INNOVATION IN HEALTHCARE MARKETING STRATEGIES IN INDIA: LEARNING FROM NON HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

Kirti Udayai1*, Piyush Kumar2

1International Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), New Delhi, India.
2Senior Consulting Analyst, Frost and Sullivan.

ARTICLE INFO

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:
Kirti Udayai
Assistant Professor
International Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), New Delhi, India

KEYWORDS: Innovation, Strategies, Healthcare

ABSTRACT

The healthcare industry has experienced a proliferation of innovations aimed at enhancing life expectancy, quality of life, diagnostic and treatment options, as well as the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the healthcare system. Health care organizations are finding their own moments of truth where they engage in new thinking about their customers. Whether these moments are prompted by inspiration from other industries, competition, health reform, consumer demands or the bottom line, agile companies are changing the way they get to know their customers, moving beyond basic transactions and embracing their patients. Several service industries outside of healthcare are helping shape healthcare consumer experiences and expectations. Today's technologically savvy consumers are more apt to do their own research when selecting a doctor, investigating treatment options, and making major health care decisions. Targeted marketing also enables us to tailor communications to each stage of the member relationship. In this paper we will inspect other industries to understand the efforts that have contributed to their marketing strategies successes as well as determine the relevance of these efforts for incorporation into the healthcare model. To generate response from prospective patients we have identified customer needs and challenges and focused on the benefits of the healthcare services that would markedly result in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing in the healthcare industry began roughly 30 years ago when the American Hospital Association sponsored the first conference on health-care marketing. The first healthcare marketing book was published during that same timeframe. In the early 1990s, progressive healthcare organizations began to evaluate their marketing objectives and began to try to understand the market, their customers, and their motivations. (Herzlinger 2006) These evaluations lead to an expanded marketing role in healthcare organizations, which ultimately lead to marketing as a core determinant in the direction of the company. Marketing is also not just limited to promotional techniques, but extends into product conception, pricing structure, distribution channels, customer service orientation, public relations and overall strategic planning. (Zeithaml et al.2001) Healthcare industries is not different from other industries, it face challenges due to changes in social behavior, economic condition and increased competition. Under conditions of turbulence, they have to be successful not only in competing under price and quality pressures but they also are in a tremendous need of flexibility and innovation of the way they do things. To stay ahead of their competitors even health care industries believe in strong marketing need to keep innovating new marketing strategies all the time to grab the “Top of the mind” awareness in the consumers mind. (Berman 2006)

Toward the end of the twentieth century, challenges in profitability, customer loyalty, quality of care, and market dominance drove hospitals emulate other industries by incorporating formal marketing functions. The new focus on customer wants, needs and expectations have fueled the rise of consumer-driven healthcare marketing. This fresh approach to marketing recognizes the participant’s role in the delivery of care and the promotion of health education and wellness. Consumer of today is radically different from yesterdays. (Campbell 1995) Today's customers have caller ids to block unwanted calls, a spam and a pop-up blocker on their internet. They even have Ti Vo which record their favorite programme without TV ads, that means today's customer can block all the possible channels to reach them.
Today’s healthcare landscape is a challenging area. Organizations are in search of successful and sustainable innovation strategies that differentiate from the competition and create viable solutions that offer improved healthcare experiences for patients and care providers in the short to longer-term. (Cannon et al 2000) At the same time the financial system needs to be sustainable. Many challenges in healthcare demand a diverse mix of skills, knowledge and competences which is beyond the capability of most individual businesses. Companies therefore have to think in terms of new models of innovation that include partnerships, acquisitions or strategic alliances equip themselves for the healthcare challenges ahead. (Andersen 2001) The Indian market offers huge opportunity for the service providers to make an impact on the quality of the Indian health care. As the presence & competition of healthcare industry increases with each passing day it is a need of the hour to adopt innovative strategies from non healthcare industry to create a unique identity & an edge over others keeping in mind consumer sensitivity & emotional response.

Learning from Non Healthcare Industry

The healthcare industry is facing paradigm change. Within this context of paradigm change lays opportunities for innovation. Applying non healthcare marketing strategies smartly in hospital organization will help in enhancing the brand image. The belief that a monumental problem can be solved by introducing a single tactical element- a brochure, a billboard, a radio campaign is like the same traditional approach where patients asks for a prescription without being seen by the doctor and that can be made and successfully implemented. What needs to be done is to go beyond the currents practices and explores the marketing opportunity in non healthcare field:

Use of medical vending machine in healthcare sector:
there are much availability of consumables vending machines in several metro stations and public places. Medical vending machines can be introduced in different metro stations, railway stations, airports and satellite clinics. The vending machine can be equipped with mini first aid kits consist of small antiseptic liquid bottle, cotton bows, bandages, pain relief tablets, ORS packets, baby care products and more. Medication-dispensing kiosks could be the next step in the hybrid of health care and self-service. U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently held public hearings on whether consumer should be able to use patient kiosks or other technology to conduct self screenings and obtain certain medications that currently require prescriptions. FDA is still in early stages of considering such a change. (Wilkinson 2012) Patients already use kiosks to test their blood pressure, check-in for a doctor's appointment, and learn about health problems. Now, prescription medicine dispensing systems “are the next step in user-friendly health care. Medical Vending machine is to go on trial in the UK which will offer medicines at any time of the day or night. Their arrival in Britain has been supported by the UK Government and Department of Health. The trial using the machines in UK hospitals will be assessed by a British university. Its sophisticated technology means it can dispense drugs whether or not they need to be counted, packed or refrigerated. It is bolted to a concrete plinth and surrounded by plate steel to protect it against thieves. The machines are already on trial in Canada, where the government is taking drastic steps to cut down the cost of prescribing medicines. However, in contrast to many kiosk manufacturers that are trying to enter this emerging industry, one of the supplier designed such vending machine system which does not allow patients to self-diagnose, nor does it take the pharmacist out of the process, which is two of the biggest hurdles now facing the FDA’s implementation of similar technology. The customer can pick up their medicine at their convenience through the self-service system by swiping their authorization card and placing their index finger on a scanner. Once the patient’s identity has been verified, a lockbox door opens and they can access their medicine. (Bessant et al 1997)

Talking newspaper:
There can be few literate countries of the world at the present time where newspapers and magazines are not an important and integral part of day-to-day lives. Not only do they keep us informed, they help us to identify with the variety of social contexts in which we live - culturally, geographically, politically or whatever. They shape, reaffirm our beliefs and perceptions. They influence our social roles and how we react to people and objects. They motivate what we put back into society. Through the medium of print and graphics they communicate their messages in ways which still remain uniquely effective in spite of other competitors in the mass media. In UK, local talking newspapers have proved to be an important feature of people’s life especially disabled people. In UK for example, the number of visually impaired people regularly reading a weekly talking newspaper can be as many as 4 times the readership of talking books and is often cited as an important aspect of their daily lives. People do, of course, receive local news via community radio and television. But there are significant differences between the content of radio and television programmes and that of printed news and the way in which information is presented. There is also evidence that talking newspapers have therapeutic value for people in health care institutions and for use in reminiscence work (Craddock 1996) This is a particular feature of UK talking newspapers which often provide a supplementary programme of features such as: interviews with local people, live commentaries on local events, readings from local publications, cookery and gardening hints, quizzes and competitions, daily living information such as new government legislation services and regular advertisements. In terms of marketing, as a relatively recent entry into the Indian automotive market, Volkswagen needed to raise brand awareness. To address this challenge, Volkswagen's marketing team focused one of its key brand pillars, innovation, to make a strong impact throughout the roll-out in India. Innovation was showcased not only in Volkswagen’s product introductions, but also in its communications and advertising. Volkswagen India created groundbreaking campaigns such as the world’s first ‘talking newspaper’, which used light-sensitive chips to speak to readers about Volkswagen as they turned the pages of their morning newspaper. The talking newspaper ad created a sensation in India, and garnered worldwide attention for taking print advertising to a new level. In one year, brand awareness more than quadrupled, increasing from 8 percent to a high of 37 percent. Using a voice-recorded device pasted on two English dailies, the company sprang a surprise to many readers in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune and Chennai. The Times of India and The Hindu, two of the largest circulated papers in the world, released a special...
advertisement in their daily papers Tuesday, launching Volkswagen’s new sedan, the Vento. Marketing experts had started talking about how this new technology can be copied by other brands as well as adapted to other parts of the print media. Headlines, special reports, sports roundups, weather reports could all be adapted as the technology is improved. Same strategy would be worth for a premium level hospital as this advertisement cannot go unnoticed.

**Language Interpreter Device:** Interpretation has been defined as the conversion of a message uttered in a source language into an equivalent message in the target language so that the intended recipient of the message responds to it as if he or she had heard it in the original. Poor patient–provider communication due to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) costs healthcare providers and payers through lower patient use of preventive care, misdiagnosis, increased testing, poor patient compliance, and increased hospital and emergency room admissions. (Cass et al 2002) Language barriers result in poor understanding of diagnosis, treatment, and medication instructions, poor understanding of and compliance with recommendations for treatment and follow-up, a significantly greater likelihood of a serious medical event and lower patient satisfaction.( Crane 1997) In US, as per the review of literature, Interpreted LEP patients, compared to English-speaking and non interpreted LEP patients, had the shortest emergency department (ED) stays; had the fewest tests, intravenous catheters, and medications; were more likely to follow-up in a clinic and less likely to return to the emergency department; and had the lowest overall charges.( Kazzi- Bonacruz et al 2003) Recent technological developments in video and telephonic interpretation offer communication that more closely resembles a face-to-face encounter with a bilingual clinician or interpreter and allow scarce resources to be used more effectively and efficiently.( Shapiro et al 1981) It describe the effects on patient care access, efficiency, quality, and effectiveness highlighting its ability to improve access to high-quality interpreter services and, after initial capital investments have been made, to improve efficiency.( Karter et al 2000) Barriers to providing language services—costs and shortage of personnel—are more easily overcome through the use of recent technological developments in videoconferencing, call centers, and the Internet, which allow resources to be shared across networks of providers and organizations.( Sarver et al 2000) The use of these technologies can be catalyzed by increased government and foundation support, and by healthcare organizations themselves through participation in communication and information-sharing networks and development of training programs for all staff in the appropriate use of these technologies.( Schapira et al 2008) In India, the healthcare market is growing towards medical tourism and problem arises in dealing with international patients who do not understand local languages well. Language Interpreter device promotes effective communication between international patients and healthcare providers.

**CONCLUSION**

For the marketing professional, the public-preferred dependence on electronic sources to disseminate information and engage in company marketing efforts represents a markedly more economical approach to consumer campaigning. In addition, the traditional restraints of paper-based advertising are lifted, leaving behind only limitations of the marketer’s imagination. The strategy successes of prominent healthcare organizations and companies in other industries highlighted in this paper provide a compelling case for the proliferation of healthcare marketing. The strategies discussed are ideas which can be used in healthcare marketing. Although not all strategies can be used for the same hospital and organization but they can be customized according to the need of the hospital. Information technology has played a vital role in the innovation of healthcare systems. Despite the surge in innovation, theoretical research on the art and science of healthcare innovation has been limited. One of the driving forces in research is a conceptual framework that provides researchers with the foundation upon which their studies are built. This paper evaluates some realistic ways of innovation in healthcare strategies in India which has to be applied in a way that suits the healthcare at its best.

**REFERENCES**

