



Corporate Hospitals And Marketing

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ABSTRACT

The word hospital comes from the Latin word 'Hospes' which refers to either a visitor or the host who receives the visitor. From 'Hospes' came the Latin 'Hospitalia' an apartment for strangers or guests, and the medieval Latin 'Hospitale' and the old French 'hospital'. In the 15th century in England it became to mean a home for the elderly or infirm or a home for the down and out. In the 16th century other terms related to hospital include hospice, hospitality, hospitable, host, hostel and hotel. 'Hospital' only took on its modern meaning as an institution where sick or injured are given medical or surgical care.

In other words, hospital means a building in which the sick injured, or infirm are received and treated, a public or private institution founded for reception and cure or for the refuge, of persons diseased in body or mind. Thus, the first and foremost function of a hospital is to give proper care to the sick and injured without any social, economic or racial discrimination.

The primary health center is the peripheral institution from which health services radiate to the rural community. It constitutes the embodiment of the new concept of integration of preventive and curative care. The centre is founded on principle that the maintenance of health is just as important as the treatment of disease and to secure both, all concerned must work as a team. It is the smallest agency which provides preventive and curative health services including family planning in a integrated manner to the rural population. The idea of developing primary health centers for providing comprehensive health services in the rural areas of India was first presented in a concrete form by the Bhole committee in 1946.

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals – the cure and care centers provide a wide variety of services like providing beds, complete nursing to the patients or providing equipment for diagnosing all sorts of ailments, arranging transportation in the form of ambulances, catering services, etc., to the individuals Part of the health care industry. Healthcare industry is a wide and intensive form of services which are related to wellbeing of human beings. Health care is the social sector and it is provided at State level with the help of Central Government.

Health care industry covers hospitals, health insurances, medical software, health equipment's and pharmacy in it. With improvement in Medical Science and technology it has gone through considerable change and improved a lot.

The history of Indian medicine and surgery dates back to the contest of age. But hospitals as an institution to which a sick person could be brought for treatment were of much later origin in other countries. In India hospitals have existed from ancient times. Even in the 6 century B.C, during the time of Buddha, there were a number of hospitals to look after the crippled and poor. More such hospitals were started by Buddha's devotees later on in different parts of India as well as outside the country. The outstanding hospitals in India at that time were those built by king Ashoka (273-232 BC). Charka and Sushruta of ancient India were famous physicians. Medicines based on Indian system were taught in the universities of Taxilla and Nalanda which probably contributed to the advance in Arabic medicines. There are evidences to show that there were many hospitals in South India in olden days as observed in the Chola and Malakapuram edicts.

According to historians, the study of the history of medicine of ancient India was greatly handicapped for want of inscriptions, manuscript or other records which are available for other ancient systems of medicine. The seals and tablets discovered at Harappa and Mohenjodaro are yet to be deciphered. But we also find from the books written by Arabian and European travelers (about 600AD) that the studies in India about medicine was in its bloom. The decline of Indian medicine started with the invasion of foreigners in the 10 century AD which was a period of unrest. The zeal of native vaidyas for the investigation of the Indian flora slackened for want of encouragement. The invaders brought with them their own physicians called Hakims. The Hakims began to prosper at the expense of the vaidyas. The maintenance of hospital in India declined during this period'^.

The rise in number of corporate hospitals, the growing competition among the different types of hospitals and health care providers, the advancement of technology in the field of medicine, the spread of new type of diseases among the people causing anxiety in locating the right service providers, and a host of factors have been

responsible for a change in the scenario of hospital management. Meanwhile, the formal recognition in the mid 1990s of marketing as an appropriate activity for health services providers in developed nations represented an important milestone. It led to the opportunity of learning and applying marketing approaches by the corporate hospitals. Also it has created an interest among media reporters, researchers and policy makers and there is a sharing of information in seminars and conferences on marketing by corporate hospitals in India.

Since the 1970s, there has been a steady growth in the corporate hospitals to make India a favoured destination for health care. The driving forces, which have led to the growth of private sector in India, are essentially the historical influence of the British, the lack of financial and physical resources in the public healthcare sector, the rising demand for healthcare from domestic patients, the demand of the international patients and finally, the economic growth of India. In addition to the push factors there are several pull factors for the growth of private hospitals especially corporate hospitals.

Promotions of Hospitals is found in the remote places even in edges of China, Guizhou province where alluring announcements or advertisement like billboard ads and other promotion care are seen in non-government hospitals. An especially turning through the lavish heaps of China's remote Guizhou Province is flanked by brilliantly hued bulletins or billboards ads that depict promoting care in private hospitals. These ads are generally about and rology medical services for men yet some 32 exhibit skin or diabetes treatments. The majority of alternate billboards laud the locale's renowned alcohols. Elite hospital advertisements like these are as yet an uncommon phenomenon in China and yet be a part of growing worldwide trends in hospital promotions.

CORPORATE HOSPITALS AND MARKETING

In marketing, each sub-department works taking one step at a time, creating the proposition, getting approvals, working on the content and then beginning with field work. Right from attracting the customer, bringing them in, providing the service, building their relationship with the brand till the final step of converting them into your brand promoters, all of it, each step here should not be just a responsibility but it has to showcase your skills, requiring development through strategic planning.

Following are ten strategies which make for the soul in successful hospital marketing:

Positioning your brand

Marketing goes with the definition of ‘identifying and meeting human and social needs.’ The catch here is to simply think. Think of ways your hospital will be different from the rest outside your fence, ways to reason why your potential customer should get converted to a loyal one, and ways to present the above-mentioned points distinguishing yourself from the rest. The areas could be your associated consultants, use of state-of-the-art technology, or your service standards. Positioning your brand with the advantages can be done with basic position maps. This marketing strategy will communicate points of similarities and differences with your competitors.

Analyzing the market needs

Researching your market has been the first step, the core of marketing strategies. Here research is your grip into the specific details of what your customer reach is, who your customers are and what exactly they need. When you have your research done, then the conversation will be about the last specific mentioned here. ‘Need’. Just like an obvious truth, there is a distinction in people’s understanding of the difference between what the customer ‘wants’ and what it ‘needs’. While the former is something which they are aware of, the latter is the untapped market potential which you’ll have access to, only with your research paper in hand. In a healthcare industry, one can create demand for a service just by analyzing the market’s need and increasing its awareness.

Winning the activity branding game

When the need has been found and you’re ready with the proposition to your business plan, the next step will be its execution, the final presentation to the public. In hospitals, this is essentially required when marketing activities are planned. For a healthcare service provider, for example, the need could be any lifestyle disorder widespread in your market niche, and the ‘value’ here will come with the understanding of such prevalence in the public. Here the hospital brand enters, with educating the public through their marketing activities in branding and promotions, that such prevalence requires an intervention and that ‘we’ are here with its solution. Because many marketing activities fail with few footfalls, not because the ‘need’ was lacking, but because your customer did not understand it. The plan is to be creatively simple.

Document customer’s value

The competition is huge and your consumer has several options to select from. What the marketer needs to work on is to make them understand why they need to 'spend' on 'your' brand. This requires customer value research where they understand what the brand values. Marketing campaigns based on social causes, events, celebrating awareness, etc. come under the umbrella of communicating important messages which the society understands, respects and ideals in, through these health campaigns. For example, hospitals can come up with a special women's health package for breast-cancer awareness, or an or the campaign for 'parents', targeting specific market segments.

Stressing on internal marketing

Internal marketing is where you involve all your staff, from the ground level right up to the topmost hierarchical position. You have a large workforce working with you day and night; these people represent what your brand stands for and that understanding must be clear. This is not only restricted to the human resources but involves marketing personnel as well. Why? Because healthcare is consumer centred. The patients here have a choice. This is where the marketer comes into the picture with the integration of these values through campaigns to align all employees to represent your brand value. When you have a campaign and all your staff (customer care associates, nursing staff, medical officers, consultants and everyone else) is (a) aware of it (b) understands the 'need' that is represented in your branding and promotional activities and most importantly (c) is aligned with the value the brand reflects and the message it promotes, then wait for the results.

Benefit strategy

Your customer is your patient in the out-patient department who has come for a doctor's consultation or a regular health check-up. They can also be an in-patient admission. Now, your customer will opt for your service only if they find the benefit to it. Marketing is not about your company's sales, but it is solely about how your customers think they are benefited. Here, the strategy follows the age-old formula of value, benefit and cost. The formula states that 'value' is equal to 'benefit' upon 'cost'. This implies that the customers will pay for your service only if they perceive the 'value' to be greater than 1, that is when they understand that the benefit, they are receiving is greater than the price they are paying for.

Website development

Healthcare is a growing industry where its consumers are up to date with all health-related information available online. Be it about an epidemic, a genetic disease or a

new technological advancement in the field, for medical or surgical management, the awareness is the elephant in the room. In a digitally advancing scenario, you need to establish your online presence as well. Your hospital's website ought to contain all information, from tie-ups to helpline numbers, online assistance 24*7, query redressed, feedbacks, testimonials, consultant's information, their availability, milestones achieved, every other information which your customer should be aware of and updated regularly.

Directing communications through various channels

Hospital's marketing strategies should focus on not only getting new customers, but also constantly retaining existing ones. The next stage to a loyal customer is a brand promoter. This will happen only if the customers get the service that they desire, more than what was expected. Analyzing feedbacks and channeling other communications is important for brand loyalty. Your communications channels could be monologue (advertisements, promotions etc.) or dialogue channels (e-mails, call-centers etc). Hospitals can work on channelizing inputs and feedbacks from these sources, converting leads and thus working on the strengths as well as correcting flaws in the journey to increasing customer loyalty.

Monitoring brand equity

Even with huge footfalls, some marketing campaigns fail, because of their below average turnovers. This can be attributed to a gap left somewhere in the strategic planning. To be consistent it is required to regularly audit and maintain your brand equity. This will help you grow, building relationship with your customers, increase demand and help you target customer segments in emerging markets.

The ocean strategy

With new hospitals springing up with their upbeat promotions and huge investments, your hospital needs to retain the existing position. When we discuss new market entries, there is usually a red one, where your competitor is entering an already potentially stable market with cut-throat competition. To retain the stance here, your organisation can always explore the 'blue', i.e. entering headstrong into a complete uncharted and untapped potential market with strategies ready to sail in the ocean (the blue ocean strategy).

FINDINGS

As per International standards penetration of health insurance in India is low. Also private health insurance schemes, which constitute the bulk of insurance schemes

availed by the population, do not cover costs of consultation or medication. Only hospitalization and associated expenses are covered. India has typically addressed concerns pertaining to pricing of medication through indirect but more pragmatic means such as taxes on medicine, healthcare services and for medical expenses and patent law. Indian patent law only protects formulation and not the composition of a drug. This means that generic drugs that typically become available after the patent protections afforded to a drug's original developer expire, are available in India much earlier. Indian pharmaceutical companies routinely re-engineer processes for manufacturing generic drugs to make medication available at much lower costs. Accordingly, most of the research budget in Indian pharmaceutical companies is oriented at developing processes for synthesizing drugs, rather than drug development. In India, the development assistance for health for a population of 1.3 billion is a total of \$650 million out of which the majority is provided for child and newborn care (\$230 million) and maternal health (\$110 million).

Hospital marketing strategies are different from other product marketing strategies where, in the latter, one can experiment with the content and market it only through monologue channels. When the most important aspect that matters from a business perspective (in private or corporate organisations) is profit or loss, there needs to be a discussion on what strategies were implemented, what the central plan was, right from the start.

In recent years, there has been some progress in government regulation to ensure quality. However, the pace has been slow, and implementation is a challenge, in part because there is no single authority responsible for quality assurance. The lack of a coherent approach in this area has raised concerns about the extent to which government can influence the rapidly expanding private sector to adopt ethical and standardized health services.

India's Ministry of Health was established with independence from Britain in 1947. The government has made health a priority in its series of five-year plans, each of which determines state spending priorities for the coming five years. The National Health Policy was endorsed by Parliament in 1983. The policy aimed at universal health care coverage by 2000, and the program was updated in 2002. The health care system in India is primarily administered by the states. India's Constitution tasks each state with providing health care for its people. In order to address lack of medical coverage in rural areas, the national government launched the National Rural Health Mission in 2005. This mission focuses resources on rural areas and poor states which have weak health services in the hope of improving health care in India's poorest regions.

CONCLUSION

The product is the central component of any marketing mix which can be defined as a set of attributes offered to consumer. Most products of the hospitals are services which can be classified as line services, supportive services and auxiliary services. Line services which are also called core services include indoor & outpatient services, emergency services i.e. ICU & operation theater. Services offered by medical & Para-medical staff come under supportive services which directly determine the quality of medical services. At last auxiliary services include ambulatory services, dietary services, indoor & outdoor patient registration services, engineering & maintenance services which all help in making hospital services effective.

In a hospital service industry, every employee works with the principal goal of providing service to its customers. The consumers here are the patients coming for primary consultation or seeking other support services, be it radiology, diagnostics or pathological investigations.

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