

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2021, Vol. 2, No. 2, 108 – 114

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.02.02.04>

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## Research Article

### Shifts in Pharma-Marketing Trends in Post COVID-19 Era

Md. Mahfuzur Rahman Khan<sup>1\*</sup>, Kona Basak<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Social Welfare and Research, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh

<sup>2</sup> Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, North South University, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh

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#### Article history:

Submission February 2021

Revised February 2021

Accepted February 2021

#### \*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[mahfuzur.rkm@gmail.com](mailto:mahfuzur.rkm@gmail.com)

#### ABSTRACT

The study reveals that there will be shift in pharma-marketing trends in post COVID-19 era. The crisis of COVID-19, which responded in lockdowns and social distancing, highlighted in some key elements in the digital transformation of healthcare. Therewith the marketing techniques changes totally in the field of pharmaceuticals. As, this is an explorative research so qualitative data has been used for conducting the research. A total number of 100 practitioners' such as doctors, physicians, psychiatrist, medical representatives and pharmacist were selected for the interview via judgment sampling technique. The time-frame of this study is in between March 2020 to December 2020. The deductive approach is used in reaching the conclusive decision on the shift in pharma-marketing in post COVID-19 era. Review of literature asserted about negative impacts of disruptions throughout the pandemics in past, though every pandemics created new opportunities. So to survive and to sustain pharmaceutical field and conjugate industries should now focus more on new marketing tactics, to counter COVID-19 side effects. Findings of the study educe that pharmaceutical industry could encounter the global pandemic by the shifts in pharma marketing strategies including advanced marketing, digital marketing, e-detailing customer relationship management, e-sampling, innovative work behavior, telemedicine revolution in order to promoting product value and expediting prescriptions to the target consumer. So, coping up with the new normal and digitalizing the possible aspects of health care and medicines including techniques of pharma-marketing can be advantageous for both individuals and organizations.

*Keywords:* Changing trends of marketing, Pharma-marketing, Digitalization of healthcare, Post COVID-19

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#### Introduction

The outbreak of Coronavirus can be described as one of the biggest health disasters of the 21st century. Within a very short period,

the Coronavirus (COVID-19) affected almost every country around the world as the number of infected people and deaths is increasing day by day. From March of 2020 to the later

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#### How to cite:

Khan, M. M. R., & Kona, B. (2021). Shifts in Pharma-Marketing Trends in Post COVID-19 Era. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research* 2 (2): 108 – 114. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.02.02.04

periods, countries were trying hard to slow the spread of the Coronavirus by implementing appropriate measures. As an international response to the Coronavirus outbreak, many countries were strictly maintaining 'lockdown', which means people were under various restrictions of free movement during the pandemic crisis. As many believed that such measures were effective in slowing down the COVID-19 outbreak and saving countless lives. Many countries imposed nationwide public holidays (unofficial lockdown) and restriction on public movement during the crisis, but things were not that easy for a developing nation to implement such kind of lockdown and restrictions that result in economic shut down if imposed for a long time (Khan, 2020). People were advised to stay at home and maintain social distance. Most required public services, national and private health services were kept open and providing non-stop support to the people. The effects of the pandemic goes beyond the loss of thousands of lives and now consider as economic and social phenomena. People worldwide enjoyed a form of partial lockdown for several weeks to stop the spread of COVID-19. Only hospitals, kitchen markets, drug stores and other essential services remained open that time. Early response to COVID-19, for example temporary lockdown, shutdown of market and institutions, work from home circumstances, the new normal way of living and social distancing, have impacted on every aspects of the countries.

Industries and organizations, who resume their entryways just after the first wave of Corona pandemic planned intellectually to return actually to their workspaces, the time has come to draw the primary exercises of this extraordinary emergency of organizations and businesses. Pharmaceutical industry encounters the global pandemic by dint of shifting in pharma marketing strategies including advanced marketing, digital marketing etc. to promote product value and expediting prescriptions to the target consumer. Modern techniques and advanced tools progress the ultimate marketing for promotion, selling and creating market value. The real impact of this crisis is yet unknown, still businesses and indus-

tries shifted their tactics and innovate aggressively to adapt and to survive. Most of the studies on COVID-19 are of almost same kind like economic, demographic, and clinical (Lin et al., 2020). There are a limited number of study which had been conducted on the extent of the shift in pharma-marketing in post COVID-19 era. Keeping that on head it motivate the authors to do this study on shift in pharma-marketing in post COVID-19 era. Regardless of so many negative impacts, a few positives can also be viewed and that are being discussed in this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a worldwide wellbeing emergency influencing all the aspects. Individuals have now confronted with numerous difficulties from the danger of getting the infection itself and its effect on overstretched wellbeing administrations, to the thump on repercussions from regulation measures on work, wellbeing, training and income. The effects of the pandemic goes beyond the loss of thousands of lives and now consider as economic and social crisis (Khan, 2020). When most companies decided to decrease their marketing budget during the global pandemic, the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry knew now was not the time to slow down their strategies. Where other industries failed to survive and stay in business during this time, the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry stepped up and continued to do what it does best. They try to be digitalized in an immense manner to help their patients continue to receive the care and treatment they need, even during a global crisis. In some certain countries, just after the lockdown get lifted in a staged way to resuscitate the economy, numerous pharma organizations wanted to open up its advertising and deals exercises in non-regulation zones.

However, the business appears to be partitioned on permitting the field power to make visits to hospitals and emergency clinics. However to sustain and to survive in long run, pharmaceutical field and conjugate industries focused on new marketing tactics like advanced marketing, digital marketing, e-detailing, tele-

medicine etc. to reach out to their targeted consumer. This certain shifts in pharma marketing may be continued even after the end of COVID-19 era.

### **Literature Review**

The definition of pharma marketing can be states as the actions which are focused on making physicians and doctors as well as the general public aware of new and existing pharmaceutical and health companies, products and brands. It might incorporate the giveaway of tests, point by point item writing, sickness the executives projects, and backing material for patients, web activities, and occasions/gatherings for psychiatrist, physicians and doctors a lot. The development of lifestyle, economy and health-education has definitely influenced the medical services frameworks creating critical changes and forcing pharma promoting as a crucial component of pharmaceutical and well-being brands. Modern pharma marketing provides a framework that acknowledges the challenges of the industry's shifting reality and prepares organizations to meet unpredictability with agility. Pharma marketing includes a perplexing connection including industry, associations, and people engaged with medical care, pharmaceuticals, health brands and hospitals & clinics (Lokesh, 2014).

Pharma companies target medical care experts, representatives and medical services associations, and these organizations, alongside those that fabricate other clinical items and medical items, target different medical services associations and people to produce straightforward deals. Drug industry is relatively an unexpected idea in comparison to the wide range of various business portions in the feeling of the people it targets. At the point when the majority of the organizations focus on the end clients straightforwardly, the drug business plans different limited time methodologies chiefly focusing on the specialists, for them being their superb clients and appreciating the force of remedy. o diminish the danger of spread of COVID-19, many state-level specialists' affiliations have conveyed to pharma organizations just as clinical salespeople relationship about the suspension of all visits from the delegates

of pharma organizations. From a pharma-marketing point of view, the way toward giving medical care administrations should be directed in full consistence with quiet prerequisites, exercises are being intended to meet these necessities. Nonetheless, accomplishing such an objective infers the recognizable proof of all purposes of obstruction of medical care staff with the medical services administration shoppers and the appraisal of the degree to which the exercises completed at these focuses compare to the requirements and assumptions communicated by the patients. Promoting or marketing the pharma products and consultation of doctors toward customers, clinicians, doctors, drug stores etc. pioneers who thusly create interest in medications, gadgets, testing, and different administrations. With such changes in pharma-marketing, organizations must build predictive marketing platforms with access to rich first- and third-party data and know how to mine that data for insights into behavior and barriers. Pharma marketers must establish a very deep customer insight to market in a differentiated way in the new era.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This paper discusses on the shift in pharma-marketing trends in post COVID-19 era. Pharmaceutical field and conjugate industries already focused on new marketing tactics like advanced marketing, digital marketing, e-detailing, telemedicine etc. to reach out to their targeted consumer. This certain shifts in pharma marketing may be continued even after the end of COVID-19 era. Subsequently, it's a decent an ideal opportunity for pharma to attempt to dominate elective arrive at outs to specialists. It appears to be unavoidable that the pharma & health marketing in post COVID-19 will see a change from its conventional practice.

### **Research Method**

This is an explorative research. Qualitative data has been used for conducting the research. As qualitative research helps to produce detailed findings where no previous or secondary data is available and also helps to produce findings beyond the immediate margins of the specific study (Mack et al., 2005); therefore, to

gain a stronger understanding of the underlying insights of online learning during a pandemic situation like Corona outbreak authors decided to conduct the study as exploratory research and qualitative in nature. For carried out the present research only secondary sources of data are used for analysis and interpretation and to develop the theoretical framework. A total number of 100 practitioners' such as doctors, physicians, psychiatrist, medical representatives and pharmacist were selected for the interview via judgment sampling technique. The authors connected the respondents from different hospitals and clinics. The total sample group was divided into two main clusters e.g.

Cluster-A: A total number of 78 practitioners, living in city or any suburb area during the COVID-19 phase one period (March 2020 to June 2020).

Cluster-B: A total number of 22 practitioners, living in rural areas, mainly left the cities when the lockdown was announced.

An in-depth interview technique was used to collect the data. A set of semi-structured questionnaires was installed and the interviews were conducted through phone calls and mobile applications such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Viber. Among the total of 100 interview sessions, 35 interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents. The time-frame of this study is in between March 2020 to December 2020. Deductive approach is used in reaching the conclusive decision. This particular study endows the shift in pharma-marketing in post COVID-19 era.

## Result and Discussion

The current pandemic hits the existing or near term marketing and investment plans which is the indicator of pharma marketer commitments which is in adjustable and evolving circumstances. Social separating, lockdowns, limitations on development and an overall hesitance to go outside are obviously issues for pharma marketing to come over. Indeed, the effect of COVID-19 on clinical preliminaries was referred to as the second greatest worry for the area. Companies are navigating the new realities with more effective way in order to complementing new online strategies

for accessing more physicians and representatives. The workflow has improved based on the online trainings, digital conferences etc. Marketing Budgets, targets and investments has reduced to some extent that leads to the owned media considerations which initiates improved websites or innovative changes in digital platform. Such situation bring out the change in pharma marketing.

### **Access of Sales Representative**

In pharma marketing sales representative diverts into newer digital tools and platforms for personal selling that improving marketing although the pandemic state. The sales rep are evolved and there has an immense possibilities of knowing the new treatments and launching products over the digital platforms like web marketing, video conferencing, e-sampling, e-detailing and so forth. Physicians always prefer the sales representative for optimizing the innovative ideas and in detailed information for particular newer treatments. In person Marketing was more time consuming and had limitations. Sales representative presents different unique proposition that evaluates the efficacy of a product which can be easily inducing the growth of personal selling by using marketing tools. The virtual marketing strategy has greater response which reflecting the faster selling and stabilized consumer despite the need of urgency through data driven methods and in cost effective way. Profoundly the investment area has changed to the digitalization platform from the contradictory point of both sales representative and patients. The hidden opportunities has developed due to increased audience by appealing digital platforms. Hence the investments are more into healthcare professionals rather than the direct to consumer advertising. Investments overpower to the digital non personal promotion, adaptation of the telehealth for the consultants as well as the patients. For instance, a respondent from Cluster -B, a sales representative who live in the rural area mentioned:

*"After hearing the lockdown announcement, I left the city in a hurry. I thought it's (lockdown) going to last only a few days, but the situation was beyond my imagination. I was not able to contact face-to-face with the doctors and*

practitioners around my area. I was given the responsibility to operate from there, which I thought, going to be difficult. But all virtual and digital tools helped me a lot.” (Ceria, 35)

### **Shift Dollars to Digital**

According to the conventional strategies the sales force are now quite indolent due to pandemic state. Sales representatives are more active in digital platforms where the non-personal promotion is broadly emphasized. NPP basically improves the assignation of the most profound health care professionals for targeting the consumer by satisfying the patients which is comparatively cost effective. The promotional tactics includes more contextual via email, social media, display advertising videos or accommodation of advertisements involving in browsing or specific search engine marketing. Digital web platform, different apps, pay per click advertising, pay per click campaigns are modern strategies for a company’s investment and upgrading area for the digitalization.

### **Digital Media Assignation**

Pharmaceutical companies broadly associated with the e-marketing or electronic customer relationship management systems for the implementation of the effective Marketing among patients, doctors, sales team and healthcare professionals. Technology induced apps and marketing websites, medical portals are used for acknowledgement of company’s product details and a correlation between the physician and sales managements. Different online conference, meetings, educational trainings can be organized and broadcasting through e-CMEs which is cost effective as well. SEO search engine optimization is a search engine also developed for the market research and development. As physically distance is maintaining due to pandemic so for the company growth and market research social media marketing aids the apparent visions and feedbacks of the consumer which helps to maintain the customer relation management activities through innovative online webinars, sales force automation, online sampling, and etc. promotional advertising through digital platform improving the selling opportunities.

### **E-Sampling**

The most powerful marketing method from which doctors can initiate care is sampling. The tolerance level of the substance can be assessed in their patients immediately and according to the condition of the product. It additionally permits specialists to do as such as a standard methodology for the particular brand. It assists with recognizing the brand name as it keeps on resonating in their psyches. It is conceivable to set up the specialized requirement for the actual inventory of the examples. Through utilizing this cell phone or online system, Physicians with PCs can undoubtedly apply for the examining demand structure. The whole situation of giving the examples and accessibility of the products has changed by conveying the best projects. After one event of using this technique by the doctors, then medical representatives may easily evaluate the applicability of samples through the data produced. With physicians and their area of concern in a specific medication.

### **E-Detailing**

E-detailing is a multimedia platform for the distribution of prescriptions by the preferred specialist to the patients via online platforms. The pharmaceutical business and conjugate industry has invested more energy focusing on this zone is intended to give the best therapy and to give clinical data rapidly and without any problem. It isn’t identified with points of interest and on web journals, even electronic clinical data is accessible all the time. Pharma companies have spent more time working on this sector to offer the best quality and provide medical knowledge quickly and conveniently, improving sales efficiency as well as helping doctors. Specifying regularly alludes to the correspondence among specialists and salesmen when an agent deductively and coherently offers subtleties. The term e-itemizing has an expansive sense that incorporates email, discussions, e-testing of online courses and item data through PCs or utilizing tabs.

### **Telehealth Utilization**

Telehealth is a subset of e-health, which encompasses the provision of health information to health practitioners and users of health,

education and training for health personnel, and the provision of management of health systems through the internet and telemarketing. Improving access to treatment, reducing exposure to disease for staff and patients, maintaining limited stocks of personal protective equipment, and reducing patient demand for services, telehealth may have several advantages during the pandemic. In order to allow patients to use telehealth and video technology to communicate with their doctors and obtain medications based on these virtual consultations, pharmaceutical marketers organizes the procedures. Changes to the telehealth policy will continue to promote expanded access to treatment during and after the pandemic. A respondent from Cluster –A, a doctor specialized in ENT, stated:

*“I probably never going to try out this digital tools but somehow this pandemic bring the brighter side of it. I am now really happy to provide telehealth services to my patient and I must convey that it was too much useful.” (Mikhael, 39)*

### **Telemedicine Revolution**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine organizations agreed that this technique has made an immense impact in expanding their divisions to promote telemedicine technology. Phone arrangements, intuitive crack facilities and video conferences are the vital modalities for far off meetings. These innovations will stay fundamental to how we give medical services later on. Because of COVID-19, telemedicine or the arrangement of medical care administrations utilizing data or promoting innovation has as of late created. In a post-COVID-19 world, telemedicine is required to change medical care. Via audio and video, patients may get medical advice. This program would also allow people living in the most remote areas to obtain health-related consultations. Telemedicine assumed a vital part in trading substantial data for the determination and the board of infections and episodes.

### **Medical Representative**

Innovative conduct at work caters to coworkers who indulge in organizational approaches and strategies that are innovatively

useful. Innovative work behavior looks at four factors that during crucial periods, such as the latest COVID-19 pandemic, seem to be fundamentally important for success prospects. These are recognition of issues, generation of concepts, promotion and realization. All these variables help workers work well responsively in doing their routine tasks. An employee's inventive work activity energizes them to focus on the challenges to be addressed by producing ideas. In the current COVID-19 crisis, this seems to be extremely relevant for MR to recognize and outline ways in which they can efficiently manage their vigor, commitment and absorption to work (engagement) to achieve their sales and marketing goals. Equally, previous research shows that it is possible to accept beneficial attitudes as tools. For instance, a respondent from Cluster –A, a medical representative who live in the city mentioned:

*“During the first phase of pandemic, I was worried about my job, but somehow I decided to carry on. I was introduced to a virtual marketing platform by my supervisor. I was baffled, but somewhat happy to be keep continuing my work.” (Hardik, 29)*

### **Conclusion**

The present study incorporates with the alteration in pharmaceutical market strategies and intervention of the modern technologies for confronting the pandemic crisis. Diversification in digitalization leads to development of health care services by maintaining the social distances and other objectivities. In general it aims the extension of the pharma marketing to create cost effective newer opportunities and overshadow the economic limitations. The pharma marketing generalizes the digitalization and innovative approaches for confronting the COVID-19 crisis which leads to the development of newer opportunities in health care services by maintaining the social distances and other objectivities. The conventional techniques are quite difficult for maintaining social distances whereas modern technologies open up many more avenues for targeting consumers, promoting products, and a platform for direct communications. As pharma market targets healthcare professionals and organizations so it creates new dimension in the

healthcare sector. This explorative research aims to the innovative approaches that companies adapt for getting rid of the pandemic challenges actually makes a difference for the expansion of the pharma market.

The finding clarifies the diversification of medical representatives in the digital platform during the corona outbreaks. Moreover, the digital media, telemedicine, over the phone communication and consultation, e-sampling, e-detailing, telehealth utilization etc. have created broader aspects for the health care management and consumer's compliances. Additionally innovative conducts which is quite feasible for dealing with the new normal. The deductive approach shows that shifts in pharma market due to the COVID-19 pandemic created new opportunities in the digital marketing. These qualitative findings are useful for the assessment of the shifting strategies in pharma marketing which expands different routes for research studies. Significant changes indicate that there still many further possibilities in terms of developments and optimization of entire pharma marketing value.

### Significance of the Study

Results from this studies allow the authors to reach out a conclusive decision with the help of the opinions from practitioners and secondary data sources. The qualitative findings from this study are useful for the assessment of the shifting strategies in pharma marketing which expands different routes for research studies.

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