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Positioning and Promotional Strategies of Pharmaceuticals in India

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Abstract

Pharmaceutical industry is one of leading and fast growing industry in India having various brands as over the counter (OTC) and prescription products. It is a closely government regulated sector so the product promotion is having legal boundaries. Every organisation designs different strategies for the achieving maximum market share. The positioning is buzz word in today's scenario, which creates a perception of product among customer and sales promotion is an attractive way for market middle man and target groups for completing the sales. So in competitive environment the focus on positioning and promotional strategies is become more important component of marketing mix. This article talks about the market environment for pharmaceutical product and different positioning and promotional strategies use by pharmaceutical organisations to build the brand value.

Keywords: Positioning, Promotional, Pharmaceuticals, Strategies

Introduction

Marketing strategies are playing a key role in success of any of brand in the competitive environment. Pharmaceutical products are unique in terms are promotion and positioning strategies because only OTC product can be directly promoted to the public where as in the prescription product sale are generated through medical professionals, so special kind of approach is required, for individual brand looking the end use of the product. In entire marketing mix the position of product and promotional strategies are boosting the sale volume and market ranking of the brand.

Positioning strategies of Pharmaceuticals

Positioning is usually a cumulative effect of small consistent activities which create positive or negative perception about a person or product. It refers to certain mental perception of offering. According to SubrotoSen Gupta "*Positioning is the act of communicating company's offer so that it occupies a distinct and valuable Place in the customer's mind.*"^[1] Basically Positioning is the strategy of differentiation. Which focus on creating a different and separate space of its own product of brand in the mind of target customer, so that whenever the customer recalls the product, the firm's brand is the first to be recalled. According to AI Rise & Jack Trout "*Positioning is not what you do to a product but what you do to mind of the prospect. That is you positioning the product in the mind of prospect*". There are various ways to position a product in customer's Black Box. Some Common ways used by pharmaceutical organisation for positioning are as follows:

- **By Emphasizing Tangible Benefits:** Specific Feature offered by brand that may be related to price, distribution, quality or any other unique benefit e.g. Colgate toothpaste offers benefits of preventing cavities and ensuring fresh breath where as Pepsodent is Germi-check to prevent and kills the germs though out the day. Promise focus on the having clove, a feature that differentiates is from the leader^[2].
- **Use Situation:** By finding the differentuse situation from the existing brand of competitors. Most common way to position pharmaceuticals. Some time also supported by R&D e.g. Aspirin tablet used as analgesic and antipyretic from long back but now days also use for hypertensive patients to prevent the shock. Some antibiotics are promoted for different therapeutic situation e.g. Norflox for U.T.I. infection^[3].

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- **Competitive Positioning:** This is Strategy of placing a firm's brand next to the leader in the market and trying to uproot it on specific tangible variable e.g. Stamlo (Amlodipin brand of Dr. reddy's) Positioned as number one amlodipine in market.
- **Lifestyle Positioning:** Position a brand on lifestyle concept contemporary or futuristic e.g. sugar free from Cadila [4].

Positioning is most commonly and successfully uses strategy for pharmaceutical products in brand building exercise. Most of the time is has been built around the technical aspect of the product. But also different other approaches are available, which are successful explored by the marketer to build the brand equity. Market positing is designed for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive and desirable place, relative to competitor's product in the mind of prospective customer [5].

Promotional stagiest of Pharmaceuticals

Promotion is a key consideration in strategic planning and it should be viewed as such, to capitalize and cash marketing opportunities. To a large extent the use of the promotion element is structured by environment, especially the nature of buyer demand. Demand is one of the most important driving forces for movement of product [6]. That is why promotion is used to shift the demand and expedite the buyer decision process. Promotion has catalytic function opportunities for developing and effective promotional plan therefore, starts with an analysis of markets and understanding of underlying forces and the firm's goals. Promotional decision must be based on organizational goals and marketing objectives [7]. The logical sequence of promotional decisions from a strategic perspective involves the following steps:-

- Identifying target markets and audiences.
- Determining promotional objectives and tasks.
- Preparing a promotion budget.
- Selecting the Promotional mix.
- Evaluating and implementing the promotional strategy.
- Feedback and review of strategy.

The current scenario of pharmaceutical marketing in India presents, an undifferentiated and difficult to recognize picture. Many Pharma companies are not only turning out a number of me-too products but also formulating and implementing me-too promotional strategies. Consequently the noise level in the market place is at its highest level [8] for a product to stand out in the market place, it become necessary for marketer to first ensure, that his product is heard above the current noise level. That is quite a difficult task, which is a promotional challenge. Marketer is required to be truly imaginative and innovative in formulating his promotional strategies and have the energy to implement them. It will create the needed synergy, i.e. the competitive edge to cut through and chaos in the market place [9].

The most commonly used promotional marketing strategies of pharmaceuticals are personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and publicity.

- **Personal Selling:** Medical representative detailing the company's product to doctors, with the help of visual-aid, leaf behind literatures, product monograph, samples of product, gifts etc.

- **Advertising:** Preparation of visual-aid, literatures of product for scientific and marketing purpose, product monograph to assist medial representative in their detailing efforts, advertising in special media like medical journals and souvenirs and medial symposiums. Advertising in print, radio and television medial for OTC product is most common practice [10].
- **Sales Promotion:** Deciding on special bonus offers, free gifts and goods to traders. Deciding on physician samples and gifts cum under preview of sales promotion.
- **Publicity:** Organizing medial symposium and seminars, conducting post marketing clinical trials of products, conducting exhibitions and other professional activities which are method to give publicity of brand and corporate image [11].

Promotion is most important element of marketing mix to build a brand for both OTC and branded formulation so it is major thrust area of marketing department of pharmaceutical companies.

Conclusion

Positioning and promotion is crucial aspect of market mix and marketing strategies. Pharmaceutical products are positioned on tangible benefits, different used situation, competition in market and life style of target population. On the basis of positioning and other marketing variables sales promotion strategies are designed. In pharmaceuticals emphasis on personal selling, for prescription products where as advertising is important tool for OTC products. Sales promotion and publicity by different method helps both type of product in branding.

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