

Influence of Healthcare Advertising and Branding on Hospital Services

Vipin Jain*, V K Singh**

Abstract

Background: *The basic role of marketing is to establish the needs and wishes of patients and to achieve their marketing perspective through design, pricing, and communication. Second objective is to provide an appropriate product and services to the market. In this regard the most unique organizational and marketing capability is its ability to generate, maintain, improve, and protect its brand equity and value. In the time and era of globalisation and awareness patients participation in decision making has increased many folds.*

Materials and Methods: *A total of 12 hospitals were evaluated over a period of two years for this study. The hospitals selected had a minimum of 100 beds, with 5 intensive care units and should be at least 5 years old. Hospitals were had to have 5 specialist departments and at least 2 super specialised departments to be included in the survey. Hospitals were to have separate department and separate phone line to deal with cases of trauma and emergency. Hospitals with fully equipped ambulances (minimum 4) were only considered for the survey. The hospitals were to have a well-established web page which was open to make contact and leave a review.*

Results: *Out of the 12 hospitals 5 (42%) had made an approach on a local level and state level. 4 had a local, state and national approach (33%); rest 3 hospitals (25%) had approach in all aspects from local to global dimension.*

Conclusion: *In conclusion, it becomes important to understand that, it should never be forgotten that health care facility is not any other commodity to be advertised as it involves life and sincere trust of the patient.*

Keywords: *Advertised, Marketing*

Introduction

In the current scenario of healthcare system the changes are seen at a rapid rate due to the increase of demand as the awareness and accessibility has reached to a larger scale of population. Some other factors responsible of such drastic change are increase in market transparency, increase in competition among healthcare providers, increasing demands for capital investment, and increase in the number of private hospitals and also limited budgets of public hospitals. Considering such circumstances the healthcare providers should consider marketing principles to satisfy their clients more actively.¹ The basic role of marketing is to establish the needs and wishes of patients and to achieve

their marketing perspective through design, pricing, and communication. Second objective is to provide an appropriate product and services to the market.² In this regard the most unique organizational and marketing capability is its ability to generate, maintain, improve, and protect its brand equity and value.³ In the time and era of globalisation and awareness patients participation in decision making has increased many folds. So, marketing plays a vital role in creating a good brand image for these healthcare providing organisations. In this regard, efforts are made by the healthcare providers to increase their market presence and get established as brands.⁴ By creating a famous hospital brand which is a valuable tool for managers to recruitment and retain doctors and nurses, a better and a more experienced staff is employed leading to the enhanced quality of the medical services. This leads to increased customer satisfaction, ultimately leading to the main goal of marketing of healthcare services.⁵ Generating itself as brand has become a basic necessity for any health care provider, in this regard it becomes important to understand the aspects of healthcare and development strategies for hospitals to establish as a brand.

Materials And Methods

A total of 12 hospitals were evaluated over a period of two years for this study. The hospitals selected had a minimum of 100 beds,

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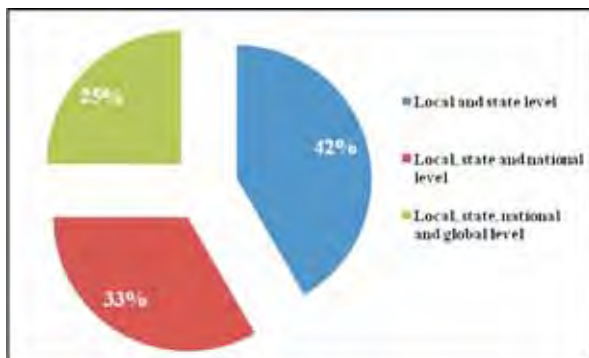
with 5 intensive care units and should be at least 5 years old. Hospitals were had to have 5 specialist departments and at least 2 super specialised departments to be included in the survey. Hospitals were to have separate department and separate phone line to deal with cases of trauma and emergency. Hospitals with fully equipped ambulances (minimum 4) were only considered for the survey. The hospitals were to have a well-established web page which was open to make contact and leave a review. The analysis was done under three main titles, namely; (a) dimension, (b) strategies, (c) results and benefits. Under the category of dimension, it was evaluated that to what extent did the hospital had made an attempt to publicise itself. Dimensions were evaluated on a local level, state level, national level and global platform. Under the category of strategies, it was evaluated to what extent did the hospitals had publicised themselves including the print media, electronic media, mobile applications and one to one meetings/free check-up camps . Considering the results, an effort was made to understand whether the results are in accord to the efforts made by the extent of marketing or not. All study material was collected from the hospitals and later on evaluated electronically. All the data was arranged in a tabulated form.

Results

Out of the 12 hospitals 5 (42%) had made an approach on a local level and state level. 4 had a local, state and national approach (33%) ; rest 3 hospitals (25%) had approach in all aspects from local to global dimensions. (Graph 1)

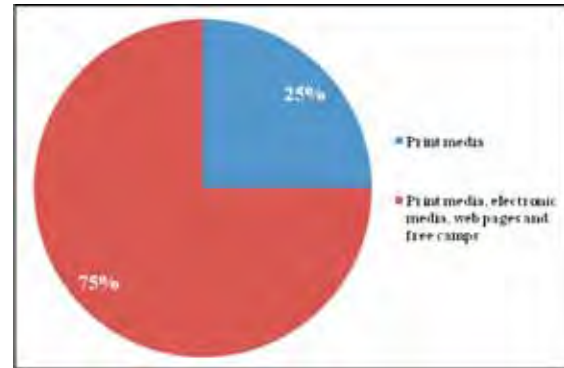
Considering the strategies involved in publicising and brand generation, 3 hospitals (25%) adopted only print media. Rest 9 hospitals (75%) had made serious efforts from print media, electronic media, mobile applications, and official websites and through free check-up camps to establish themselves as brands. (Graph 2)

Graph 1: Indicating the area of approach



The results so achieved by the two earlier method analyses were not at all surprising. The 5 hospitals limiting themselves to local level of publicising (42%) were hardly able to create a turnover of up-to or less than 100,000 INR per annum with a 12 new patients on an average examined daily. Almost 5 hospitals (42%) that publicised themselves as a brand national and globally were

Graph 2: Method used for publicity by different hospitals



able to create a turnover over 200,000 INR with an average of 30 new patients examined daily. On 2 hospitals (16%) were such that which were able to establish themselves as an international brand and also did received patients throughout the world (medical tourism). Thus, creating a turnover above 500,000 INR and over 50 patients examined on a daily basis. (Table 1)

Table 1: Average turnover and patient OPD levels of hospitals.

Area Of Approach	n	Daily average patients in OPD	Turnover per annum in INR
Local and state level	5	12.00	? 1,00,00,000.00
Local, state and national level	5	30.00	? 2,00,00,000.00
Local, state, national and global level	2	50.00	? 5,00,00,000.00

Discussion

In this analysis 12 hospitals were evaluated in the aspect of healthcare branding in hospitals and other medical specialities. A systematic analysis presented that the branding had a number of unique dimensions. The most commonly discussed dimension in these studies was brand equity or brand value. Thus, brand equity can be called as the final results of any branding process. Brand equity creates a good and reliable image in the minds of patients and get them go back to the same hospital to get the service next time. Discussing the results of this study, brand equity had been considered equally important and highly profitable in pharmaceutical industry as well as in of primary healthcare sector. In regard to pharmaceutical industry the brand loyalty, brand awareness, and perceived quality affect positively on brand equity.⁶ In addition, study analysis in private sector gave a view that brand equity affects brand preference to a large extent.⁷ In other service providing industries, the development of brand equity and its effective factors is promoted which results in the importance of its role in branding as a unique service.⁸⁻¹⁰ Another important factor of branding is brand loyalty, which is effective on patients. The factor of brand loyalty depends mainly upon patients’ satisfaction, quality of service, and

responsibility accepted by the healthcare providers. As soon as the patient becomes faithful to a hospital brand, he/she will not confuse in choosing the best and most legit option for getting health care. It is now well established fact that for creation of a trusted brand, its introduction to the patients, facilitating and understanding for the patient, and gaining patients' attention, trust, and ultimately loyalty, branding methods for medical services in the field of brand names, reliability, and communication with the target patients, accurate timing of activities, and sober advertising can be impressive. So with the above evidence this can be established that, as the health status improves it increases patient's satisfaction on the other hand, and in return their loyalty to hospital also increases many folds. Thus, by developing a sense of loyalty, patients' willingness to receive hospital services increase and they will also recommend that particular hospital to others. Now, the tendency of medical staff, especially doctors and nurses, toward hospitals being used as a branding strategy tend to be more regarding the healthcare presentation. In some studies it was established that unlike store image, brand trust and satisfaction are also absolutely on brand loyalty.¹¹ Even some studies suggested a significant relationship between the three items of price, advertising, and sales development strategies and the dimension of loyalty of customer.¹² At the end of the day hospital branding did improve clinical and financial performance finally leading to branding of hospital can develop and provide a healthy competition in the healthcare industry using brand equity, which has been established as the ultimate goal of marketing.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis suggest the importance of healthcare branding and its unique place in the development of healthcare marketing. In this effect, the healthcare policy making agencies need to understand this aspect on macro-level and hospital administrators at a micro-level the dimensions which influence healthcare branding and reallocate their disputes from each other. It becomes important to understand that, it should never be forgotten that health care facility is not any other commodity to be advertised as it involves life and sincere trust of the patient.

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