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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN MEDICAL PROFESSION- AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF LUCKNOW CITY

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ABSTRACT

In today's technology driven world, social networking sites have become an avenue, where retailers can extend their marketing campaigns to a wider range of consumers. The tools and approaches for communicating with customers have changed greatly, with the emergence of social media; therefore, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan (Mangold and Faulds 2099). Advertising has gone a long journey from print media to social media and today, social media is such an important platform, which cannot be ignored by the businesses to remain competitive in the market. As far as medical profession is concerned, the practice of physicians and surgeons normally do not call for advertisement as they rely on publicity through word – of – mouth endorsement. If we talk about practicing doctors word – of – mouth publicity does what an advertisement cannot do.

The aim of the present paper is to find out the usefulness of social media marketing with an eye on word – of – mouth publicity generated through the use of social media in medical profession.

KEYWORDS: Social Networking, Retailers, Physician, Surgeons, Campaigns

INTRODUCTION

Advertisement has always been a central theme for the business to promote and increase their sales. However, there has always been various wary to reach customer through advertisement like print media – newspapers, yellow pages etc., electronic media – television, internet and social networking sites – facebook, twitter, instagram, google+ etc. As the tariff of data plan for internet is reducing, the access of internet and Smartphone is becoming easier as a result social networking sites have gain popularity and we find that majority of the Smartphone users are at social media platform. This has paved the way for the businesses to reach customer through this platform. As far as medical profession in concerned, the practice of physicians and surgeons normally do not calls for advertisement as they rely on publicity through word – of – mouth endorsement. If we talk about practicing doctors word – of – mouth publicity does what an advertisement can't.

OBJECTIVES OF ADVERTISEMENT

- The basic objective of an advertisement is to reach the customer whether it is B2B or B2C.

- Create such a message to get the attention of the intended customers and hold their attention and influence their behavior in the desired way.

Benefits of Social Media Marketing

- As compared to print media, the reach of social media is much more through which the advertiser can reach a bigger pool of audience.

- Social networking sites provide user flexibility approach in selecting the areas for which they feel comfortable to see the advertisement.

- The advertiser can reach the targeted audience in no time.

- Two way approach and more users friendly.

- All the advertisements will remain there at social media account such as in the newsfeed of the face book and the audience will have a look at this whenever he opens his account/pages.

- The costing pattern is also very different from other media campaign. Here advertiser has to pay per click or per 1000 impressions. In case of face book the rate is per click or per 1000 impression however, the same can vary for other social networking sites.

- Advertiser has flexibility to manage the costing budget. He can set a limit

Social Media as a Means of Creating Word – of – Mouth Publicity

Technically, the word 'Word – of – Mouth publicity' does not come under the category of advertisement because here we do not pay anything to reach the intended audience but it fulfills the other requirements of the advertisement and helps in promoting brand promotion and selling. As far as medical profession is concerned, is the most important factor to reach the audience. Here, the advertiser does not say anything about his product / services but the same in conveyed through someone else who is known to the targeted audience /customer and there is no reason that he should not believe on him because he has no interest i.e. no monetary gain for recommending the particular doctor. So, though creating word – of – mouth publicity, doctors reach the targeted audience and when it is through the use of social media the reach may be much more and faster as well. If planned carefully, this kind of publicity will work very well in enhancing the publicity for medical professionals.

Social Media- a Blend of Digital Marketing and Word – of – Mouth Publicity

The creation of word – of – mouth publicity requires no need of payment as in case of digital marketing where we have to pay for the advertisement. At social media platform, we can create our page or can give our ad. In both the cases, we have to pay for the advertisement, if it is delivered to the audience and it would be charges as per the payment plan opted. While on the other hand, we can increase the number of our followers which is very easy at the social media platform. In this way we can reach more and more audience. When we apply both these things i.e. advertising on social media platform together with creating more and more followers in the required region we can reach very large

number of audience to promote our business of medical profession efficiently and effectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature focuses on the existing literature on social media marketing for medical professionals. According to Sarasohn-Kahn (2008) the Internet plays a central role in providing health information and is also becoming a platform for convening social networks and creating health information (p. 3).

According to NASDAQ, "consumer trust is increasingly determined by online reputation--which is why more and more companies are finding it beneficial to enlist the online reputation management services" (2012).

According to Shay (2014) practices should encourage patients to share their positive experiences in online communities to help boost their online reputation. Russell Faust (2011) says investment in social media comes down to investment in technology and time. "The technology investment in social media is minimal. Unlike traditional marketing channels, your social media presence is 'free'.

While sales can be used to measure ROI, it should not be the number one reason for joining any social media platform as a medical practice because social media is "first and foremost about branding" (Clifton, 2013). "Experts say some physicians have been slow to adopt LinkedIn because it doesn't connect them directly with patients" (Dolan, 2011).

Moses, et al. (2014) find that doctor-to-doctor networks such as store electronic medical records and allow medical professionals to transfer medical records among themselves, which brings some risks with security breaches.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- To find out the overall acceptance of social media marketing by the patients.

- To find out the category – wise acceptance of social media marketing by the patients

- To find out the overall acceptance of words – of – mouth publicity on social media platform by the patients.

- To find out the category – wise acceptance of words – of – mouth publicity on social media by the patients.

Hypotheses Drawn

H0: There is an overall acceptance of social media marketing by the patients.

H1: There is only the category – wise acceptance of social media marketing by the patients

H0: There is an overall acceptance of words – of – mouth publicity on social media by the patients

H1: There is category – wise acceptance of words – of – mouth publicity on social media by the patients.

Research Methodology

The sampling method adopted for the purpose of research is stratified sampling. Patients were divided into two strata; one for luxury treatment such as Cosmetic surgery (category I) and other normal or urgent treatment (category II). Fifty patients from each stratum were selected as sample. Respondent were asked to give a score from 0 – 10 with respect to their acceptance for digital marketing as well as word – of – mouth publicity done on social media.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The score given by respondent were converted into + and – signs and the sign test was conducted on category – wise and on over all basis for both digital marketing and word – of – mouth publicity on social media. Z score arrived was as under:

Table 1

Z Score Type	Over All Treatment	Luxury Treatment	Normal Treatment
Digital Marketing	-5.60	-3.11	-4.81
Publicity	-0.60	1.41	-2.26

Since Z score for digital marketing for overall treatment as well as for luxury and normal treatment fall outside the range of (-) 1.96 to +1.96; **the null hypothesis is rejected**. However, in case of word – of – mouth publicity, the Z score for over all treatment and luxury treatment is inacceptable range but for Normal treatment category it is rejected again.

CONCLUSIONS

From the above test, it is clear that audience is not accepting the social media marketing from medical professional. Even word – of – mouth publicity is not acceptable for normal treatment. On the other hand, the audience is accepting the word – of – mouth publicity on social media for the luxury treatment.

Limitations of the Study

Samples were collected from the Lucknow city only and there were two strata only; one was luxury treatment such as Cosmetic surgery and the other category was remaining all other treatment. Since the weight given was equal it may be possible that if the study were conducted using more strata the result were different. Further, a sample from a single city does not represent the mindset of all the population such as of rural and metro population.

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