



A STUDY ON PROMOTION OF HOSPITAL SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Present study intended to study the promotional activities in two corporate hospitals. Opinions are collected from doctors, nurses and administrative personnel on promotional activities. Further, collected data were analyzed with statistical tools like Mean and S.D. It is concluded that the perceptions of respondents on promotional activities are positively opinioned in two sample hospitals. The Grand Mean and S.D. scores are in the range of 2.55 to 2.79 (Grand Mean) 0.38 to 0.48 (S.D) in APOLLO and 2.52 to 3.01 (Grand Mean) 0.32 to 0.36 (S.D) in CARE respectively, on a 5 point scale indicating place mix of the sample hospitals is agreeable to the respondents.

KEY WORDS: Promotion; Hospital Services; Corporate Hospitals; Message

INTRODUCTION

Services promotion is an integral part of the hospital and is related to clinical, educational, behavioral, and organizational issues. 'Promotion' is the hot topic in hospitals, by the promotional activities hospitals able to communicate the right message to patients and service seekers. The information can be regarding the treatment and auxiliary arrangements like transport, communication, diet facilities for attendants of the patients, price

etc, apart from this, direct promotion includes inpatient-doctor interaction and the care taken by the support staff. Promotion is basically communication. Messages are carried to the market by the service's styling and features, it's offering price and the places and times where and when it is available. Here we will confine our attention to the subset of marketing tools that are primarily promotional in nature, that are classified as promotion as promotion.

These promotional tools are extremely numerous and varied. Classification of the various promotional tools is desirable to facilitate analysis and planning. These tools fall into four groups. They are Advertising, Sales promotion, Personal selling, Publicity. Public relations, publicity, advertising, lobbying, fund raising educational programs are the various devices used for promoting a service, or idea. Some other methods such as word-of-mouth, rumor, gossip, opinion polls and endorsement of opinion leaders. The effective promotion needs surprise. Therefore, anything that is stereotype or imitation should be avoided. It is good to innovate and be creative in promotion. In hospital services promotion, the important thing to remember is need to carefully balance and co-ordinate the advertising messages and the management of the hospital's image for the long term effectiveness of the hospital's public relation program.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective for which the research has been undertaken is

1. To investigate and compare the promotional activities in the selected two super-specialty hospitals.

2. To elicit the perceptions of Doctors, Nurses and Administrative personnel on promotional activities of two sample hospitals and comparing.
3. To make suitable suggestion for better promotion of hospital services.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The available literature revealing that much discussion has not taken place on promotion of services in hospitals. Due to the changes of consumer perceptions in India, there is a need to study the distribution activities in Indian hospital industry.

SELECTION OF SAMPLE HOSPITALS

Two corporate hospitals namely APOLLO (Jublee Hills) and CARE (Banjara Hills) in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh have been selected which are running on similar and almost identical facilities.

SELECTION OF SAMPLE SIZE AND ITS JUSTIFICATION

The sample is taken from three categories after giving adequate representation to all classes. The three classes include doctors, nurses and administrative Personnel. Following table explains the respondents work experience in respective organizations. The category of experience classified into three, namely A, B and C.

Table No:1 Work Experience of Sample Doctors, Nurses and Administrative Personnel

Sl.No	Designation	Work Experience	Apollo		Care		Total	
			Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	Doctors	Below 5 years (A)	18	24.00	22	29.34	40	26.67
		5yrs.to 10 yrs (B)	28	37.30	33	43.99	61	40.67
		Above 10 yrs. (C)	29	38.70	20	26.67	49	32.66
		Total	75	100.00	75	100.00	150	100.00
2	Nurses	Below 5 Years (A)	28	18.60	33	22.00	61	20.50
		5yrs.to 10 Yrs (B)	68	45.50	78	52.00	146	48.60
		Above 10 Yrs. (C)	54	35.90	39	26.00	93	30.90
		Total	150	100.00	150	100.00	300	100.00
3	Administrative Personnel	Below 10 Yrs (A)	8	22.80	12	34.20	20	28.50
		10 yrs to 20 yrs (B)	18	51.50	17	48.60	35	50.00
		Above 20 yrs (C)	9	25.70	6	17.20	15	21.50
		Total	35	100.00	35	100.00	70	100.00

Following table showing the population and sample size of two selected super specialty hospitals.

Table No: 2 Population and Sample size in Selected Hospitals

S.No	Particulars	APOLLO		CARE		Total	
		Population	Sample	Population	Sample	Population	Sample
1	Doctors	156	75	127	75	283	150
2	Nursing Staff	340	150	320	150	660	300
3	Administrative Personnel	45	35	40	35	85	70

DISCUSSION AND INFERENCE

Pertaining to the questionnaire to doctors in APOLLO, out of 156 doctors, the questionnaire was distributed to 85 and only 75 response sheets were taken for final analysis. Out of 127 doctors in CARE, the questionnaire was distributed to 90 and 75 response sheets were selected for final analysis. In the case of questionnaire relating to nursing staff, in APOLLO, out of 560 nurses, 340 nurses are working on permanent basis and 220 are working on contract basis. The questionnaires were distributed to 170 nurses who are working on permanent basis and finally 150 questionnaires were selected for analysis. In the case of CARE hospital, out of 510 nurses, 320 nurses are working on permanent basis and remaining 190 are working on temporary basis. The questionnaires were distributed to 180 respondents who are working on permanent basis and 150 response sheets were taken for final analysis. The questionnaires developed for administrative personnel was distributed to 45 numbers in APOLLO, and 35 were selected as sample for final analysis. Out of 40 administrative personnel in CARE hospital, 35 persons are selected for final analysis.

METHODOLOGY FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaire, which was intended to diagnose the opinions of respondents (Doctors, Nurses and Administrative Personnel) on people mix in two sample hospitals, contains twenty statements in total. The count of responses is considered and for each type of

response (Strongly Agree, Agree, Can't Say, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) and for each type of respondents in two hospitals, the Mean and S.D is calculated separately. Finally conclusions are derived by calculating Grand Mean and S.D.

LITERATURE SURVEY

'Brand Equity in Hospital Marketing' by Kyung Hoon Kim a , Kang Sik Kim b, Dong Yul Kim c, Jong Ho Kim d, Suk Hou Kang¹ This study identifies five factors that influence the creation of brand equity through successful customer relationships: trust, customer satisfaction, relationship commitment, brand loyalty, and brand awareness. An empirical test of the relationships among these factors suggests that hospitals can be successful in creating image and positive brand equity if they can manage their customer relationships well. 'Hospital Advertising: Does it Influence Consumers? By Fisher CM, Anderson CJ² examined the effectiveness of hospital advertising and its strength as a factor in hospital choice. 'Impact of Mass Media on Public Behaviour and Physicians: an Ecological Study of the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic by Codish S, Novack L, Dreiherr J, Barski L, Jotkowicz A, Zeller L, Novack V³ identified the mass media plays an important role in public health behavior. 'Current Issues in the Physician - Patient Relationship' by Kalliainer LK, Lichtman DM⁴ The Journal of Hand Surgery 2010, 35 (12): 2126-2129 identified the physician-patient relationship has been subjected to numerous

stressors over the past several decades. 'Depth of Target Marketing Programs Varies among Healthcare Sector' by Heather Schultz⁵ Direct Marketing News, May 01, 2011 Issue, concluded that the hospital marketers remain positive on their sectors adoption of more advanced marketing methodology. 'Consumer Perception of Direct Mail Advertising' by Raymond E. Taylor⁶ Journal of Direct Marketing, Volume 4, Issue 3, PP 46-52, Summer 1990, identified that the direct mail is perceived as a more professional advertising medium for hospitals than are other media.

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN APOLLO HOSPITAL

The promotion mix of Apollo hospital based on advertisement of services, promotion of services, publicity of service, personnel selling and public relations. Apollo is mainly trying long-term build up of a particular services or brand. In this connection Apollo successfully build up brand image of their services like bypass surgeries, diagnosis, pharmacy etc. For promoting some of their services, Apollo following incentives as part of their promotional plans. These incentives are using some time to create long run response and sometimes are offered to create an immediate behavior response from the users. Apart from above promotional mix likes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, Apollo is also concentrating personnel selling as apart of promotional mix. In this context Apollo is following pull strategy (advertising and sales promotion) as well as push strategy (personnel selling), and sometimes combination of both for promoting their services. In a view to increasing reputation of the hospital in society, Apollo is participating several social services programmes. As a part of promotional activities, Apollo started a separate public relation department for

delivering functions of developing media relations, publications, and community relations. This department is planning important role in implementing the strategic plans of the hospital.

PROMOTION ACTIVITIES IN CARE HOSPITAL

Care hospital giving equal importance to the image advertising and product advertising in their promotional campaign. For this purpose Care hospital preferring electronic media, and web based advertisements. Along with, Care hospital is advertising through news papers, magazines and bill boards, displays, posters, traveling displays, station posters, direct mail advertising etc Apart from the above methods Care hospital is following some other methods like distributing souvenirs, brief presentations by the surgeons on kidney transplant and other critical surgeries on the screen, distributing portfolio (a flat portable case for carrying loose papers) called as family health manager, to keep all of a family's health records and papers. Among other things, it contains information regarding medical insurance, immunization and other health records, health facts, health related articles, up-to-date papers one would want to keep handy about the entire family's health care. For promoting certain advanced services like MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging Equipment which is used to see soft tissues without the use of X-Ray) Care hospital is following mails to all physicians and hospitals in the whole state informing them of the availability of MRI and also they are arranging continuing medical educational programmes. Let us move on to the Mean and S.D values of doctor's perceptions on the promotional activities of sample hospitals. Following table representing mean and standard deviation values of perceptions of doctors about promotional activities of the sample hospitals.

Table No: 3 Mean and S.D of Doctor's Perceptions on the Promotional Activities of the Sample Hospitals (N=75)

Sl.No	Statement	Apollo		Care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Your hospital is able to propagate its services to patients and their relatives.	2.53	1.21	2.73	1.13
2	You are feeling yourself as a direct promoter of your hospital services.	2.82	1.41	2.53	1.09
3	Your hospital special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy.	2.94	1.29	2.93	1.06
4	In your opinion special campaigns like, heart-checkup, dental checkup at concession rates are getting good response from patients.	2.94	1.29	2.93	1.06
5	In your opinion, the talk by doctors in T.V and radio programs of this hospital is successful to increase the reputation of hospital.	2.53	0.96	2.86	0.81
6	This hospital is having strong brand image in the patients.	2.20	1.17	2.40	0.88

Point Scale: 1-strongly agree.....5-strongly disagree

Above table reveals that 'hospital is able to propagate services' (2.53), 'feeling yourself as a direct promoter of hospital services' (2.82), 'special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy' (2.94), 'response of patients on special campaigns' (2.94), 'special programs in T.V and radio increasing reputation of hospital' (2.53), 'strong brand image of the hospital' (2.20). From this, it can be stated that the promotional activities of Apollo hospital perceived well by the respondents.

In the case of Care hospital, 'hospital is able to propagate services' (2.73), 'feeling yourself as a direct promoter of hospital services' (2.53), 'special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy' (2.93), 'response of patients on special campaigns' (2.93), 'special programs in T.V and radio increasing reputation of hospital' (2.86), 'strong brand image of the hospital' (2.40). Therefore, it can be said that the promotional mix in the hospital are well perceived by the respondents. Let us see the Mean and S.D values of nurse's perceptions on the promotional activities of the sample hospitals.

Table No: 4 Mean and S.D of Nurses Perceptions on the Promotional Activities of the Sample Hospitals (N=150)

Sl.No	Statement	Apollo		Care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Your hospital is able to propagate its services to patients and their relatives.	2.73	1.34	2.19	0.98
2	You are feeling yourself as a direct promoter of your hospital services.	2.26	1.12	2.26	0.77
3	Your hospital special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy.	2.20	1.17	2.33	0.94
4	In your opinion special campaigns like, heart-checkup, dental checkup at concession rates are getting good response from patients.	2.20	1.17	2.33	0.94
5	In your opinion, the talk by doctors in T.V and radio programs of this hospital is successful to increase the reputation of hospital.	2.52	1.20	2.59	1.08
6	This hospital is having strong brand image in the patients.	2.46	1.09	1.81	1.05

5 Point Scale: 1-strongly agree.....5-strongly disagree

Above table shows that ‘hospital is able to propagate services’ (2.73), ‘feeling yourself as a direct promoter of hospital services’ (2.26), ‘special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy’ (2.20), ‘response of patients on special campaigns’ (2.20), ‘special programs in T.V and radio increasing reputation of hospital’ (2.52), ‘strong brand image of the hospital’ (2.46). From this it can be stated that the promotional activities of Apollo hospital perceived well by the respondents.

In the case of Care hospital, ‘hospital is able to propagate services’ (2.19), ‘feeling yourself as a direct promoter of hospital services’ (2.26), ‘special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy’ (2.33), ‘response of patients on special campaigns’ (2.33), ‘special programs in T.V and radio increasing reputation of hospital’ (2.59), ‘strong brand image of the hospital’ (1.81). Therefore it can be concluded that, the respondents in the hospital having positive impression on the promotional mix of the hospital. Now observe the Mean and S.D values of administrative personnel’s perceptions on the promotional activities of the sample hospitals.

Table No: 5 Mean and S.D of Administrative Personnel Perceptions on the Promotional Activities of the Sample Hospitals (N=35)

Sl.No	Statement	Apollo		Care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Your hospital is able to propagate its services to patients and their relatives.	2.08	1.26	1.77	0.97
2	You are feeling yourself as a direct promoter of your hospital services.	1.80	0.83	1.80	1.27
3	Your hospital special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy.	1.91	1.14	1.82	0.82
4	In your opinion special campaigns like, heart-checkup, dental checkup at concession rates are getting good response from patients.	1.91	1.14	1.82	0.82
5	In your opinion, the talk by doctors in T.V and radio programs of this hospital is successful to increase the reputation of hospital.	1.94	1.02	2.17	1.38
6	This hospital is having strong brand image in the patients.	1.88	1.15	1.94	0.99

5 Point Scale: 1-strongly agree.....5-strongly disagree

Above table shows the perceptions of administrative personnel on the promotional activities of Apollo hospital; ‘hospital is able to propagate services’ (2.08), ‘feeling yourself as a direct promoter of hospital services’ (1.86), ‘special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy’ (1.91), ‘response of patients on special campaigns’ (1.91), ‘special programs in T.V and radio increasing reputation of hospital’ (1.94), ‘strong brand image of the hospital’ (1.88). From this it can

be stated that the promotional activities of Apollo hospital perceived well by the respondents.

In the case of Care hospital, ‘hospital is able to propagate services’ (1.77), ‘feeling yourself as a direct promoter of hospital services’ (1.80), ‘special promotional campaigns are gaining the attention of the needy’ (1.82), ‘response of patients on special campaigns’ (1.82), ‘special programs in T.V and radio increasing reputation of hospital’ (2.17), ‘strong brand image of the hospital’ (1.94). Therefore it can be concluded that, the respondents in the hospital having positive impression on the promotional activities of the hospital.

Table No: 6 Grand Mean and S.D. of Respondent's Opinion on Promotional Activities of Sample Hospitals

Sl.No	Respondents	Apollo		Care	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Doctors	2.66	0.61	2.73	0.48
2	Nurses	2.39	0.54	2.25	0.46
3	Administrative Personnel	1.92	0.42	1.88	0.44

5 Point Scale: 1-strongly agree.....5-strongly disagree

Rating of Sample Hospitals on Promotional Activities:-

Above table shows that the perceptions of doctors, nurses and administrative personnel on promotional activities, entire are positively opinioned in two sample hospitals. The Grand Mean and S.D. scores are in the range of 1.92 to 2.66 (Grand Mean) 0.42 to 0.61 (S.D) in APOLLO and 1.88 to 2.73 (Grand Mean) 0.44 to 0.48 (SD) in CARE respectively, on a 5 point scale indicating perceptions of the sample hospitals is agreeable. Finally it is concluded as the respondents (Doctors, Nurses and Administrative Personnel) perceptions are agreeable to the promotional activities of two sample hospitals.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BETTER PROMOTION OF HOSPITAL SERVICES

Public Relations:-

In almost every area of the hospital where staff comes into direct contact with the patients, the human relations and patient relations are of utmost importance. This is where public relations and marketing work at their best. Depending on how the staff practices public relations will make or mar the hospital. All other outside marketing activities are secondary, even superfluous and irrelevant. Hospitals have failed to pay attention to this fact which is a key to their success.

Telephone Etiquette:-

The telephone is one of the most effective promotional tool on which the reputation of hospital rests. The way in which a telephone call is answered has an important psychological effect on the caller. A prompt connection, after the first ring, whenever possible, and a pleasant voice make the caller feel immediately that he is dealing with an efficient, vibrant and dynamic organization. If the telephone is not answered promptly, and if the voice behind it sounds bored, tired and slurred, a negative impression is created.

Establishment of Media Relations Policy:-

The policy should specifically state who speaks for the hospital, whether the chief executive officer or the public relations director, or any other, and in their absence as during the night when quite often accident victims are admitted, who may be called to make a statement to the press. All those who are required to make statements to the media should be familiar with the official policy and the procedure laid down therein.

Development of Relationship Marketing:-

Relationship marketing is the process of getting closer to the customer by developing a long term relationship through careful attention to customer needs and service delivery. A focus on customer retention

- ✎ An orientation towards product benefits rather than product features;
- ✎ A long-term view of the relationship;
- ✎ Maximum emphasis on customer commitment and contact;
- ✎ Development of ongoing relationships;
- ✎ Multiple employee / customer contacts;
- ✎ An emphasis on key account relationship management; and
- ✎ An emphasis on trust.

All of the techniques are helpful in maintaining good relations with hospital services utilisers.

Direct – To - Consumer Marketing:-

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) marketing involves promotional techniques aimed at the end user, targeted to specific customer segments, and customized to the greatest extent possible. The DTC movement is gaining momentum in healthcare as the industry becomes increasingly consumer driven and the ability to target narrow population segments is refined. The trend toward DTC advertising is driven by a number of factors.

Customer Relationship Marketing:-

The most important aspects of a true CRM initiative lie in how the organization as a whole defines its customers, identifies and segments their needs, and organizes around serving them in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Hospital services marketers should first identify what goals are most important to the organization, and these should guide the internal planning and implementation efforts. Some of the more common goals and objectives for developing and implementing technology-driven customer relationship programs include

- ☺ Improving customer service and satisfaction;
- ☺ Increasing profitability;
- ☺ Reducing the number of negative customer experience;

- ☺ Allocating resources more efficiently'
- ☺ Reducing the cost of managing customer interactions;
- ☺ Attracting and retaining customers and prospects;
- ☺ Staying in front of customers and building stronger relationships over time; and
- ☺ Improving clinical outcomes.

Internet Marketing:-

The Internet Marketing has radically transformed the worlds of marketing and healthcare. Although healthcare organizations were slow to jump on the Internet Marketing bandwagon, recent years have seen a surge of interest in the use of the Internet for a wide range of marketing activities. Hospitals have to create websites because this has become their primary interface with their customers. Healthcare website has generally moved beyond static marketing information and corporate descriptions and has introduced a deeper level of service information, health content, and interactive features. Most, however, are not truly integrated with their other marketing efforts or other IT applications in the hospital. A small number of health systems are pushing customized health information and medical records out to consumers, allowing e-mail communication with physicians, and performing actual disease management online.

CONCLUSION

The role of services promotion in hospitals is changing. Promotion function of any hospital involves the transmission of message to present, past and potential patients. Promotion includes advertising, sales promotions, personal and publicity. Hospitals do not normally undertake aggressive promotion, they rely a lot on a favorable word of mouth. To increase the cliental, a hospital

may continuously introduce different health services like the acupressure clinic, master health programs and diabetes health checkups apart from annual health check ups provided to different companies i.e. corporate clients. Hospitals conduct camps in rural areas to give medical check ups at a reasonable price so that the rural people approach the hospital again in the future. They also sponsor frequent visits to the spastic society, old age homes, etc. hospitals generally advertise in health and fitness magazines.

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