

A Study on e-Detailing in Promotion of Pharmaceutical Products: Views of Sales Force in Lucknow City

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Abstract

E-detailing is one of such selling processes recently adopted by pharmaceutical companies in India for communicating product messages to the HCPs (Health Care Professionals). As this is a new way of communication, it is necessary to identify the key success factors in the pharmaceutical industry for adopting e detailing as marketing and communication tool. The purpose of this study is to uncover the factors influencing the scope and acceptability of e-detailing concepts recently started by pharmaceutical companies in India. As viewed by the sales force, internal factors like easy to use e-detailing, easy interaction, top management support, type of products, improved quality of work, quick task accomplishment, clear and understandable interaction, managerial readiness and operational capabilities are the most important factors responsible for proper acceptability of e-detailing programme. Other stimuli which work as external factors are brand acceptance, audience acceptance, business environment, market accessibility, market trends, convenience mode of communication and relationship with customers. This has a positive impact on overall business of the companies. Results of this study will help pharmaceutical companies working in India to understand factors influencing scope and acceptability of e-detailing as an important promotional tool.

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Pharmaceutical companies may plan their promotional strategies based on the discussions.

Key words: *E-detailing, E-marketing, Factor analysis, Health care, Health care professionals, PSRs*

Introduction

E-detailing can be best described as the use of information technology in the field of pharmaceutical detailing. It is becoming highly popular among pharmaceutical companies because it maximizes the time of the sales force, cuts down the cost of detailing and increases physician prescribing. Thus, the application of information technology is proving to be beneficial to both physicians and pharmaceutical companies. When e-detailing was introduced in 1996, it was limited to the US; however, numerous other countries soon adopted this novel approach to detailing and now it is popular in many developed nations. (*Isaac D Montoyain Expert Opinion on Drug Safety*)(2008). Historically, product detailing has been the most important way for pharmaceutical companies to communicate drug information to physicians. Unfortunately, traditional methods of detailing are no longer as effective as they once were. Pharmaceutical companies face mounting competition where physicians have less time to spend with sales representatives. Furthermore, current detailing methods do not provide physicians with information that they value when they want it: one study found that 78 percent of doctors feel that the product information they receive from sales representatives is biased, and nearly half say that the timing of detailing calls is inconvenient. The migration of detailing services to an electronic channel that physician can access to get the information they want, where they want, at a time that is most convenient for them (e-Detailing), can decrease detailing costs while increasing revenue. e-Detailing can be an important tool that helps pharmaceutical

companies improve physician relationships and, in turn, build market share. Many pharmaceutical companies have e-Detailing initiatives under way and physician interest appears to be growing.

In this research, researchers have tried to investigate the factors responsible for acceptance and execution of e-detailing as a marketing tool by sales force of numerous pharmaceutical companies in Lucknow city.

Research Methodology

The study is based on Primary data, collected from sales professionals of Pharmaceutical Company in Lucknow city. To collect primary data, “Survey research approach” was adopted for the project and for this communication approach; personal interview of the respondents was conducted. For the collection of data, a properly structured questionnaire was used. Further, it is not feasible to go for a population surveys due to the numerous sales force and the scattered location. Hence, researchers had gone for intelligent sampling.

In this research, researchers surveyed 150 respondents who are using e-detailing as marketing tool for promotion of pharmaceutical products in Lucknow city. In this research stratified and convenience sampling method has been used for sampling procedures. There are some limitations for the study that should be carefully taken into consideration with respect to interpretation and implementation.

1. Due to time and cost factor only 150 professionals were surveyed.
2. The study is limited to Lucknow city and all the information furnished by the respondent was treated as correct.

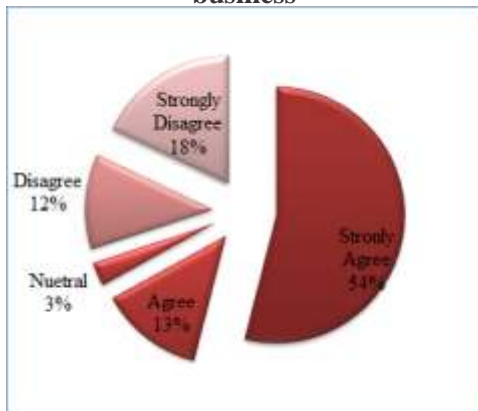
Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This analysis is divided into two parts viz., internal factors and external factors that are responsible for acceptance of e-detailing as

promotional tool for promotion of pharmaceutical products. This analysis is done by using pie chart as analytical tool.

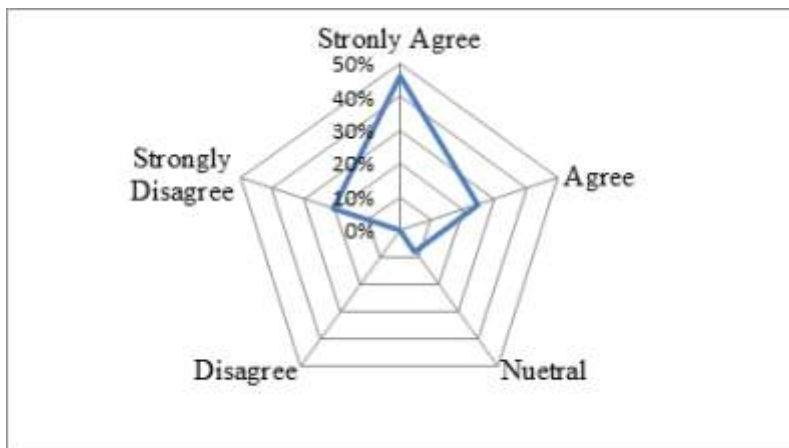
Internal Factors

Chart 1: Opinion about the use of e-marketing tool for conducting business



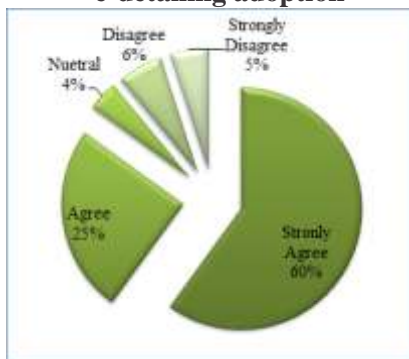
Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents 54 percent 'strongly agree' and 13 percent 'agree' that e-detailing tool for conducting business is easy to use. The rest 31 percent are using e-detailing as promotional tool but does not agree with the factor that e-detailing is useful for conducting business. Remaining 3 percent are neutral on above factor.

Chart 2: Opinion about the interaction with the target customers through e-detailing tools



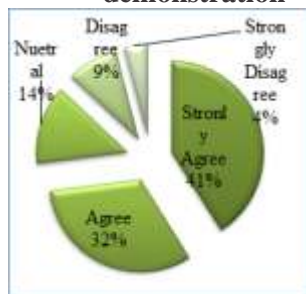
Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents, 46 percent 'strongly agree' and 25 percent 'agree' that using e-detailing tool helps them to interact with customers easily. Rest 21 percent respondents use e-detailing but not satisfied that e-detailing helps them to interact with customers easily. Remaining 8 percent are neutral on above factor.

Chart 3: Opinion about the support from Top Management for e-detailing adoption



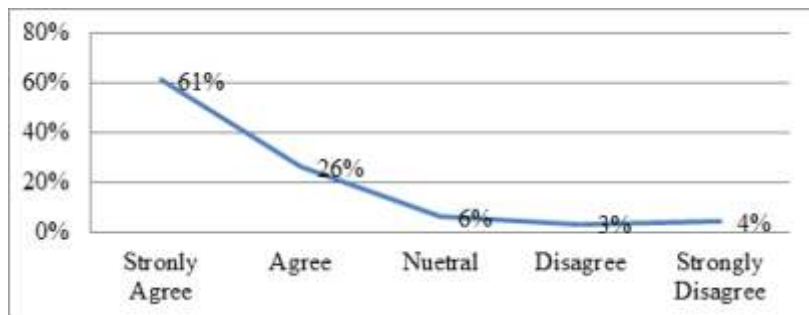
Interpretation: More than 85 percent respondents 'agree' that they get sufficient support from top management for adoption of e-detailing for promotion of their pharmaceutical products. It shows that top management played an important role in the adoption of e-detailing as promotional tool and encourage their employees for maximum utilization of e-marketing tool. Only 11 percent sales personnel do not agree with above factor but still they use e-detailing due to some other factors. Remaining 4 percent are not able to answer the above question.

Chart 4: Opinion about the adoption of e-detailing for product demonstration



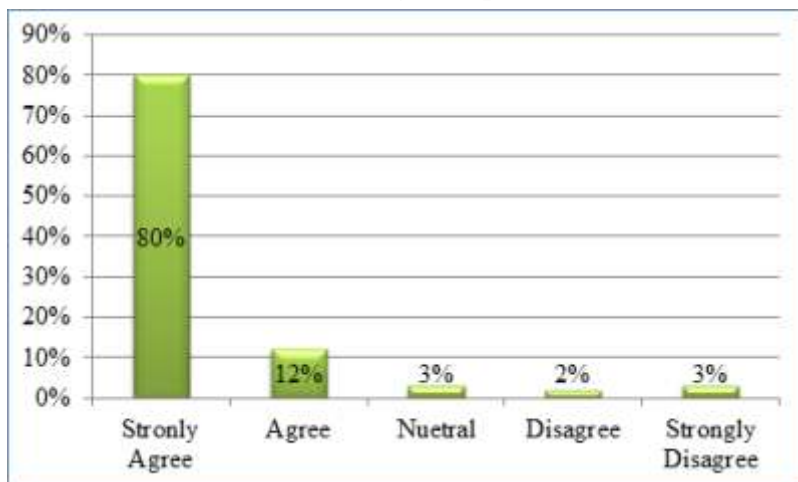
Interpretation: Among the 73 percent respondents 'agree' that they have such type of products that support e-detailing to demonstrate them easily in front of their customers. They think that e-detailing helps them in easy demonstration of their brands. Rest 13 percent do not think that product played any role in the adoption of e-detailing as promotional tool. 14 percent respondents are neutral on above factor.

Chart 5: Effect of e-detailing on the quality of work



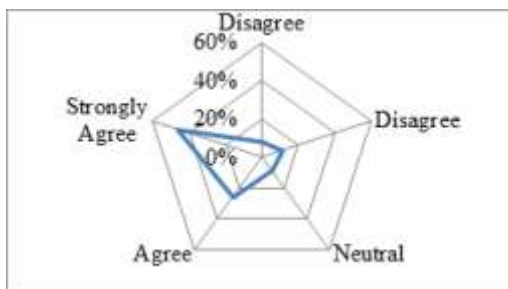
Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents 87 percent 'agree' that e-detailing improves their quality of work they have to perform on daily basis. They think e-detailing helps them to persuade their customers easily. Remaining 7 percent sales personnel do not agree with above factor and 6 percent are neutral on above question.

Chart 6: e-detailing and speed of work



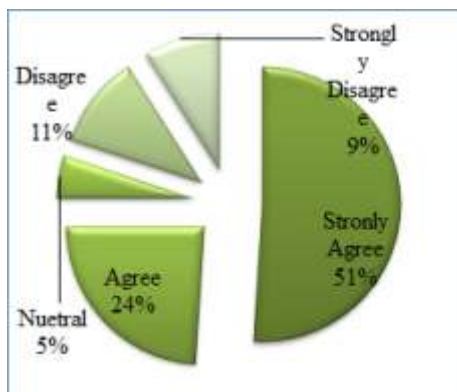
Interpretation: More than 90 percent respondents 'agree' that e-detailing enables them to accomplish their task more quickly. In the present scenario physicians provide very less time to sales personnel for detailing. In this situation, e-detailing played vital role in detailing of their brand. Only 5 percent are 'not satisfied' respondents and 3 percent are neutral on above question.

Chart 7: e-detailing support for interaction with the customers



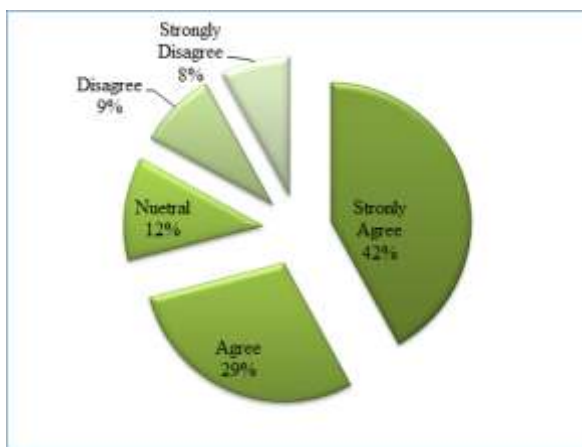
Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents 46 percent 'strongly agree' and 26 percent 'agree' that interaction with customers with e-detailing is clear and understandable. 72 percent respondents 'agree' that interaction with e-detailing is clear and understandable. They are able to present their brand more effectively in front of their customers. 19 percent sales personnel do not agree with above statement and remaining 9 percent are neutral on above question.

Chart 8: Managerial Readiness for e-detailing

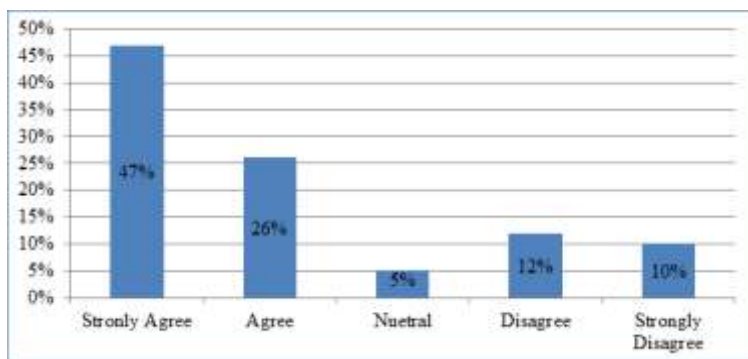


Interpretation: More than 75 percent of the respondents either strongly agree or agree that their higher ups have extended all support and co-operation for the adoption of e-detailing in product promotion. It means that manager played a key role in adoption of e-detailing. They take follow up on regular basis and ready to adopt e-detailing in their routine work. 20 percent respondents do not agree with above factor and 5 percent are neutral on above question.

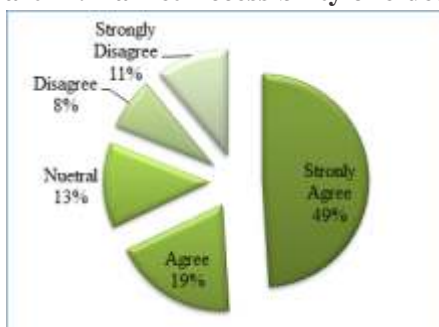
Chart 9:Operational Capabilities of the organisation to adopt e-detailing



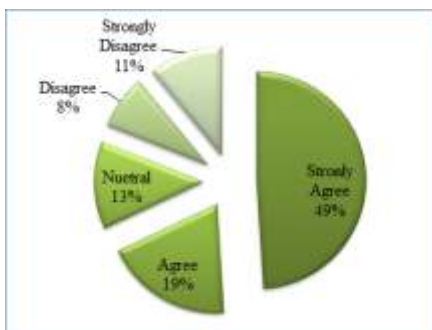
Interpretation: Operational capabilities of the organization is another factor which motivates sales personnel to adopt e-detailing as marketing tool for promotion of their brands. It can be seen in the above chart that 71 percent respondents 'agree' that their organising is capable of adopting e-detailing as an important tool for product promotion and remaining 17 percent 'disagree' while 12 percent are not able to give their views on above question.

External Factors:**Chart 10: Audience Acceptance of e-detailing**

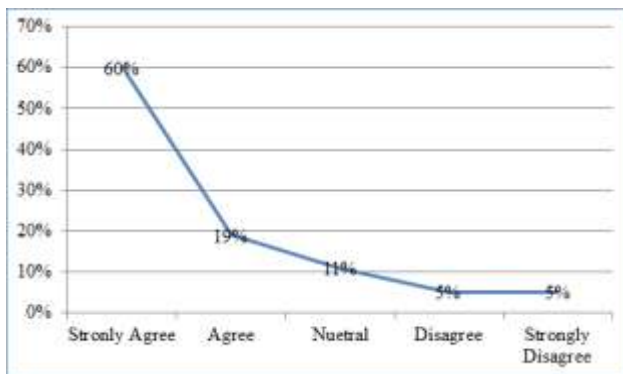
Interpretation: Understanding and support of health care professionals also play an important role in the success of e-detailing as a marketing tool. It is heartening that 73 percent of the respondents strongly agree or agree that acceptability of e-detailing by health care influence is the key for its success. However, 22 percent of respondents feel that audience does not play any role in the adoption of e-detailing as a promotional tool. While 5 percent are neutral on the above question.

Chart 11: Market Accessibility of e-detailing

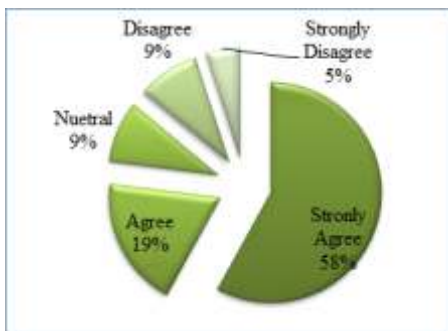
Interpretation: About 68 percent of respondents perceive that market acceptability is the key reason for adoption of e-detailing as a promotional tool of their pharmaceutical products. Rest 19 percent of respondents do not agree with the above statement but they use e-detailing in their daily promotional activities. While 13 percent are neutral as they were not able to respond to the above question.

Chart 12:e-detailing as a convient mode of communication

Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents 74 percent respondents find e-detailing a convenience mode of communication with their customers. It means that many of the respondents find e- detailing as convenience mode of communication while 11 percent do not find e-detailing as easy as traditional detailing. Rest 15 percent respondents are neutral on above statement.

Chart 13:Brand Acceptance in the Market

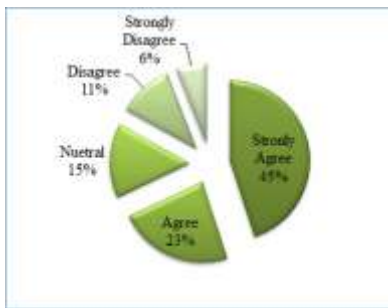
Interpretation: Nearly 79 percent respondents feel that brand name of the product and organization motivates them to adopt e-detailing for promotion of their brands. Further, brand of the organization played vital role in acceptance of e- detailing among physicians that motivates sales personnel to adopt e-detailing as promotional tool. Rest 10 percent do not agree with above statement and 11 percent are not able to respond.

Chart 14: Relationship with target customers and e-detailing

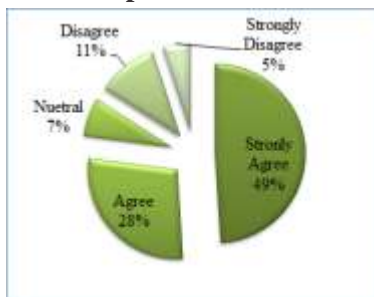
Interpretation: More than 77 percent respondents agree that relationship with their target customers helps them to adopt e-detailing as a marketing tool for promotion of their products. Relationship with the customer is the key to take time for promotion of their brands that motivates sales professional to adopt technology as promotional tool. 14 percent respondents are using e-detailing but not satisfied with the above statement and remaining 9 percent are neutral on above factor.

Chart 15: e-detailing and Competitive Pressure

Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents 47 percent respondents agree that competitive pressure is responsible for adoption for e-detailing. 40 percent respondents disagree that competitive pressure played any role in adoption of e-detailing as marketing tool. This is the one does not factor which satisfy most of the respondents. This indicates that, competitive pressure does not have any key role in the adoption of e-detailing as promotional tool.

Chart 16: Business environment

Interpretation: Among 150 respondents 68 percent respondents agree that present business environment that fastly adopting technology is the main reason to adopt e-detailing as marketing tool. It shows that technology also finds place in pharmaceutical marketing as it is positively affecting other industries. While 17 percent sales professional do not agree that business environment motivates them to adopt e-detailing as promotional tool. Rest 15 percent are neutral on above statement.

Chart 17: Response to Market Trends

Interpretation: Out of 150 respondents 77 percent respondents feels that current market scenario motivates them to adopt e-detailing as a promotional tool for the promotion of their pharmaceutical products. Market is well responding to e-marketing that is why sales professionals adopt e-detailing as promotional tool. While 16 percent respondents do not find market trends played any role in adoption of e-detailing by them. Rest 7 percent respondents are neutral on above statement.

Findings and Conclusion

As viewed by the sales personnel, various internal and external factors are responsible for adoption of e- detailing as promotional tool. As viewed by the sales force, internal factors like easy to use e-detailing, easy interaction, top management support, type of products, improved quality of work, quick task accomplishment, clear and understandable interaction, managerial readiness and operational capabilities are the most important factors responsible for proper acceptability of e-detailing program. Other stimuli which work as external factors are brand acceptance, audience acceptance, business environment, market accessibility, market trends, convenience mode of communication and relationship with customers. This has a positive impact on overall business of the companies. Results of this study will help the pharmaceutical companies working in India to understand the factors influencing the scope and acceptability of e-detailing as an important promotional tool. Pharmaceutical companies may chart their strategic communication in line with the same. The above discussed factors played vital role in adoption of e- detailing as promotional tool. Most of the respondents are not satisfied with all the factors but they are satisfied with either of the above discussed factors. Despite, they are using e-detailing as promotional tool.

This paper has identified the factors responsible for acceptance and execution of e-detailing as a pharmaceutical marketing communication tool. These factors may be tested in entire country and intensity may be analyzed beyond city boundaries.

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