription from doctors.

Justification of the study:

Doctors are the most critical customers in pharmaceutical selling. They prescribe a product to their patients; patients purchase those medicines from chemists, and chemists generate products' demand. This demand moves either directly to the company or company nominated distributors.

There is cut-throat competition among the pharmaceutical companies of Pakistan these days. The most crucial weapon of pharmaceutical companies is their competencies in personal selling. Notably, the quality of companies' representatives creates the difference. Hence, the medical representative is the key person to develop a business relationship with the doctors and in the generation of prescriptions. So, which promotion tool has the most influencing power in medical representatives' eyes in the prescription generation, the researcher will strive to find the same through this study.

Scope of the research:

This research study will act as a primary point for Pakistan's pharmaceutical companies to understand the importance of various promotion tools used by medical representatives for doctors' satisfaction and prescription generation.

This research project is based on primary and secondary data; this will help recognize customer insight regarding different promotion tools. This study will also offer a foundation for advanced research in the future.

Hypothesis or basic assumptions:

Hypothesis will not be postulated to draw conclusion.

Literature Review:

The pharmaceutical companies' sales department needs to be aggressive and always on their foot to grab highly academic professional customers who are medical doctors. Pharmaceutical companies promote their prescription medicines to doctors who can prescribe a product to his/her patients when there is a need. The pharmaceutical companies' sales team visits doctors regularly for continuous product reminders, and they are trained to use all promotional materials/tools intelligently. Hence, the sales team plays a vital role in the market development of a product. Through literature review, study subjects become more transparent, and a broader aspect of the study is obtained. The literature review will cover the pharmaceutical industry's history, current marketing practices, and practical marketing concepts. A significant point of view, academic perspective, and description will be recognized existing in the literature.

History of product and services marketing:

The sale is a process that involves offering a product or service to someone in exchange for money or other benefits. In the pharmaceutical industry, sales representatives are considered

as the backbone of the selling process. Pharmaceutical companies trained their medical representatives and give them complete product knowledge to promote prescription products and then assign them specific territories. Medical representatives' job responsibility includes visiting doctors and meeting chemists as per company rules and motivating doctors to prescribe products. Thus a medical representative plays a vital role in generating revenue by influencing doctors to prescribe in their brands.

According to McQuillan, in the 1940s, salespersons of the pharmaceutical industry use different names like "The Backslapper," "Dr. Snob," and "Dr. Resistant" to describe the doctors' behavior against different selling moves (Greene, 2007:2).

Bansal & Sanjoy (2005) expressed that the relationship between doctors and medical representatives (MRs) has existed since last. Medical representatives influence doctors through their work and encourage them to prescribe products.

Marks HM (1995) noticed that pharmaceutical companies use some modified marketing tactics in the first half of the 20th century. The salesman was encouraged to focus on pharmacies rather than doctors. It was noticed that companies increase their revenue through stocking products in pharmacies than convincing doctors to prescribe them in favor of their patients (Greene, 2007:2).

The 19th and 20th centuries are considered the golden period of the pharmaceutical industry, and many new companies were formed in that period. Insulin and Penicillin were the key critical discoveries of that era, which became mass-manufactured and distributed. Germany, Switzerland, and Italy had specifically vital industries, while Belgium, the US, UK, and the Netherlands were followed them.

Many new molecules and drugs were researched during the 1950s, and they were produced in a massive quantity. They were marketed in the 1960s. The newly discovered molecules at that time included oral contraceptive, "The Pill," Cortisone, blood-pressure drugs, and other heart medications; others include MAO Inhibitors. Another well-known molecule that was discovered in the 1960s was Valium (Diazepam). It was marketed in 1963 and stood alone as the most prescribed drug in history until the research was done about the drug causing dependency and habituation.

In the 1960s, new regulations were made after an investigation of severe congenital disabilities by using thalidomide (tranquilizer) in pregnant women. Newly developed U.S Food and drug administration (FDA) in 1960s, made some new laws to restrict and limit financial links between pharmaceutical companies and medical professionals.

In the 1970s, pharmaceutical companies focused on researching new salt and molecule; the invention of Cancer drugs was a breakthrough in that period. For the pharmaceutical industry, the period of 1980s was the era of new laws and regulation as regulatory bodies approved new molecules after strict scrutiny. However, the advent of new technologies for computation and analysis resulted in the development of newly researched molecules, which included drugs for heart disease and AIDS.

The 1990s period for the pharmaceutical industry was an era of globalization, i.e., the pharmaceutical industry entered into a new business environment characterized by mergers and takeovers. Pharmaceutical companies used contract researched organizations for drug clinical trials; thus, the research work process became faster, and many new molecules were researched and developed in this period.

Globalization also affects the marketing activities which were practiced in the pharmaceutical industry. Pharmaceutical companies entered into a new world of consumerism,

and the advent of scientific technologies, i.e., the internet, helped to approach consumers directly. The use of the internet made possible the direct purchase of medicine by drug consumers and help drug producers direct the purchase of raw material. In the U.S, pharmaceutical companies use TV and radio as a source for Direct-to-consumer promotion due to new regulations by the FDA in 1997. Worldwide pharmaceutical market size is approximately \$770-780 billion, with a low growth of 3-4% in 2009 (Statista, 2020).

Sales and marketing capability became an increasingly important source of competitive advantage. In 2002, firms spent nearly \$9.4 billion on marketing in the US (Holland & Bátiz-Lazo 2004).

In Pakistan, the pharmaceutical industry is a rapidly growing industry. In 1947, it was challenging to see a pharmaceutical company in Pakistan. However, Today Pakistani Pharmaceutical industry comprises about 400 manufacturing units. The pharmaceutical industry in Pakistan is well established and capable of meeting almost 70% of medicine demand. Over the last decade, national pharmaceutical companies show progressive growth and cover a major industry portion. The national pharmaceutical companies are following Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) by the local and international guidelines (Pakistan's Pharmaceutical Industry, 2020).

The Pakistan pharmaceutical industry is relatively young in the international markets with an export turnover of over US\$ 100 Million as of 2007. Pakistan pharmaceuticals Industry boasts of quality producers, and regulatory authorities approve many units all over the world. Like the domestic market, the sales in the international market have gone almost doubled during the last five years. The pharma industry is focusing on an Export Vision of USD 500 Million by 2013 ("Pakistan's Pharmaceutical Industry," 2020).

Prescription drugs always need the attention of the doctors to prescribe. As the "me too" brands are getting their broader way in Pakistan's market, the need for aggressive sales and marketing efforts are required. A perfect branding strategy and a hard-working sales team is the desired combination to influence the doctors to prescribe a medicine.

The pharmaceutical industry of Pakistan is comparatively new in the international market and has an export turnover of US\$ 100 Million as of the year 2007. The pharmaceutical industry of Pakistan makes its position strong in the international market because of quality producers, and with highly skilled professionals and the use of the latest scientific equipment for analysis, many manufacturing units are approved by regulatory authorities worldwide.

Recent practices and policies:

Ward and Peocitch (2008) discussed the selling tactics in pharmaceuticals. He stressed that strong marketing could influence the prescription habit of doctors. Innovative selling strategies motivate doctors to prescribe a specific brand with strong research and development back-up of medicines.

The researcher further said that pharmaceutical companies spend much money on marketing tactics and strategies. It is believed that this spending helps doctors in their decision-making of a specific brand prescription. Though doctors with more excellent training or specialization may be less likely to be influenced by marketing or pharmaceuticals branding.

However, pharmaceutical companies sometimes offer doctors numerous obligations on prescribing a specific brand, which often includes a country comprehensive tour, conference, or free drug samples. Even in a regulated market such as Australia, where pharmaceutical companies

cannot advertise directly to consumers, it seems that further marketing may eventually lead to more significant consumer costs and rationing of medicines based on affordability rather than need.

Wazana (2000) doctors, including hospital residents and consultants, have a similar attitude about medical representatives. They believe that medical reps discuss up to date information with them about their product and their competitors. They admit that gifts play a crucial role in product prescriptions. They believe that product samples and travel for conferences influence prescription habits than routine product promotional objects.

Hoiman (2005) discussed the USA's pharmaceutical industry's marketing tactics & their weight on patient care and clinical medical study. He pointed out that 2002 was the year in which the pharmaceutical industry spent \$15.63 billion on product promotions, including gifts and free tours.

According to Parker and Pettijohn (2003), drug companies' promotions subconsciously influence physicians' prescription patterns. In 2002, the pharmaceutical industry in the U.S.A spent \$15.63 billion on promotions, including free office supplies, all-expenses-paid events, sales representatives, and awards to physicians.

According to Warriar et al. (2010), drug samples' provision has accounted for 50 - 64% of the total marketing expenditures by the pharmaceutical industry in the U.S.

According to Rx and D (1999), a drug sample is defined as "a package containing a limited quantity of a pharmaceutical product sufficient to evaluate the clinical response, distributed to authorized health care practitioners free of charge, for patient treatment" (Warriar et al. 2010).

According to Shaughnessy and Bucci, (1997), doctors use product-free samples as a starter dose of his patient. He demonstrates proper use (as in dermatological medications or inhalers), and decrease cost for patients who are in difficult financial situations. In the next visit, he asks the patient about the effectiveness of the drug with any adverse event. This practice produces confidence in the product (Warriar et al. 2010).

Warriar et al. 2010 pointed out that physicians write prescriptions that yield sales of new products; the industry naturally focuses on substantial marketing efforts on physicians to influence their prescribing behaviors. Much of this physician marketing is carried out through pharmaceutical sales representatives (PSRs) who visit physicians and provide information about their products while promoting the use of their products by offering gifts, meals, and free drug samples.

Researchers stressed that many physicians interviewed gave patients samples to start them on a drug and then wrote a prescription for a name brand drug.

According to a survey of physicians in 2001 (Campbell et al., 2007), researchers pointed out that anesthesiologists were the specialty who least receive product-free samples or any other obligation from pharmaceutical companies than general practitioners, residents, or cardiologists. It is also interesting that general practitioners showed maximum meetings with medical representatives.

According to Andaleeb and Tallman's 1996 examination of doctors' relationships with the medical representative showed that doctors considered medical reps as an essential source of information. The study found that doctors had sociable dealings with medical representatives, but they do not think about them as an essential element of their clinical (Manchanda & Honka, 2005).

McKinney et al. (1990) found that 50% of the senior doctors and 42% of the post-graduate training doctors thought obligation of \$100 or more than this influence doctors' prescription (Manchanda & Honka, 2005).

Madhavan et al. (1997) found that not all doctors believe that gifts could influence their prescription pattern (Manchanda & Honka, 2005).

Taylor and Bond (1991), as cited in Manchanda & Honka (2005), studied the association between new product prescriptions and influence aspects. Researchers analyzed doctors' prescription manners. Medical reps were the second most important and mostly influenced the prescription of antibiotics and analgesics.

Williams et al. (1995) established a strong positive connection between medical reps' visits weekly and product prescriptions by the doctors (Manchanda & Honka, 2005).

According to Mehta (2000), doctors and their spouses and family are sponsored by pharmaceutical companies in international or local medical conferences. Sponsorship includes their stay, ticket, food, or even local sightseeing (Girish et al., 2007).

Orlowski (1992) pointed out that after a pharmaceutical company-sponsored local or international tour, doctors are bound to prescribe specific brands of the company that sponsored them (Girish et al., 2007).

Effective Concepts:

According to Bulte and Lilien (2001), money spend on marketing tactics, and the degree of branding determines whether the doctors will prescribe the product or not (Ward and Peocitch, 2008).

According to Ward and Peocitch (2008), the relationship between medical representative and doctor is essential in product prescriptions. Doctors usually trust medical reps and use the information that comes from them before prescribing any medicine. It is also believed that brand name is a vital element in influencing doctors for product prescription.

Wazana (2000) discussed the gifts distributed to doctors by the pharmaceutical industry. He thinks communication between doctors and pharmaceutical companies started when they were in medical college or medical university. This interaction is so vital that it keeps on also going in their professional medical practice. Usually, medical reps visited a doctor four times a month. According to the researcher, the type of obligation becomes changes as the doctors become senior in their clinical practice. Wazana pointed out that taking product free samples were linked with a quick prescription of a drug.

Hoiman (2005) stressed that extraordinary direct-to-consumer (DTC) promotion broadly links with better sales of the advertised medicines. However, this practice could not be in the best favor of patients.

According to Norris et al. (2005), pharmaceutical companies at present are adopting a versatile move toward medicine promotion, including the distribution of free drug samples. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines pharmaceutical promotion as “all information and persuasive activities by manufacturers and distributors, the effect of which is to induce the prescription, supply, purchase, and use of medicinal drugs” (Warrier et al. 2010).

According to Bansal & Sanjoy (2005), doctors respond to pharmaceutical companies sponsored a pleasure trip in the form of heavy product prescriptions. These heavy product prescriptions usually do not respect patients' safety and benefits.

They further pointed out that numerous doctors do not think accepting pens, calendars, or pharmaceutical companies sponsored family lunch or dinner is unethical. However, accepting luxurious obligations in place of professional doings are unethical.

According to Manchanda and Honka (2005), all marketing tactics and moves of pharmaceutical companies are for doctors first and second for patients (consumers). Product brochures, updates, advertisements in medical journals, and samples for doctors, while product awareness flyers or posters are for patients.

Strang et al. (1996), as cited in Manchanda and Honka, (2005) surveyed Canadian family practitioners and physicians and analyzed their medical representatives' behavior. Different results were seen in this survey, like 92% of the physicians considered that medical representatives' main task is to medicine promotion on doctors, whereas 37% considered physician's education as the main task of the selling process. 47% of the physicians considered that medical representatives present full information to depict a medicine, but 80% realized that medical representatives overstated medicine's usefulness.

Fassold and Gowdey (1968) surveyed Canadian physicians; 24% of the physicians agreed that pharmaceutical companies advertisement about the medicines were their ideal option for the of information of new drugs.

Manchanda and Honka, (2005) believe that product reminders and brochures influence doctors for product prescriptions in an excellent way.

According to Verma, (2004), as cited in Girish et al. (2007), medical representatives are a significant and vital source of a pharmaceutical company to provide product brochures, clinical studies, or posters to doctors.

Girish et al. (2007) are in the opinion that it is impractical that a pharmaceutical company invests considerable money on doctors in obligation and does not demand business from him in return. Pharmaceutical companies strived to aroused doctors' decisions for product prescription strongly by massive spending on them through marketing.

Research methodology:

In the research methodology section, the content includes the following topics: research strategy, population, sampling, research instruments, and research setting. The description of each topic is discussed under the next headings:

Research strategy:

Yin (2003) pointed out that there are five main research strategies in social science, which include experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories, and case studies (Ayman, 2007).

This research project is based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data sketched out the importance of medical representatives in medicines promotion and the significance of different promotion tools in a prescription generation. All available resources, i.e., medical journals and publications, the internet, and marketing books and marketing articles, have been used to collect all information.

Primary data analyzed the medical representatives' perspective regarding different promotion tools they used in doctors' calls. Because a medical representative is a person who uses a promotional tool in a doctor's chamber to make his doctor's call effective, through this research project, the researcher attempted to find out the essential promotion tool in the eyes of medical representative for prescriptions generation by the doctors. The project centers on present-day events. Therefore, neither archival analysis nor historical methods are appropriate to employ. The researcher was surveying to depict a conclusion; hence, the survey strategy was the chosen strategy for this project.

Population:

According to IMS-November 2010, more than 400 pharmaceuticals companies³ are operating in Pakistan. According to in-house data of top-five national companies⁴ more than 300 medical representatives of top-five national companies are working in Karachi in different capacities.⁵ They have a similar job description, i.e., to meet doctors regularly for product reminders, motivate them for product prescriptions, and timely and correctly use promotion tools.

Sampling:

The research setting in this project is Karachi. A sample of 100 medical representatives of the top five national pharmaceutical companies has been randomly selected from Karachi⁶ to fill the survey questionnaire.

Research instruments:

To get the primary data, a self-descriptive “choose the best” type questionnaire has been devised. Precise and qualitative data from well-defined targeted respondents are collected with their willingness. A hypothesis has not been made to depict a conclusion.

Research setting:

The entire regions of Karachi have been considered equally for medical representative selection. The researcher presented the questionnaire by the researcher directly to respective medical representatives. Questionnaires are collected back after being completed by medical representatives.

Data collection procedure:

Data has been collected between June and August 2011. Since the researcher intended to evaluate various promotion tools used by a medical representative for medicine promotion, I used a questionnaire. This Questionnaire was designed to qualitatively examine the medical representative’s perspective regarding the importance of different promotion tools in terms of prescription generation. This questionnaire was directed to 100 medical representatives, from Karachi city, of Pakistan’s top five pharmaceutical companies. Confidentiality, privacy, and safety of the respondents were protected throughout the processes of qualitative data collection. Most of the locations for the questionnaire were government or private hospitals in Karachi.

Data analysis procedure:

The researcher reviewed the filled questionnaire with category percentages for each question. Findings are in the form of visual displays of each question’s data in bar/pie/line charts

³ national & multinational

⁴ collected from those companies’ marketing department.

⁵ medical representatives or senior medical representatives, etc.

⁶ the biggest city of Pakistan

and histogram form. Data analysis is facilitated with a coding scheme to work out each question. There are five options for each question i.e.

- i. Every Time
- ii. Mostly
- iii. Sometimes
- iv. Rarely
- v. Never

At the end of the questionnaire, a guideline was given for each option regarding the doctors' prescription status from the medical representatives' perspective. "Every Time" describes that a doctor always considers particular promotion tools in prescribing medicine. "Mostly" means a promotion tool has the recall ability for a product after every second prescription. "Sometimes" describes a recall ability of promotion tool after every 5th prescription. "Rarely" means recall ability after every 20th prescription, and "Never" means recall ability after 100 prescriptions.

"Every Time" and "Mostly" are collectively described as codes which determine the success of a particular promotion tool in the generation of product prescription by the doctor, whereas "Sometimes", "Rarely" and "Never" are collectively expressed as the codes which are not acceptable by the doctors for the prescription generation of a product.

Findings:

All 100 medical representatives selected randomly have more than 05 years of medical representative experience.

The question that asked about physician samples ability in prescription generation in the eyes of a medical representative, revealed that 47 medical representatives out of 100 gave their opinion in the favour of physician samples, whereas, 53 placed physician samples as not helpful in the prescription generation (Figures 3 and 4)

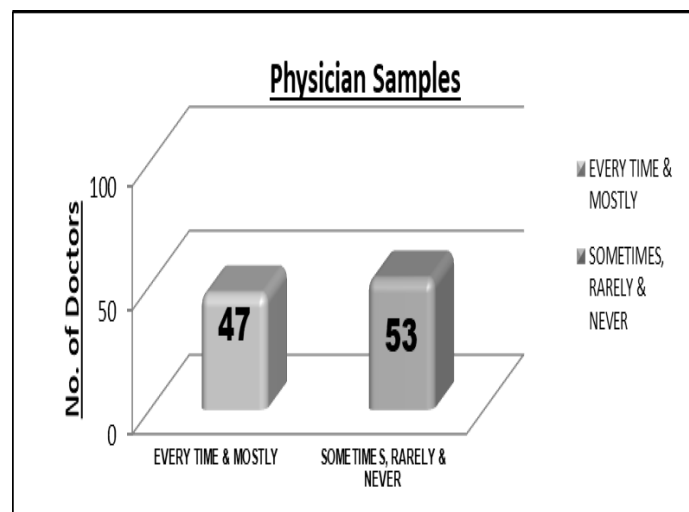


Figure 3: Physician samples - 1

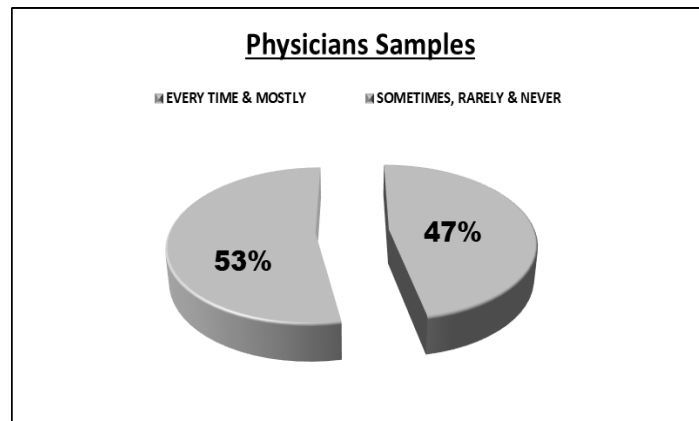


Figure 4: Physician samples - 2

The question that asked about the relationship between regular visits of a medical representative to doctors and prescription generations in the eyes of a medical representative, revealed that 52 medical representatives out of 100 are in the opinion that regular visits of a medical representative to doctors have a strong relationship with product prescription generation by the doctors, while, 48 considered medical representative regular visits are not very much helpful in prescription generation (Figures 5 and 6).

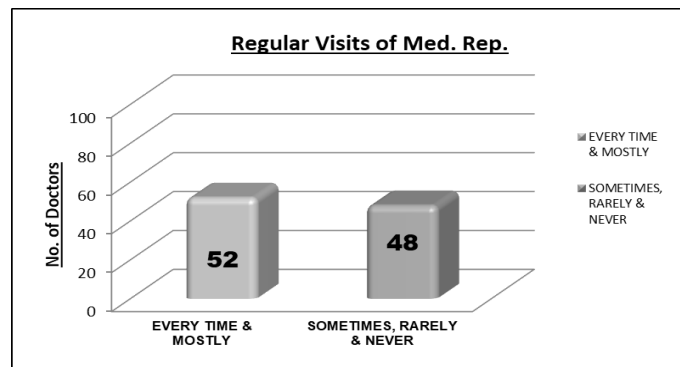


Figure 5: Regular visits of medical representative -1

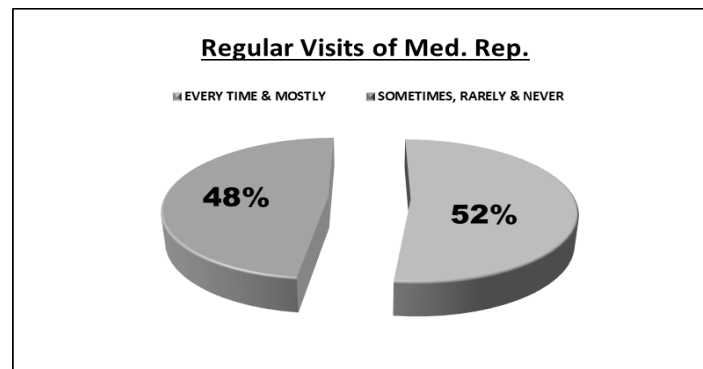


Figure 6: Regular visits of medical representative - 2

The findings of the question that asked about the relationship between regular visits of top management and product prescription by the doctors, revealed that out of 100, 70 medical representatives considered regular visits of top management to doctors helpful in product prescription generation, though 30 medical representatives do not relate product prescriptions with top management regular visits to doctors (Figures 7 and 8).

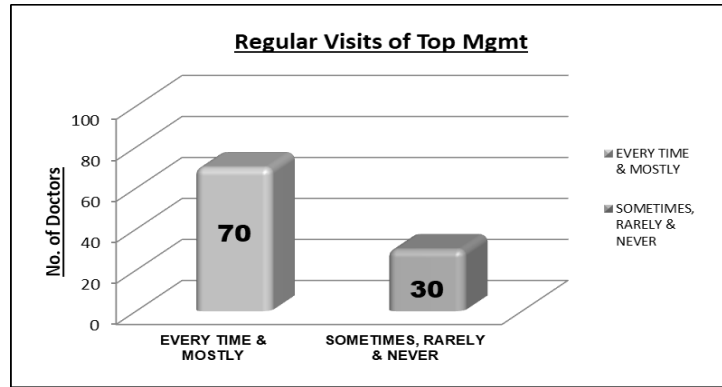


Figure 7: Regular visits of top management - 1

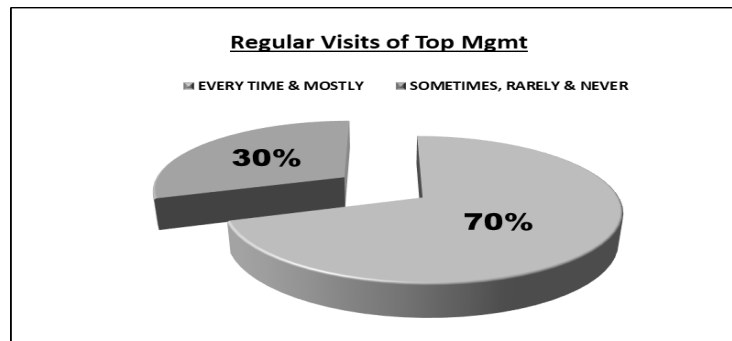


Figure 8: Regular visits of top management - 2

The question that asked the relation between product literature/updates and prescription generations in the eyes of a medical representative revealed that out of 100, 36 medical representatives considered product literature/updates helpful in product prescription generation, though 64 medical representatives do not relate product prescriptions with product literature/update (Figures 9 and 10).

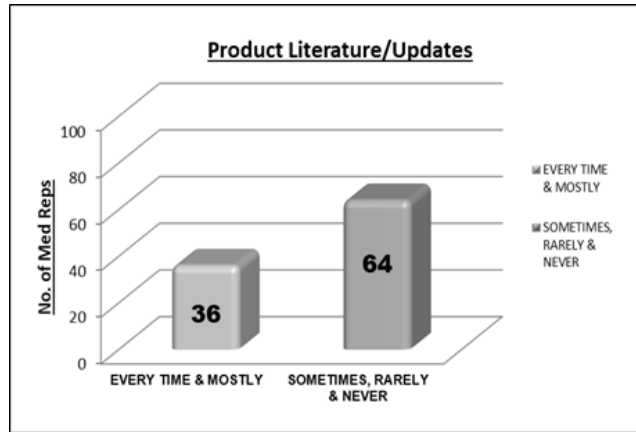


Figure 9: Product literature/Updates - 1

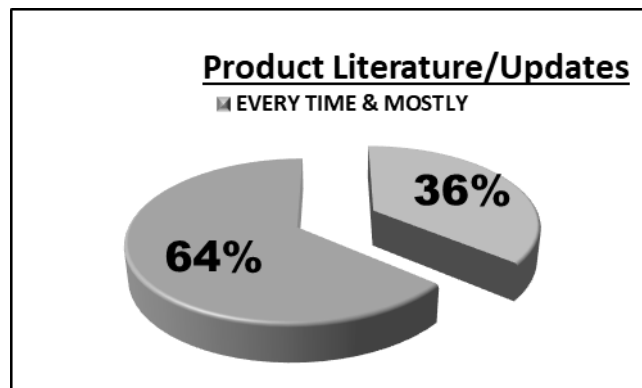


Figure 10: Product literature/Updates -2

The question that asked about the relation between product literature/updates and prescription generations in the eyes of a medical representative revealed that 62 medical representatives answered that textbook as a gift has a strong relationship with product prescription generation by doctors while 38 are not in the favour of a relationship between textbook as a gift and product prescription by the doctors (Figures 11 and 12).

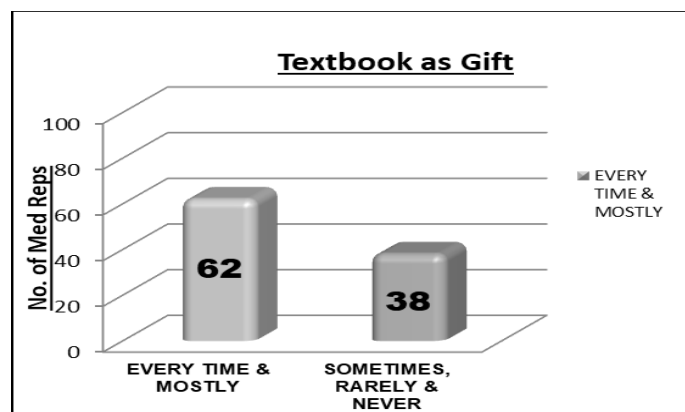


Figure 11: Textbook as gift -1

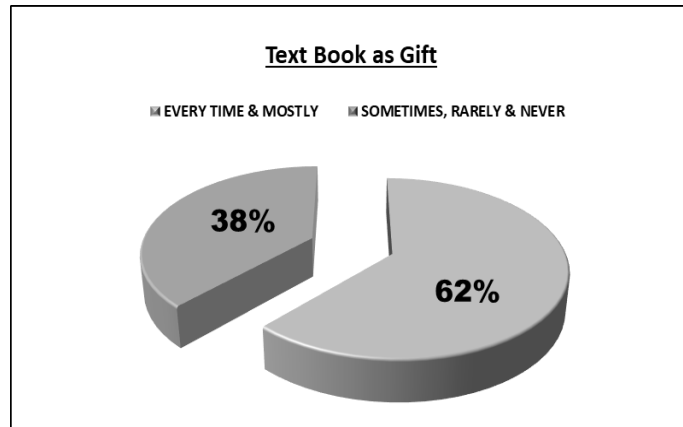


Figure 12: Textbook as gift - 2

Form the analysis of the question that asks about the relationship between sponsorship of doctors in international conference and product prescription, it was revealed that, very interestingly, all 100 medical representatives gave answer that there is a strong relationship between sponsorship of a doctor in international conference and product prescriptions (Figures 13 and 14).



Figure 13: Sponsorship in international conference - 1



Figure 14: Sponsorship in international conference - 2

While answering the question about sponsorship of a doctor for personal tour again all 100 medical representatives gave the answer that there is a strong relationship between sponsorship of a doctor for personal tour and product prescriptions (Figures 15 and 16).

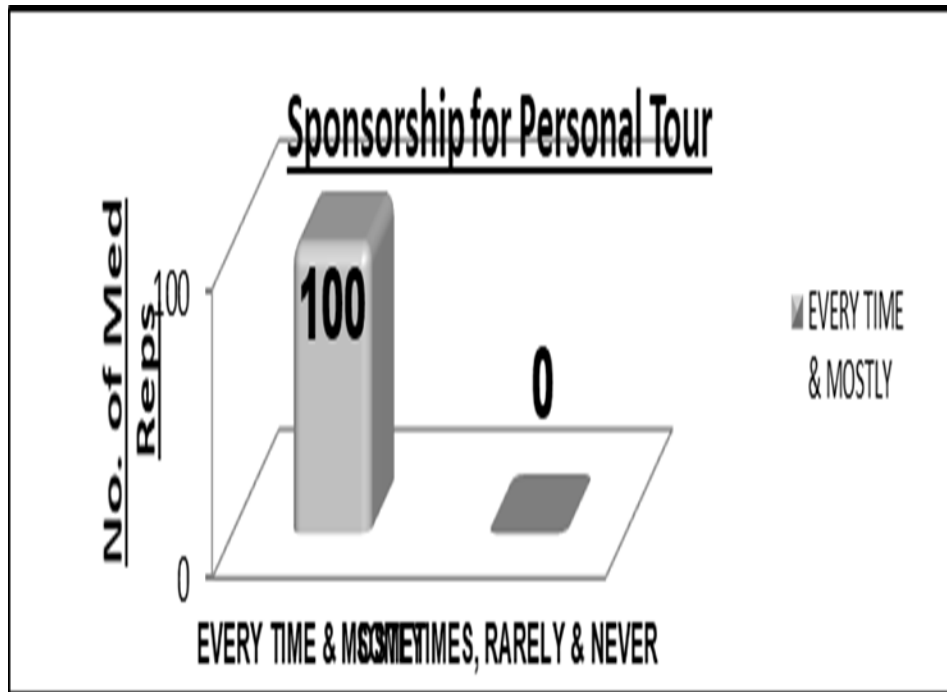


Figure 15: Sponsorship for personal tour - 1

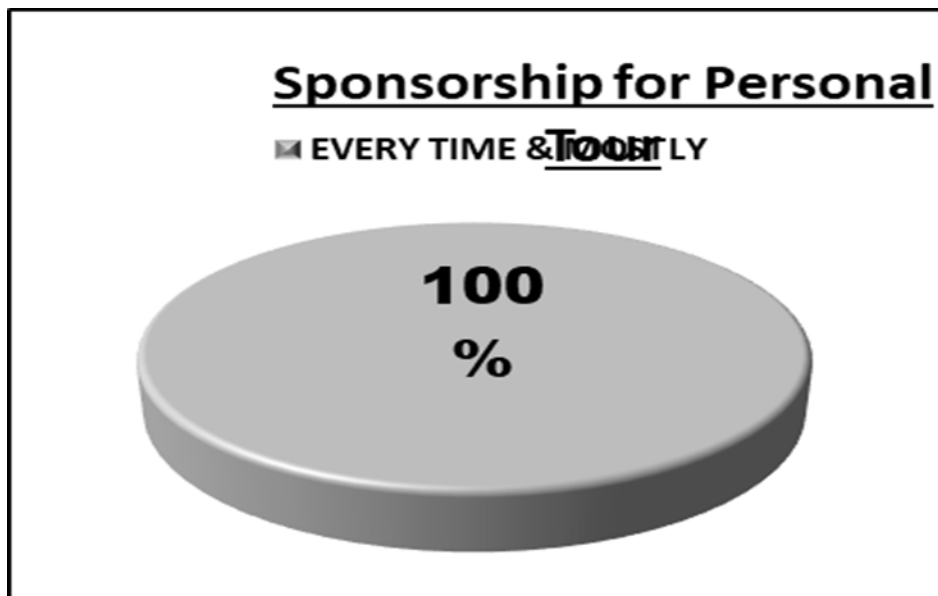


Figure 16: Sponsorship for personal tour - 2

The question that asked about the relation between product free drug camps and the prescription of a particular product by doctors revealed that 68 medical representatives are in the

view that there is a strong relationship between free drug camps and product prescriptions whereas, 32 medical representatives are not in the favor of these 68 medical representatives (Figures 17 and 18).

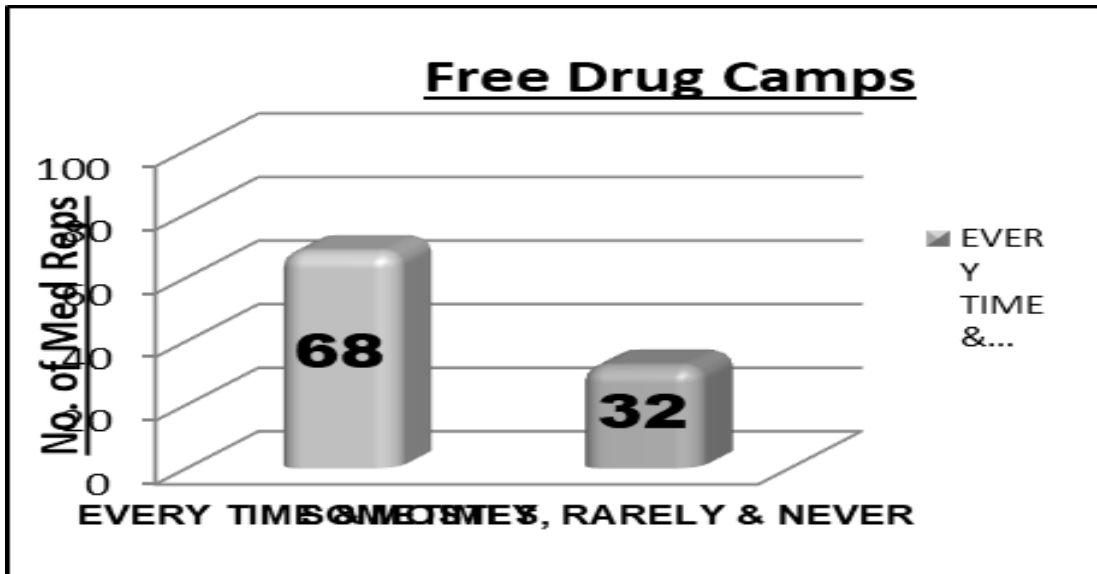


Figure 17: Free drug camps - 1

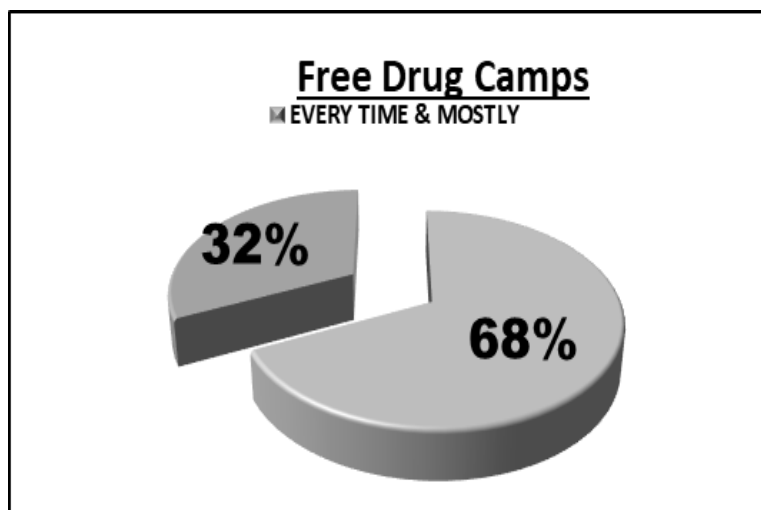


Figure 18: Free drug camps - 2

Form the findings of the question about personal gifts as a promotion tool for product prescription generations 83 medical representatives answered that they consider personal gifts as a source to generate product prescription by the doctors, whereas 17 medical representatives did not consider personal gifts important for product prescription generation (Figure 19 and 20).

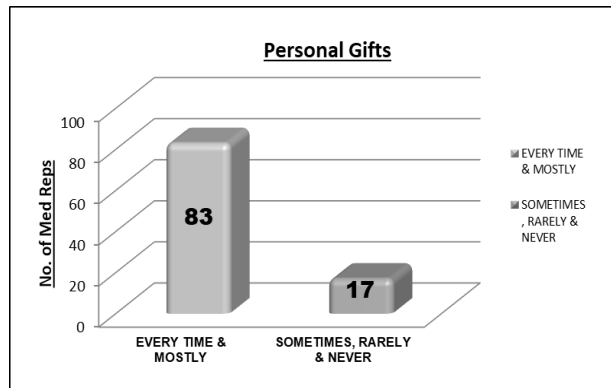


Figure 19: Personal gifts -1

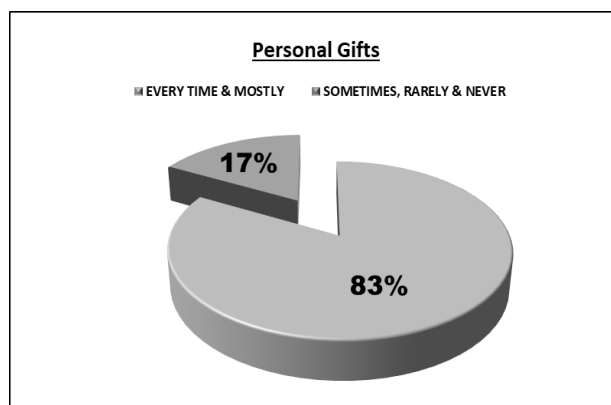


Figure 20: Personal gifts - 2

The question that asked about the relation between the personality of medical representative and the product prescription by the doctors 46 medical representatives out of 100 are in the opinion that personality of the medical representative is very important in product prescription generation by the doctors while 54 medical representatives did not consider it important for product prescription (Figure 21 and 22).

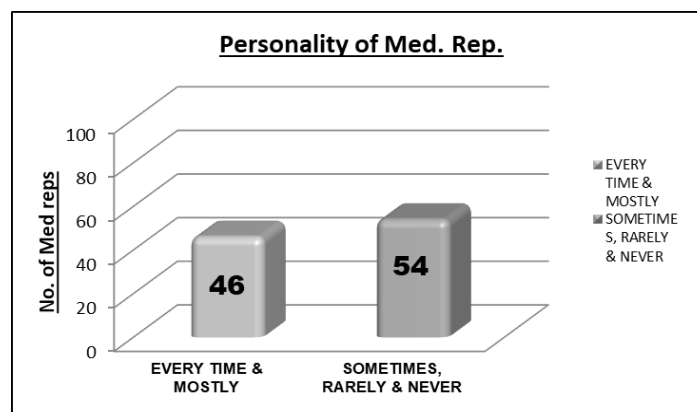


Figure 21: Personality of Medical representative

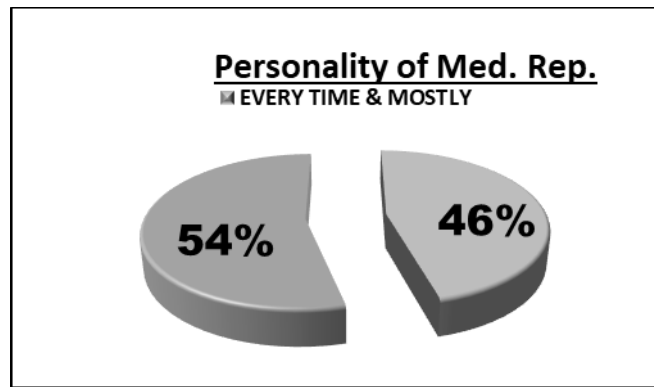


Figure 22: Personality of Medical representative

Conclusion

On the basis of findings, it can be concluded that near to medical representatives, there are three main promotion tools which are the most productive in terms of the prescription generation by the doctors, these tools are;

- i. Sponsorship in an international conference
- ii. Sponsorship for a personal tour
- iii. Personal gifts

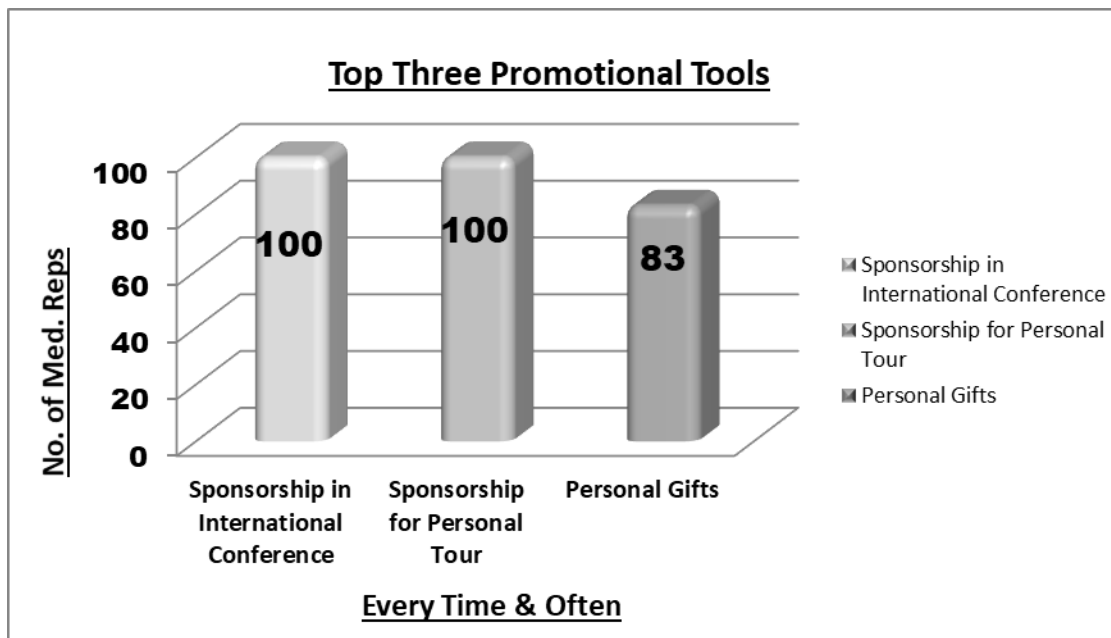


Figure 23: Top three promotional tools

All 100 medical representatives believe that “sponsorship in the international conference” and “sponsorship for personal tour” are the most influencing promotion tools for the doctors and always remind and motivate doctors for product prescriptions. It is the job of medical

representatives to select doctors from their allocated territories to use promotion tools. The selected top three promotion tools involve huge costs, so medical representatives' crucial responsibility is to select the doctors after the complete screening.

It is a usual practice that companies offer doctors to attend an international medical conference. This conference usually consists of 3 to 4 days in which companies bear all the boarding and lodging expenses of the individual doctor (sometimes spouse also).

In the personal tour, doctors are also offered complete boarding and lodging, and it also usually consists of 3 to 4 days. Companies called personal tour as "international CME" where they make sure to take doctors to important places of the visiting city and make the trip a pleasure trip and satisfy their customers (doctors) with every aspect.

Medical representatives' rate "personal gifts" in the third position as an essential promotion tool for product prescription. Eighty-three medical representatives considered "personal gifts," a vital promotional tool for the prescription generation.

Personal gifts are those gifts that doctors use personally, and patients do not benefit from them. Personal gifts may include;

- i. Cell phone
- ii. Home accessories (Juicer/blender/Tea set etc.)
- iii. Car shades
- iv. USB device
- v. Laptop
- vi. Executive suiting
- vii. Perfumes

Medical representatives' role in the distribution of personalized gifts is vital. They have to select the right customer for these gifts so that they could get maximum business from them in terms of product prescriptions in return.

Recommendations:

This research project will offer how medical representatives recognize various promotion tools for product prescription by doctors. Through primary data (questionnaire), it provides evidence that medical representatives consider three promotion tools as the essential tools for prescription generation, which are;

- i. Sponsorship in an international conference
- ii. Sponsorship for a personal tour
- iii. Personal gifts

Training and development of the field force are exceptionally vital for pharmaceutical companies. Medical representatives consider those promotion tools the essential tool for product prescription, which involves a considerable amount of the company. Nevertheless, in medical representatives' eyes, personal (medical representative) visits, product literature/updates, and physician samples do not have so much importance in the prescription generation. The sales representative's job of any organization is to produce maximum results using minimum resources. Hence, it is recommended that pharmaceutical companies train and develop their medical

representatives on how to utilize the company’s necessary resources and produce maximum results.

Summary:

Medical representatives are the front-line sales staff of any pharmaceutical company. Near to doctors (customers), they are the face of any company. Their communication skills and liaison with customers are crucial for business generation. They need to have selling and communication skills training from time to time by the pharmaceutical companies to utilize any promotional campaign at its maximum and work as per the guidelines given by the company’s marketing department. The marketing department must work with the sales team side by side and make the sales team aware of the importance of any promotional tool or field/marketing strategy and activity.

Appendix A: Survey

Personal Information

Designation: _____

Specific Information

Note: Please Tick one category of each promotional tool depending on whether that tool influences the doctor to prescribe products always or mostly or sometimes or rarely or never.

S No.	Promotional Tool	Everytime (1)	Mostly (2)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)
1	Physician Samples					
2	Regular visits of Medical Representative					
3	Regular visits of Top Management					
4	Product Literature / Updates					
5	Textbook as Gift					
6	Sponsorship in international Conferences					
7	Sponsorship for personal tour					
8	Free Drug Camps					
9	Personal Gifts					
10	Personality of Medical Rep. / Manager					

- (1) Every time = One out of one prescription (1/1).
- (2) Mostly = One out of two prescriptions (1/2).
- (3) Sometimes = One out of ten prescriptions (1/10).
- (4) Rarely = One out of twenty prescriptions (1/20).
- (5) Never = One out of hundred prescriptions (1/100)

References

- Awais, S. E. (2002). *The Art and Craft of Pharmaceutical Selling*, 1st edn: GA Communications, Lahore, Pakistan.
- Ayman, A. (2007). Characteristics and Strategies of the Generic Pharmaceutical Industry in the State of Kuwait; From doctors' perspective. A research report submitted to Maastricht School of Management, MSM Maastricht, Netherlands in part fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Business Administration.
- Bansal, R. K., and Sanjoy, D. (2005). Unethical relationship between doctors and drug companies, *JIAFM*, 27 (1): 40-42
- Campbell, E. G., Russell, L. G., Mountford, J., Lawrence, G. M. Paul, D. C. and David, B. (2007). A National Survey of Physician–Industry Relationships. *N. English Journal of Medical*; 356:1742-50.
- Girish, T., Usha, A., Neeraj, K. (2007). Influence of promotional tools offer by pharmaceutical industries on Physicians prescribing behavior. *ISSN – 142 (1): 4-4*.
- Greene, J. A. (2007). Pharmaceutical Marketing Research and the Prescribing Physician. *Ann Intern Med*. 146(10); 742-748.
- Hoiman, C. (2005). Selling Drugs: Marketing Strategies in the Pharmaceutical Industry and their Effect on Healthcare and Research, *Explorations*, 8: 89-94
- Holland, S. and Bátiz-Lazo, B. (2004). *The global pharmaceutical industry*. Retrieved December 1, 2020 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23744988_The_Global_Pharmaceutical_Industry_2004
- IMS – MAT. (2010). November 2010, Pakistan Retrieved December 2, 2020 from <http://www.imshealth.com.pk/>
- Kotler, P. (2002). *Principles of Marketing*. 3rd European ed. Prentice Hall. London
- Manchanda, P. and Honka, E. (2005). The effects and role of direct-to-physician marketing in the pharmaceutical industry: an integrative review. *Yale Journal of Health Policy Law Ethics*. 5(2): 785-822.
- Pakistan's Pharmaceutical Industry. (2020). Retrieved December 2, 2020 from <https://www.ppma.org.pk/Profile/pakistan-pharmaceutical-industry/>
- Statista. (2020). Global market size. *Statista*. Retrieved December 2, 2020 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/189788/global-outsourcing-market-size/>

- Ward, S. and Peocitch, A. (2008). *Selling Sickness: A Macro Research Agenda for the Marketing of Pharmaceuticals*, (In press), Proceedings of the Australian New Zealand Marketing Educators Conference, Sydney, Australia.
- Warrier, R., Monaghan, S. M., Maio, A., Huggett, K., and Rich, R. (2010). Effect of drug sample availability on physician prescribing behavior: A systematic review. *Clinical Reviews and Opinions*, 2(4), 41-48
- Wazana, A. (2000). Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry Is a Gift Ever Just a Gift? *JAMA*, 283(3): 373-380.
- Wikipedia. (2020). Pharmaceutical industry. Retrieved December 2, 2020 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharmaceutical_industry
- Yanis, S. (2011). Maximizing sales rep success. Retrieved December 1, 2020 from <http://social.eyeforpharma.com/opinion/maximizing-sales-rep-success>