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By Mr. Nadiminti Rajesh Kumar & Dr. Sajid Alvi

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Analysis of Sales force/ Sales Representatives effectiveness was also a part of the project. This was an attempt to understand the relationship between the sales representatives and the physicians, which weights to influence the prescription generation. The preference of the physician towards the traits of a Sales Representative where identified. The behavioural and professional characteristics of the representatives were the area of focus. This feedback was employed to improve the approach by the representatives towards the Physicians.

Keywords: *e-detailing, Pharmaceutical promotion.*

GJMR-B Classification: *NLMC Code: QV 701*



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Marketing/Promotional Initiatives by Pharmaceutical Companies – "Doctor's Perspective"

Mr. Nadiminti Rajesh Kumar [α] & Dr. Sajid Alvi [σ]

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Another part of the research was to take the feedback of the physicians on Digital Initiatives that are being adopted actively in the pharmaceutical world. These include:

- The shift from a VISUAL AID to E-DETAILING for detailing of the product.
- Introduction of engagement apps for the Physicians – Speciality specific, Knowledge sharing apps.
- Social media campaigns for spreading awareness, launches etc.

Keywords: e-detailing, pharmaceutical promotion.

I. Introduction

The paper was aimed to understand the need gaps and the potential opportunities that are available in the marketing/promotional initiatives for the medical fraternity. This was done by conducting a primary market research which involved face-to-face interviews with the physicians of different specialities. 11 specialities of doctors were chosen to have holistic and a representative result/feedback. Along with the initiatives the doctors were asked to give feedback on the performance and effectiveness of sales representatives, where the doctors preference of how sales reps should approach the doctors could be mapped. Feedback on the digital initiatives, the technology based advancements in the engagement approaches by the pharmaceutical companies.

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II. Literature Review

Many countries have measures in place to limit advertising by pharmaceutical companies. In India, the direct to user/consumer advertisement i.e. "*Patient*" is not allowed according to the law. Hence the promotion and advertisements are channelized towards the doctors, as they have a direct relationship with the patients. The Pharmaceutical firms communicate and send the message about their products to the Patients Via Doctors. This is accounted as *"Marketing to health-care providers".*

- Marketing to health-care providers takes three main forms: activity by pharmaceutical sales representatives, provision of drug samples, and sponsoring continuing medical education (CME).
- The pattern has evolved witnessing a shift from these traditional initiatives to the new age digital initiatives.
- However, a blend of traditional practices and the newer initiatives pertaining to the technology and advancement is the most practised and followed in the pharmaceutical system.
- Pharmaceutical companies have their distinct customers: "DOCTORS", hence every pharmaceutical firm engages the physicians with a host of promotional tools.
- The basic intent behind these tools is to build a long term relationship with the doctors in order to ensure continuous business and support from the doctors towards their firm.
- While the companies make efforts and positively influence doctors, such initiatives highly encourage doctors to prescribe their drugs marketed by their sales representatives.
- Companies use various tools viz. gifts for personal/clinical use/academic use, scientific education programs, collaboration for clinical studies or patient awareness, detection camps and sponsorships.
- Based on feedback collected from doctors, company would plan and channelize investment and efforts and therefore streamline the entire customer relationship management process.

III. Objectives of the Research Paper

- The overall research objective was to gather feedback from doctors on current promotional tools

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and various doctor engagement activities undertaken by pharmaceutical companies.
- To identify the various types of scientific/non-scientific engagement initiatives, which activities appeal to the medical fraternity and identify top companies associated with every type of engagement initiatives
- To identify need gaps/opportunities in terms of doctor engagement initiatives which doctors would want pharma companies to undertake
- To assess the quality of sales representatives and identify attributes on which doctor's evaluate sales reps. Identify top companies basis the quality of sales reps
- To find out the feedback on digital means of engaging and communicating with doctors: i.e. e-detailing and other digital promotional activities.

IV. Target Selection

- The market research was conducted in Hyderabad and Pune. The motive was to have a good representation from the parts of India, and have a more representative feedback.
- The territory that I covered was the South & Western India, namely Hyderabad and Pune.
- The sample size considered and covered in Hyderabad- Total : 103

Hyderabad											
Specialty	Cons. Phy	Cardio	Psycia	Neuro	Ortho	Gastro	Dermat	Paed	Gyneac	Chest	Opthal
Number	17	12	12	5	13	6	12	6	12	4	4

PUNE											
Specialty	Cons. Phy	Cardio	Psycia	Neuro	Ortho	Gastro	Dermat	Paed	Gyneac	Chest	Opthal
Number	10	6	7	9	6	6	6	6	9	9	11

- The sample size considered and covered in Pune- Total: 85
- Overall Face-to-Face interviews conducted with the physicians in Hyderabad and Pune accounts to 188.

V. Research Methodology

- Type of research: Exploratory and Descriptive
- Research design: Qualitative and Quantitative
- Target Customers: Consultant Physicians, Cardiologists, Chest Physicians, Dermatologists, Gastroenterologists, Gynaecologists, Neurologists, Orthopedicians, Ophthalmologists, Paediatricians, Pyschiatrists.
- Sample size: 188 Doctors
- Type of questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was prepared having closed and open ended questions.
- Data collection method: Face-to-Face interviews with the doctors.
- Data analysis tool: MS Excel
- Territory covered: Mumbai and Pune
- Tools used for research:

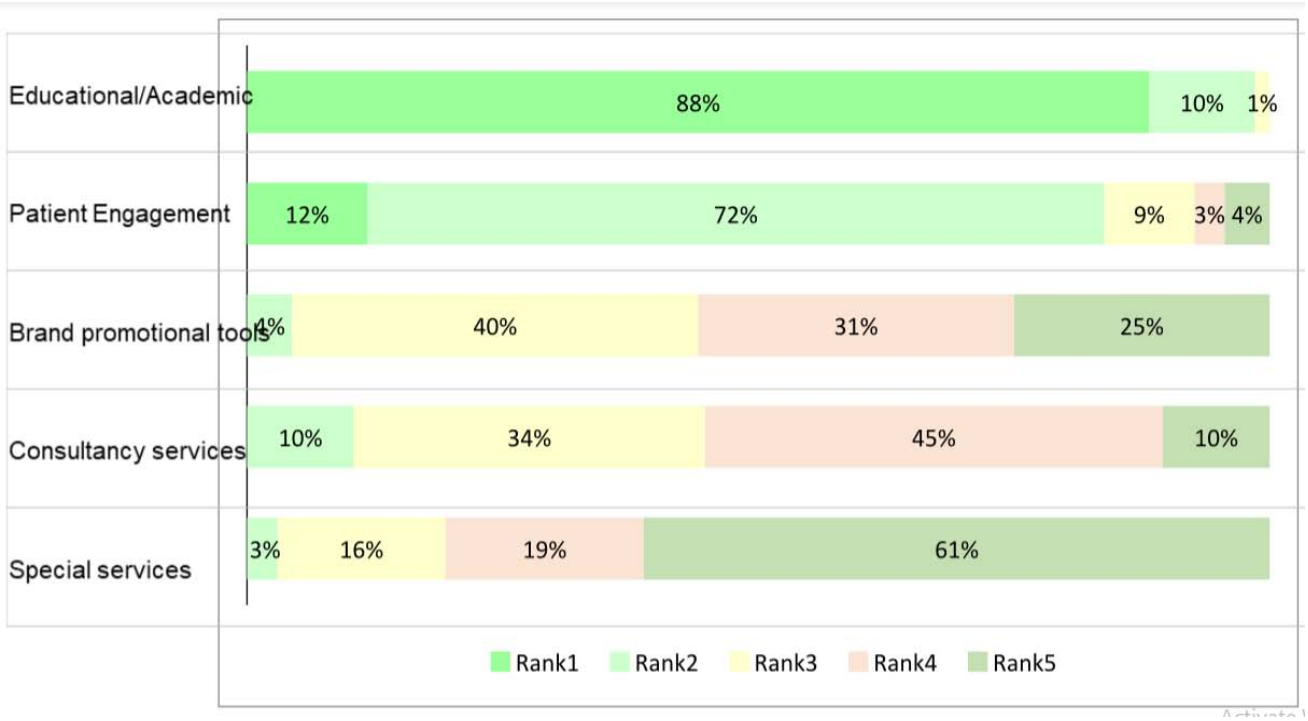
1. Primary data: Primary data was collected from doctors through structured questionnaires. It is original, authentic and serves the purpose of the project.
2. Secondary data: Secondary data was collected from literature, articles and internet.

VI. Data Analysis

I: Feedback on Overall Promotional Engagement Initiatives

Considering the different kinds of tools/initiatives that pharma companies engage you with, what is your opinion about importance of each (Rank order 1 to 5)?

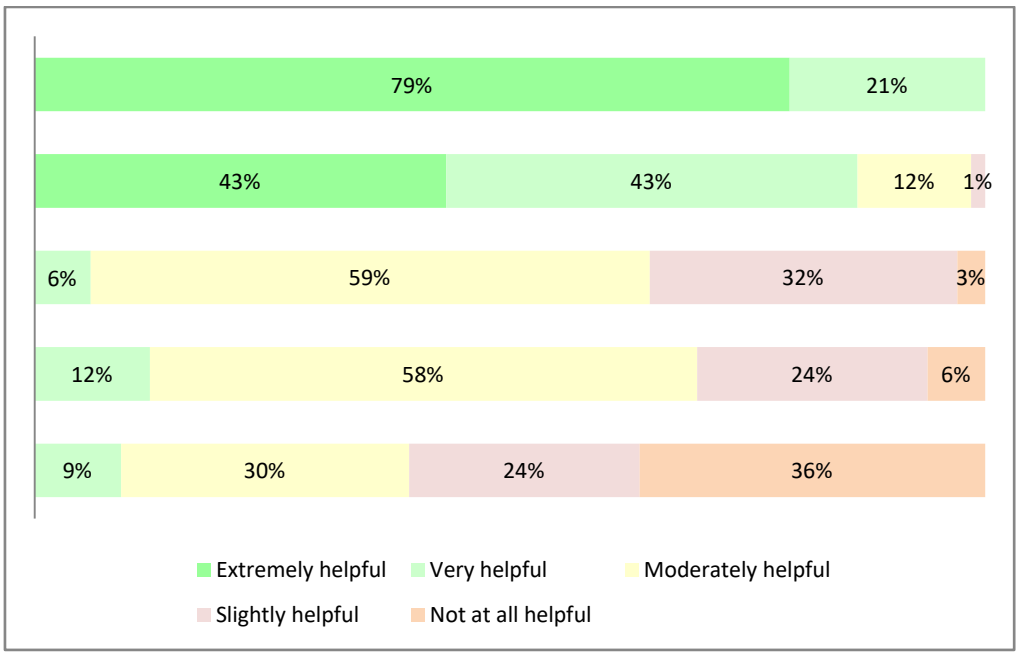
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Interpretation:

- From the above picture it can be inferred that, Educational/Academic initiatives are the most preferred initiative accounting to 88% (Ranked 1) and Patient Engagement initiatives are perceived as most important by 12% of the doctors. The Consultancy services stand at 10% followed by Brand promotional tools are ranked most important by 4% of the doctors and finally Special services are marked as important by 3% of the doctors.

Which initiative influences your prescription behavior the most (Kindly tick the most relevant option)?



Interpretation:

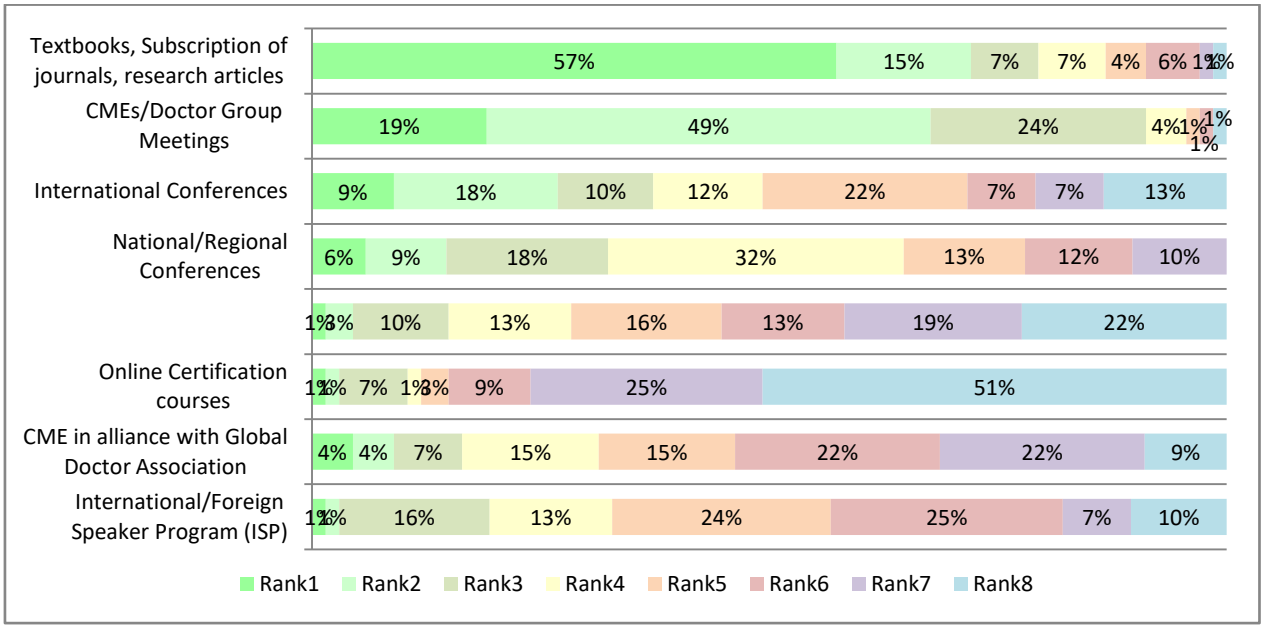
While in terms of usefulness of the initiative, again Educational initiatives and Patient Engagement appear to be most influential initiatives.79% of the physicians consider the educational/ academic initiatives the most useful and thereby play a role in influencing the prescription and 43% of physicians consider patient engagement initiatives most useful. The Consultancy services are considered as most useful initiative by 12% of the doctors. The Special

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services are perceived as the most important by 9% of doctors and finally the Brand promotional tools are considered as most useful by 6% of doctors.

Section II: Feedback on Educational/Academic Service

1. Considering the different kinds of tools/initiatives that pharma companies engage you with, what is your opinion about importance of each (Rank order 1 to 8)?

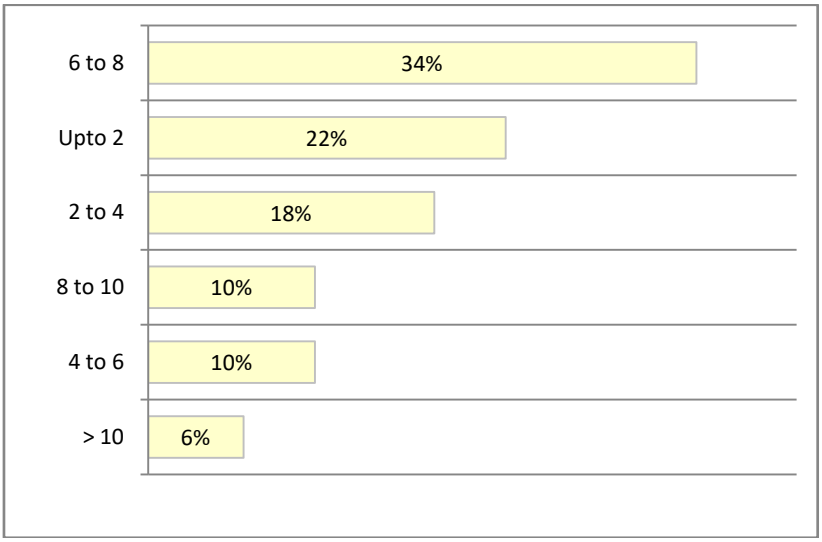


Interpretation:

- The usefulness of the initiatives towards the up gradation of the knowledge has seen highly fragmented response pattern. In Edu./Academic initiatives, Textbooks, Subscription of journals, research articles(57%) and CMEs/Doctor Group Meetings(19%) are considered most important to upgrade scientific knowledge. If the top two ranks are considered as the parameter, The Edu/academic initiatives are considered as most important to upgrade the scientific knowledge accounting to 72% of the physicians and followed by CME's with 68% of the doctors. The International conferences were considered as most useful by 27% of the doctors. Followed by national conferences and other online initiatives.

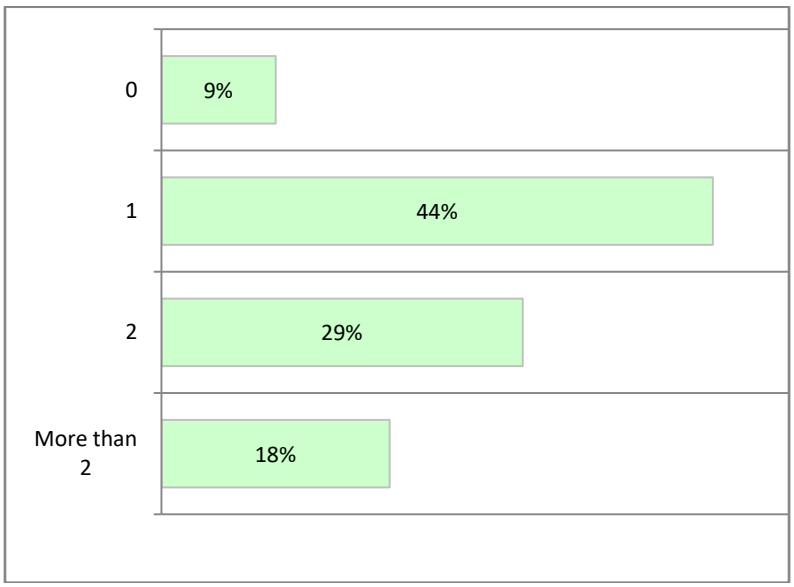
2. Talking about CMEs, how many invitations do you receive for a CME per week? Out of those invitations, how many do you prefer to attend?

CME's Invitation per month:



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CME'S attended per month by the physicians:

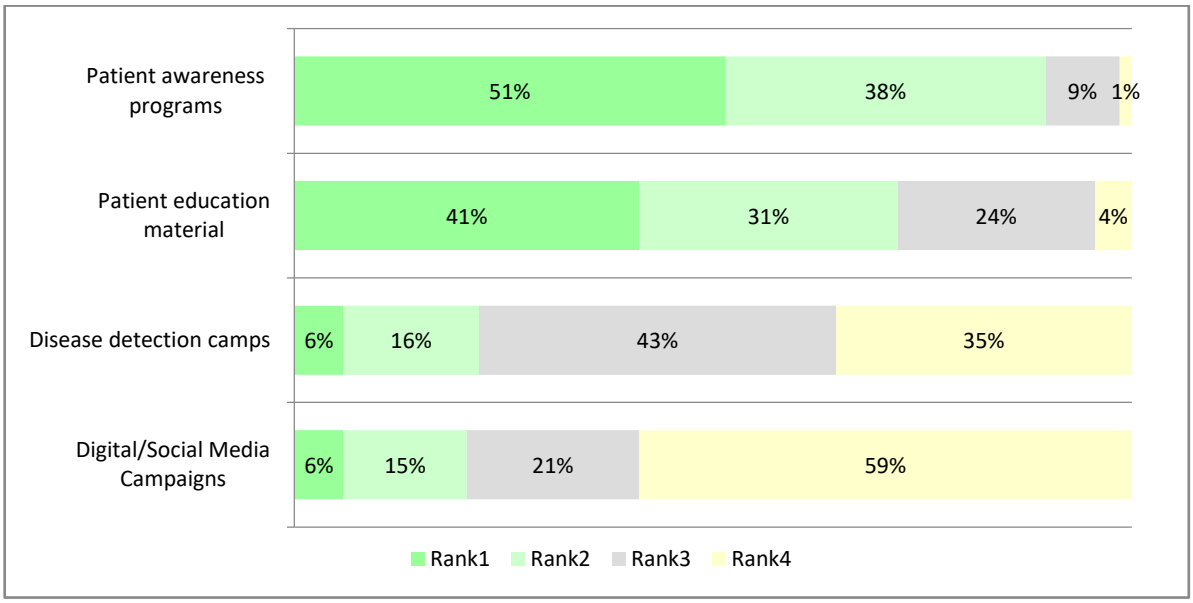


Interpretation:

- If the graphs are seen carefully it can be observed that, 34% of the doctors receive around 6-8 invitations to the continuous medical education, 22% of the doctors get at least 2 invitations per month. But, only 44% of the doctors attend only 1 CME out of the host of invitations they get. 9% of doctors choose NOT to attend any CME.

Feedback on Patient Engagement Initiatives:

3. Doctor, amongst the Patient Engagement Activities, according to you which initiative is important to build your connect/influence the patients? (Rank in an order of 1 to 4 for each)



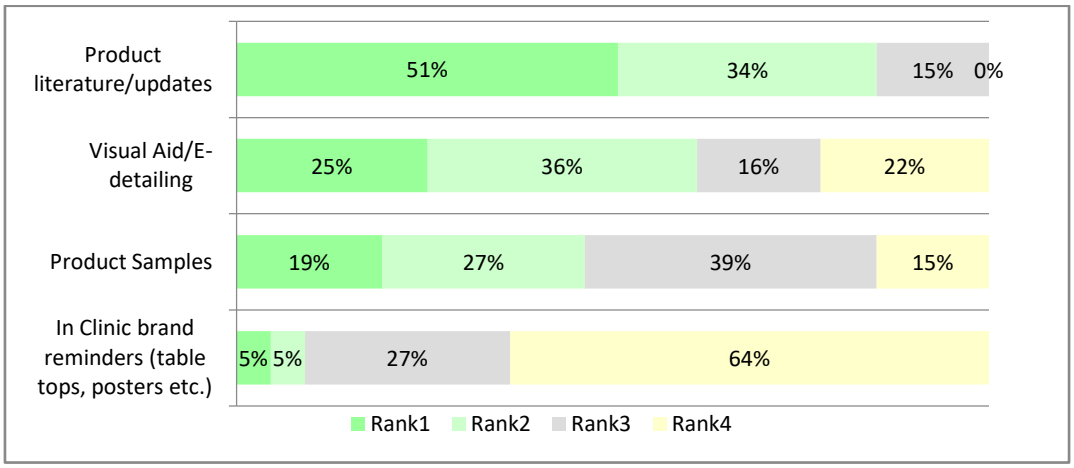
Interpretation:

- Among the Patient Engagement initiatives, Patient Awareness programs (51%) and Patient Education material (41%) are considered most important to build connect/influence the patients. The Disease detection camps and Digital/social media campaigns have bagged 6% each.

Feedback on Brand Promotional Tools:

4. Amongst the various brand promotional tools which tool helps you recall the brand name the most (rank in an order of 1 to 4 for each)?

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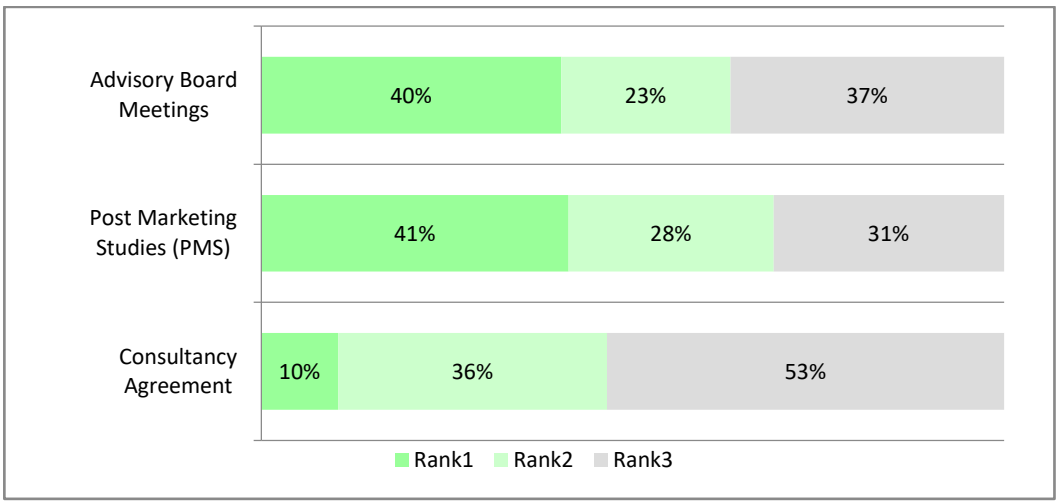


Interpretation:

- Product literature was perceived as Clinical updates: regarding the drugs and studies on it about various types of reactions, efficacy etc. The Clinical updates (51%) are considered most useful to recall brand name, followed by 25% of Visual aid/e-detailing. 19% of Product samples, 5% of Clinical brand reminders.

Feedback on Consultancy to Pharma Companies

5. In Consultancy to Pharma Companies given a choice, which initiative would you prefer the most? (Rank in an order of 1 to 3 for each).



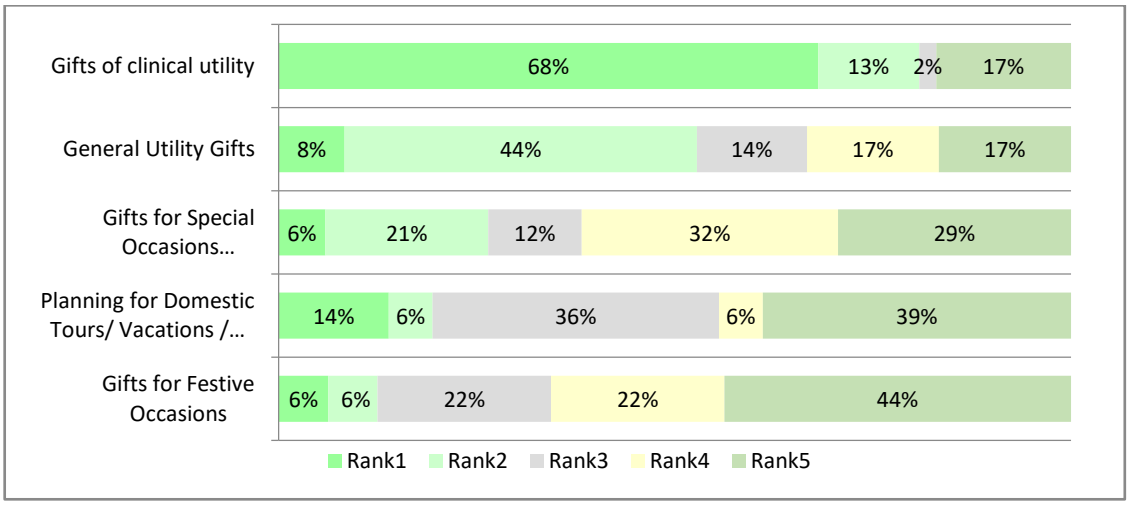
Interpretation:

For Consultancy services, PMS (41%) most preferred followed by Advisory Board meetings (40%).

Feedback on Special Services:

6. Doctor, amongst the various Special Services which initiative is the most preferred by you? (Rank in an order of 1 to 5 for each).

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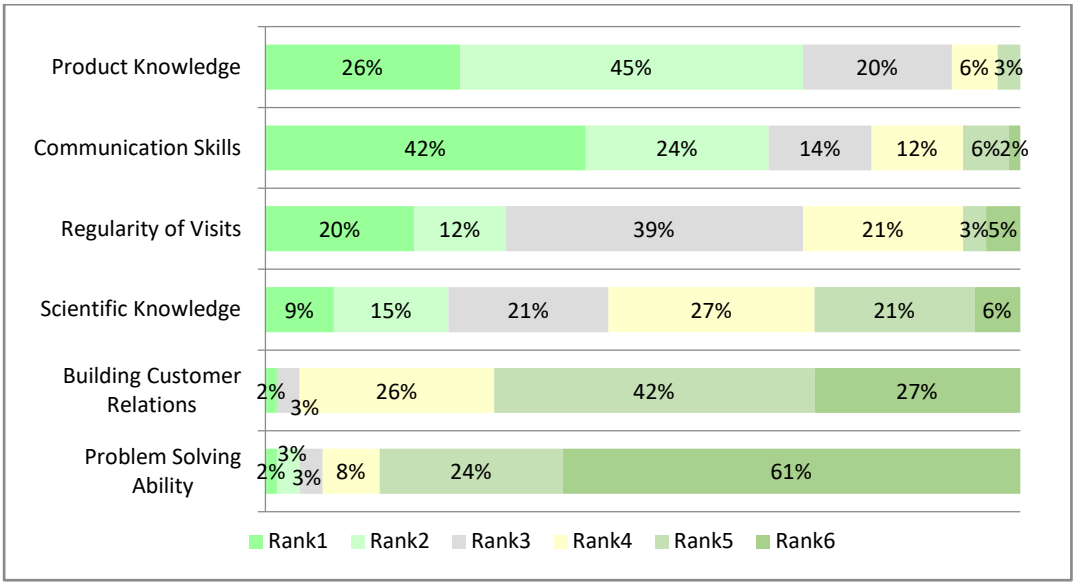


Interpretation:

68% Doctors prefer gifts of clinical utility, followed by 14% of them preferring planned tours and vaccations. 8% of them prefer Gifts for general utility. 6% each for Gifts for special occasions and festive occasions.

Feedback on Sales Representatives

7. Amongst the various factors to assess the sales reps, which factors do you consider most important (rank in an order of 1 to 6 for each)?



Interpretation:

The doctors perceive Communication skills (43%) followed by Product knowledge (26%) as most important factors to assess sales representatives.

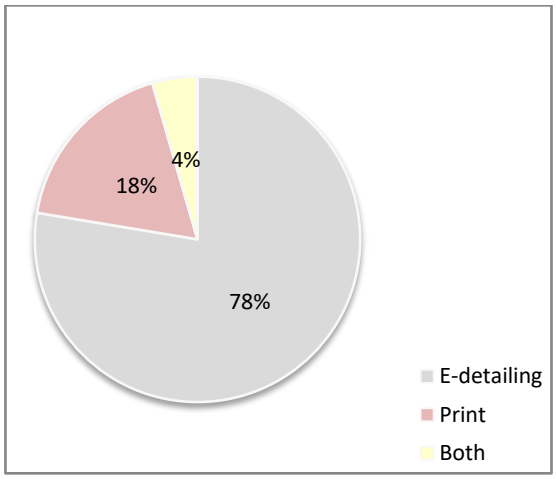
20% of the physicians perceive regularity of visits the most important.

9% of them expressed that scientific knowledge as a important parameter. 2% building customer relations and 2% problem solving ability.

Section VIII: Feedback on Digital Initiatives

8. With the emergence of technology-based alternatives pharma companies have started engaging with you through various digital means of communication. One of the most popular being E-DETAILING using a tablet device. Which medium of detailing would you prefer the most?

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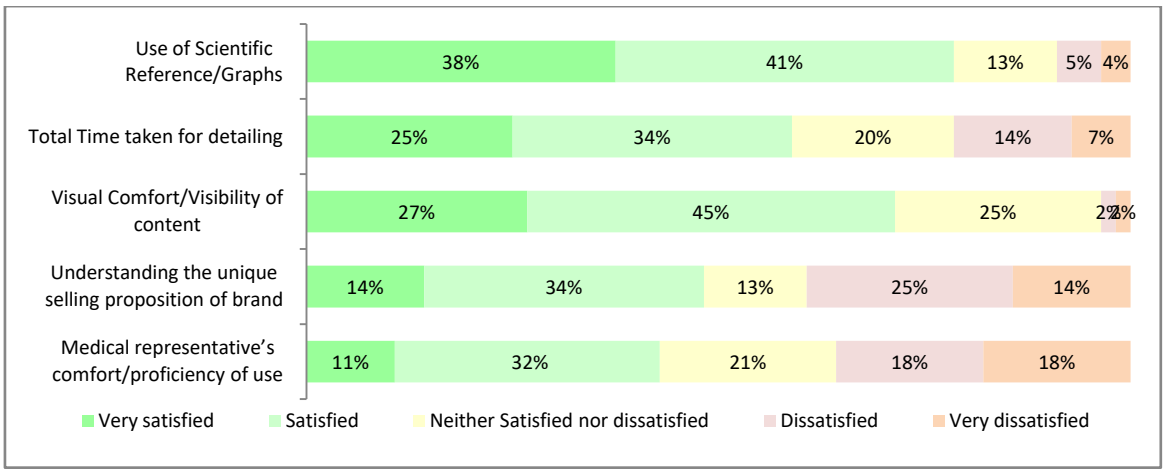


Reasons for preferring e-detailing over print
Eco-friendly/Saves paper
Saves Time
Visually effective
Easy to understand
Informative references available
Convenient
Informative
Graphically explainative
Technical advancements
Informative graphs available

Interpretation:

More than 3/4th of the doctors preferred E-detailing over Print medium.

9. Compared to the traditional detailing, can you give us a satisfaction score for E-Detailing on the following parameters, (1 is least satisfied and 5 is most satisfied).

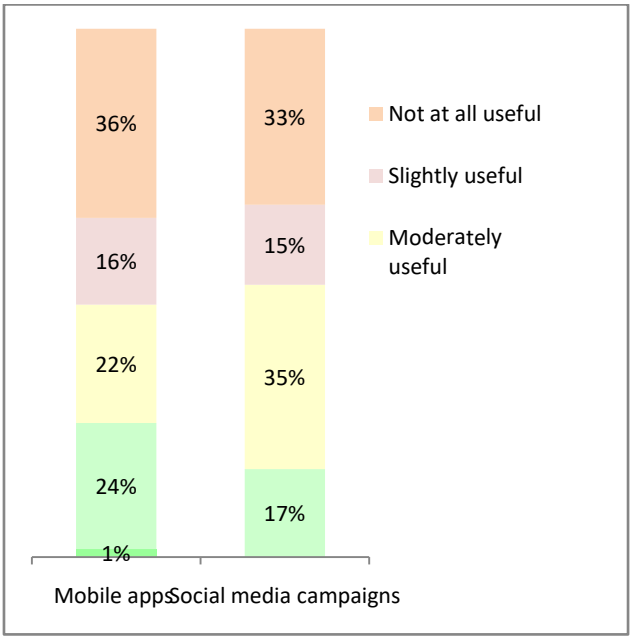


Interpretation:

E-detailing scored lower on Rep's comfort and understanding unique selling proposition of the brand.

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10. How useful are the various mobile apps and various social media campaigns launched by pharma companies?



11. What kind of mobile applications do pharma companies engage you with? Can you name and describe any such app which you found most useful in your professional/clinical experience?

Mobile apps names recalled by the doctor
Medscape App
Medline
mobile App by -Sun Pharma, Glenmark, Intas, Zydus, Cipla, Abbott, Femme Health, Aresto, Nestle, USV
Knowledge Genie App
Up to date App
1 mg App
CiplaMed App
Pastest App
Epocrates App
NbN2 App

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12. What are your expectations from a knowledge sharing app in your clinical practice?

Expectations from Knowledge sharing app
No time for mobile applications/Not prone to use apps
Apps with regular updates on Drug
Apps with Drug Details: MOA, side effects, contraindications
Apps which are User Friendly
Apps which include Patient awareness and knowledge
Apps Which gives Scientific Knowldege Update
Apps with Drug Details
Apps with Disease specific information
Apps which give access to latest Journals/research articles
Would prefer Google, E-mails and SMS for updates

Insights

After a comprehensive research and analysis about the various promotional/engagement initiatives involved in the sector of marketing and advertisement done to the health-care providers, it is observed that:

1. Among all the initiatives, Edu./Academic initiatives have taken the majority of importance followed by Patient engagement initiatives. However, other services like special services didn't get a considerate importance.
2. In the Education/Academic initiatives, the top initiatives like Textbooks, Subscriptions of journals, research articles and CMEs/DGMs are perceived relatively more important.
3. Around 78% of Physicians receive more than 2 CME invitations per month, while only 44% of the doctors attend 1 CME.
4. At patient level, Physicians prefer more of patient awareness programs, and less disease detection camps.
5. To recall brand names, Clinical Updates are most helpful, followed by Visual aid/ E-detailing, while In-clinical reminders tools are the least preferred.
6. Among the consultancy services, PMS is the most preferred initiative.
7. Sp. Services tools like clinical and general utility gifts are mostly preferred.
8. For Sales reps factors, communication skills is ranked the most important factor.
9. ~75% of Physicians prefer E-detailing over print detailing.
10. Very few Physicians find mobile apps and social media campaigns useful, however most are not able to recall/name any of the apps or campaigns.

VII. Recommendations

1. Within Education/academic initiatives, Latest Journals subscriptions and research articles should be provided regularly to ensure continuous literature up gradation.
2. To ensure participation at CMEs, plan CMEs at convenient time and venue. CMEs should be based on academically advanced or new topics with eminent speakers. Also CMEs/Conferences with accreditations and credit points are doctor's choice.
3. At Patient level, focus on awareness programs and patient Education material should be considered.
4. Among the brand promotional tools, focus should be emphasized on regular clinical updates. Moderate amount of brand reminder tools should be provided to the physicians.
5. Consultancy services should be done more effectively, focusing on advisory board meetings and PMS. Awareness and exposure to the consultancy agreements should be done in order to engage and attract the interested physicians.
6. E-detailing being the preferred medium, improve the proficiency of the sales reps for e-detailing.
7. Mobile apps for doctors can be launched with regular drug updates, apps with access to complete drug information and access to latest journals.

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