

CHEMISTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS OVER THE COUNTER BRAND MEDICINE MARKETING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RAJASTHAN

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Abstract

The study intends to explore the chemist attitude and perception towards brand OTC medicine marketing strategies performed by the major pharmaceutical companies in Rajasthan. It also aims to study the impact of marketing mix factors on chemists' perception and attitude. The research is descriptive in nature and based on primary data collected via structured questionnaire, floated among chemist in Rajasthan. The study was conducted in period of July to November 2017. Totally 174 chemists participated on a random basis. The dependent variables like chemist perception and attitude and independent variables like product, price, place, and promotion with product labelling are considered in the research study. It is observed in the study that OTC product labelling has positive impact on chemist attitude in compare to other variables whereas OTC marketing mix elements like place and promotion have positive impact on chemists' perception. These marketing mix elements should be considered in marketing strategies plan by the pharmaceutical companies to create a successful brand in the OTC marketplace.

Keywords: Over-The-Counter (OTC) Medicine, Pharmaceutical Marketing, Chemists' Perception, Chemists' Attitude

Introduction

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are medicines sold directly to the consumer without any prescription while prescription medicines are sold to patient only on valid physician prescription. In India the phrase OTC has no any regulatory recognition but all the medicines which are not scheduled drugs are considered as a non-prescription medicines or OTC medicines.

With the changes in lifestyles and increase in self-medication practices with healthcare awareness the OTC medicine market steadily increased in the Indian as well as global pharmaceutical market. The easy accessibility and availability of OTC medicines make consumer convenient to treat their common ailment like headache, fever, constipation, acidity, and fatigue without any consulting with physicians and other healthcare professionals.

With more consumer awareness and easy availability of OTC medicine the over-the-counter medicine market in India having a worth of \$6292 million and it is projected to be growing at a CAGR of 14.6%, to be reach \$12440 million by 2021. In pharma emerging market like India, chemist, and pharmacy attendants play an important role in promoting and selecting various brand OTC medicine among consumers. In India where literacy rate lies at 74%, the role of chemist is important in helping the consumers for buying and safely use of OTC medicine available in drug market. In this way chemist are the most important link between the pharmaceutical companies and the consumers who decide the best OTC medicine for their consumers and perhaps it is important to know how marketing mix elements effect chemist buying decision towards branded OTC medicine.

OTC Brand Medicine and Chemist

The pharmaceutical companies are looking towards chemist recommendation for any of the OTC brand medicine because recommended OTC medicine from chemist will produce more sale and make more profit. As the chemists are the important link after the physician who recommended the OTC medicine or other healthcare supplements to consumers and conveys the idea that the product is special, will treat the consumer problem, and can be trusted. In this way the responsibility level of chemist is important when they recommended the OTC product to consumer.

To perform the role of chemist, it is important that they must have knowledge about the condition of the patient experiencing, including the treatment options available and when self-medication may not be appropriate. Secondly, chemist have a responsibility to educate their consumer about the safe and effective use of OTC medicines. If chemist recommendation promotes trust in that product, then chemist have a responsibility to make sure that patients should understand how to use the OTC medicine safely and in this way chemist expect that OTC medicine marketed by pharmaceutical companies should have detailed information about OTC medicine so that it will assist them in counseling the consumer for safe and effective use of OTC medicine.

Statement of the Problem and Need of the Study

As the numbers of OTC products are available in market with different therapeutic segment to consumers and most of the purchasing of OTC are made through Pharmacist or chemist retailer. The author, here studied the chemist perception regarding OTC brand medicine marketing strategies promoted by major pharmaceuticals companies in Rajasthan as it will be helpful to understand their purchase behavior of the OTC products. This research study will be helpful to pharmaceutical companies in planning and designing effective promotional communication which have more impact on chemist perception and positively enhance the growth for OTC medicine market.

Review of Literature

Khan Yaqub (2013) In this article "A Review on Marketing of OTC Drugs", the author narrates about the regulation of marketing and sales of OTC drugs in developed countries like US and Canada, He also discuss that OTC medicine which are listed as 'Ayurvedic Medicines' are also regulated under drug and cosmetic act and rule. The author did a pilot study to understand the attention, attitude, and practice of OTC medicine among adults in the National Capital Region. A sample of fifty respondents was chosen using convenience and judgmental sampling which included people of both genders with different demographic background. Information was gathered by using a designed questionnaire. The study showed a rich inclination among both doctors and consumers to accept more OTC medicines. The author also suggested that sellers should consider the worth of each model based on category of product change, presently retail influenced and the degree of consumer knowledge with the brand due to existing prescription status. The study also revealed that by making understanding to community on how to treat and how to prevent common ailments which may reduce the effort of general practitioners where lack of medical facilities was existing, pharmacists should be permitted to counsel and guide patients that deliver better healthcare solutions to prevent reoccurrence of these common ailments by suggesting them better OTC drug product.

Bhalerao (2016) In their research paper on "Consumer and Chemist Preferences towards Analgesics and Antipyretics in Drugstores in Nashik City" The research study revealed that increase in

consumption of OTC medicine among the educated crowd as well as the ignorant is due to diverse reasons such as awareness or self-assurance about different medicine among the educated while unfamiliarity of the potential risks towards self-medication among the ignorant. In some cases of unfamiliarity about a brand or a molecule, the pharmacist plays a main role in counselling about the brand medicine to the patient particularly when the patient is interested in practicing self-medication with OTC medicine. The researcher also focused on advertising of OTC products on television which falls in specific category like Digestives, Antacids, Cold rubs and Analgesic etc. The study includes descriptive research, in which 91 Pharmacist were selected from two different regions of Nashik city with an objective to identify most sold molecule to patients, most demanded brand by patients and most recommended brand by Pharmacist. The study reveals that Pharmacists (44 percent) prefer to sell Paracetamol, 28 percent interested to sell Nimesulide and 22 percent prefer to sell paracetamol + ibuprofen combination. Hence the self-medication among the consumer was performed due to their awareness about different drug molecule to treat common ailments.

Shroti Rahul (2011) In their research paper on "A study on over the counter drugs in retail pharmacies in Indore city", The study was conducted to determine the prevalence of over the counter medications and to assess patients' perceived safety of these medications in Indore city. The author conducted the cross-sectional study to determine the extent and pattern of use of over the counter medications. Data were collected from a random sample of 127 pharmacists from various pharmacies in city following WHO methods. The questionnaire was developed and administered to collect information on the demographic profile and use of over the counter medication among the consumers or patients. In the research paper author asked principal pharmacists about the prevalence of use of over the counter drugs, categories of medications preferred, safety priority of using the drugs and knowledge of use of over the counter drugs. The study concluded that the prevalence of over the counter drug use was estimated and found substantial use of over the counter medicine. The author also suggested that there should be a strong patient education system and government legislative framework should be there to control the sale of medication in the country.

Srivastava RK W. S. (2017) In their research paper "Study of consumers' perception towards pharmaceutical over-the-counter products in emerging markets – India", the study was conducted to know the consumer perception towards over the counter medicine and influencing factors for purchasing OTC medicine in India. In the study author studied demographic variables as well as independent variables like lifestyle, mental health, attitude and personality and some influencing factors like doctor advice, prior awareness, brand name and promotional strategy by pharmaceutical companies were also studied. The study results revealed that doctors and pharmacist are the most reliable source of information before taking OTC medicine, there is significant difference between male and female perception about the use of OTC medicine. The study results also revealed that most of the India population is aware of OTC products. The author suggested that OTC market is coming up future of the pharmaceutical industry due to increase in health awareness among people. To provide rich information about OTC product to consumer author suggested that FMCG model should be applied to the over the counter pharmaceutical marketing laterally with traditional marketing.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the present research pursuit to make analysis of chemist perception towards

marketing mix elements that is product, price, place, and promotion of OTC medicine brands promoted by major pharmaceutical companies in Rajasthan.

Following are the key objective of proposed research

1. To find out the correlation between chemist attitude and OTC brand marketing
2. To find out the correlation between chemist perception and OTC brand marketing

Materials and Methods

The present research is based on the descriptive research that studied chemist perception about OTC brand marketing performed by the major pharmaceutical companies. The research study also evaluates the chemist attitude towards OTC brand marketing strategies promoted by the major pharmaceutical companies under quantitative research.

Research Design

The research is descriptive in nature. It was based on the primary data. Primary data were collected via structured questionnaire. In the study, a sample size of 174 chemist was considered. Data obtained were analysed to identify the correlation between chemist perception and OTC brand marketing.

Sample size and sampling techniques

In the present study a sample size of 174 chemist was calculated as shown in **Table 1** based on consumer chemist ratio by using following formula :

$$\frac{\text{Total Rajasthan Population} \times \left(\frac{\text{Estimated OTC Consumer 5\%}}{100} \right)}{\text{Chemist Retail Shop in Rajasthan}}$$

So, the consumer and chemist ratio = 100:1

Sample size = 100 consumer per chemist

Table 1 : Descriptive statistics of chemist location

Location	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Near hospital/Clinic	53	30.5	30.5
Near residential area	74	42.5	73
Near commercial place	47	27	100
Total	174	100	

The study sample size was comprising of 174 chemists depending upon their location. The maximum chemist respondents are from residential location 42.5%, 30.5% respondents are from near hospital or clinic and rest of 27% are located near commercial place. Thus. the results revealed that there was maximum number of chance of those consumer that visit chemist shop without prescription.

Research Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The research questionnaire was designed accordance with the objective of research. The primary data were collected through the structured questionnaire with interview technique. The chemists were asked to reply to the questions in the questionnaire which will be related to chemist perception about OTC brand products marketing. The questionnaire is developed based on the dependent variables like chemist perception and the independent variables like Product, Price, Product labelling, Promotion, and Place.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The Cronbach's alpha test was calculated to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument use for consumer response. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.916, thus the instrument was considered as reliable for the present study.

Results and Discussion

The data collected undertook for descriptive and inferential analyses.

Highest Selling OTC Medicine Segments Among Chemists

It was asked from the chemist "For what type of common ailments or symptom do you sell OTC medicines". This question was asked to chemist to find out the highest selling OTC medicine segment among chemist.

Table 2 : Highest Selling OTC Medicine Segments

Type of Common ailments	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Cough and Cold Fever	26	14.9	14.9
Headache	31	17.8	32.8
Skin Problem	27	15.5	48.3
Gastritis / Acidity	71	40.8	89.1
Muscle Pain	15	8.6	97.7
Vitamins/mineral supplements	4	2.3	100
Total	174	100	

Inference

From the above **Table 2** it is noticed that chemist sells highest OTC medicine is for 'Gastritis/Acidity' with 48.3%, followed by 'Headache' with 17.8%, 'Skin problem' with 15.5% and 'Cough and Cold fever' with 14.9%. Rest of the minor ailments share small portion of the OTC medicine sell which is 'Muscle pain' and Vitamins supplements with 8.6% and 2.3% respectively. Thus, the above table shows that Gastritis/Acidity was the highest selling OTC medicine segment among chemist.

Chemist Opinion Regarding Effective Source of OTC Product Information

It was asked from the chemist "State the importance of medium providing OTC medicine information available in market" to identify the effective source of information regarding branded OTC product.

Table 3 : Chemist Opinion Regarding Effective Source of OTC Product Information

S. No.	Effective source of information	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Agreement	Rank (based on agreement)
1	Sales representative	16.7	28.7	5.2	31.6	17.8	49.4	2
2	Print and Electronic media advertisement	12.6	8	24.1	41.4	13.8	55.2	1
3	Customers	11.5	20.1	24.7	39.7	4	43.7	3
4	Company's conference	5.2	25.3	27.6	28.2	13.8	42	4

From the above **Table 3**, it presents the chemist opinion regarding effective source of information regarding OTC medicine. 55.2% of chemist shows their level of agreement with media advertisement as an effective source of OTC medicine information, followed by sales representative with 49.4% agreement level, Customers are also important source of information for new branded OTC medicine with agreement level 43.7% and the least one is company conference with 42% of level of agreement.

Thus, it revealed that chemist rely on media advertisement as an effective source of OTC brand product information. So, the pharmaceutical companies should specially focused on print and electronic media advertisement when they perform OTC brand product promotions.

Multiple linear regression model for chemist attitude

Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the relationship between Chemist attitude and the independent variables like Product, Price, Product labelling, Promotion, and Place. Based on the data set received a multiple regression model was formulated for Chemist attitude. The model shows the impact of various OTC marketing mix on chemist attitude if other factors were kept constant.

Inference

The multiple regression model with predictors Product, Price, Product labelling, Promotion, Place produced $R^2 = .065$, $F(5, 168) = 2.333$, $P < .05$ which can be observed from tables model summary and ANOVA. Thus, the results revealed that 6.5% variability was observed in dependent variable (Chemist attitude) due to predictors.

Thus, it revealed that from all the predictors of OTC marketing mix element only Product labelling can have an impact on chemist attitude that is up to 6.5%, Thus if a pharmaceutical company wants to make OTC brand marketing impact than they should consider Product labelling as an important element of OTC marketing mix which perform positive impact on chemist attitude about OTC brand product.

Table 4: Coefficients of ANOVA for Chemist Attitude

Coefficients										
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		Impact
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	2.663	0.341		7.805	0	1.99	3.337			
Price	-0.04	0.034	-0.088	-1.162	0.247	-0.107	0.028	0.974	1.027	No Impact
Product	-0.016	0.066	-0.02	-0.247	0.805	-0.146	0.114	0.84	1.19	No Impact
Place	0.017	0.064	0.022	0.271	0.787	-0.109	0.143	0.833	1.2	No Impact
Promotion	0.077	0.067	0.094	1.155	0.25	-0.055	0.21	0.843	1.187	No Impact
Product labelling	0.159	0.065	0.193	2.434	0.016	0.03	0.288	0.887	1.127	Positive Impact
Dependent Variable: Chemist attitude										

From the above **Table 4** of coefficient, it was revealed that Product labelling have a significant positive regression weight, indicating chemist responded with higher scores on this variable was expected to have higher dependent variable i.e. Chemist attitude after controlling the other variables in the present model. Thus, to make an OTC brand marketing impact on chemist attitude, pharmaceutical companies must consider product labelling so that chemist can easily counsel the consumer about product use in indications and enables them about safe as well as effective use of OTC medicine.

Following **Figure 1** shows the normal P-P plot of regression for Chemist attitude. The bubbles denote the observed responses against straight line representing expected responses. The co-linearity of both indicates the suitability of the model. Hence, it may be concluded that model is suitable and can be used to find out Chemist attitude level if responses for other independent variables are present or vice versa.

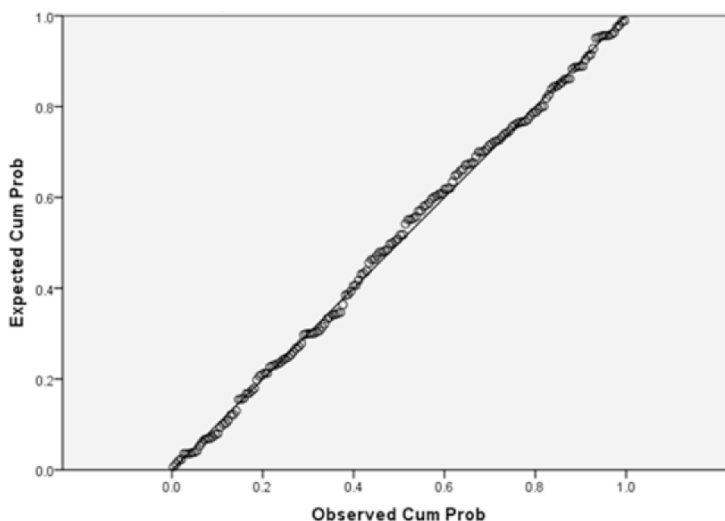


Figure 1: Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual for Chemist Attitude

Multiple Linear Regression Model for Chemist Perception

In the following regression model analysis was performed to examine the relationship between Chemist perception and the independent variables like Product, Price, Product labelling, Promotion, and Place. Based on the data set received a multiple regression model was formulated for Chemist perception. The model shows the impact of various OTC marketing mix on chemist perception if other factors were kept constant.

Inference

The multiple regression model with predictors Product, Price, Product labelling, Promotion, Place produced $R^2 = .076$, $F(5, 168) = 2.760$, $P < .05$ which can be observed from tables model summary and ANOVA. Thus, the results revealed that 7.6% variability was observed in dependent variable (Chemist perception) due to predictors.

Thus, it revealed that from all OTC marketing mix elements Place and Promotion have an impact on chemist perception regarding OTC drug marketing is up to 7.6%.

Table 5 : Coefficients of ANOVA for Chemist Perception

Coefficients										
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		Impact
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF	
	(Constant)	2.063	0.364				5.673	0	1.345	
Price	0.025	0.036	0.051	0.678	0.499	-0.047	0.096	0.974	1.027	No impact
Product	0.002	0.07	0.002	0.023	0.981	-0.137	0.14	0.84	1.19	No impact
Place	0.15	0.068	0.179	2.204	0.029	0.016	0.284	0.833	1.2	Positive impact
Promotion	0.15	0.071	0.169	2.096	0.038	0.009	0.291	0.843	1.187	Positive impact
Product labelling	-0.008	0.07	-0.009	-0.109	0.914	-0.145	0.13	0.887	1.127	No impact

Dependent Variable: Chemist perception

From the above **Table 5** of coefficient, it was revealed that Place and Promotion have significant positive regression weight, indicating chemist responded with higher scores on these variables was expected to have higher dependent variable i.e. Chemist perception after controlling the other variables in the present model. Thus, to make an OTC brand marketing impact on chemist perception, both marketing mix elements that is Place (product availability at different distribution channel) and OTC product promotion must be considered by pharmaceutical companies.

Following **Figure 2** shows the normal P-P plot of regression for Chemist perception. The bubbles denote the observed responses against straight line representing expected responses. The collinearity of both indicates the suitability of the model. Hence, it may be concluded that model is precise and can be used to find out Chemist perception level if responses for other independent variables are present or vice versa.

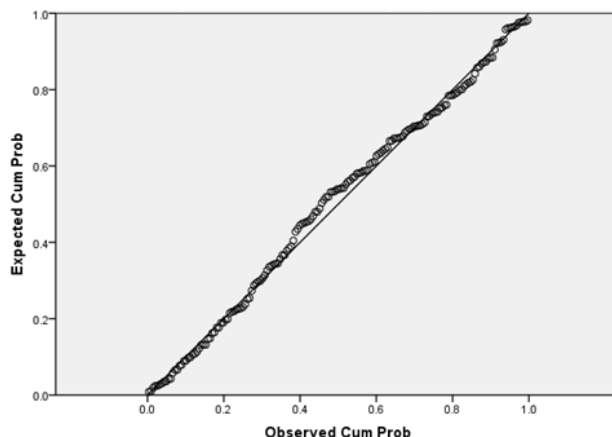


Figure 2 : Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual for Chemist perception

Conclusion and Recommendation

The above conducted study gave insight about perception and attitude of chemist towards OTC marketing strategies performed by the pharmaceutical companies. The results revealed that OTC medicine marketing mix elements like place and promotion has positive impact on chemist perception which shows that OTC product availability at different distribution channels (Place) like pharmacy store, healthcare store is important factor in deciding chemist perception towards OTC brands. Another marketing mix element Promotion is also having significant impact on chemist perception because OTC product promotion make them easier to recall the brand as well as it helps them to push brand OTC medicine among consumers who are already aware about OTC brand name. The OTC product labelling is important factor for deciding chemist attitude which indicates that though OTC medicine is marketed by pharmaceutical companies, but product labelling is important factor to consider as a brand OTC medicine because product labelling assist chemist to make proper counselling of consumer regarding safe and effective use of OTC medicine in common ailments. The study may attract attention and useful to the pharmaceutical companies in assessing their OTC medicine marketing strategies from chemist perspectives which it creates and influenced with its efforts. The research study helps in finding the congruence between pharmaceutical companies presumed positioning strategies for their OTC brand product and chemist's perception of OTC marketing strategy.

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