A STUDY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR PROMOTION AND GROWTH OF HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MP, INDIA

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Abstract- It is observed that a lot of work has been done on the overall Indian rural market by many national and International corporate organizations, very less work has been done by the healthcare industry in rural India. As a result while products like Pepsi, Parle biscuits etc have made inroads into farthest possible rural markets, even basic medicine could not be made readily available in these areas. There are several reasons why healthcare companies have neglected rural markets. The urban hospitals had so much formal demand that they did not find the need for reaching the rural market until recently. Today, as the competition in urban areas intensifies, as cost rises, as productivity stagnates, the healthcare players feel the need to focus more on the rural market. This paper focuses on the healthcare facilities in Rural area and suggestive model for its promotional strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence, an issue as important as public health and healthcare of the masses has been conveniently ignored by the government as well as by the corporate. The development of the nation largely depends upon the development of the rural population. However for any industry to enter into rural markets it is necessary to understand the rural market, the rural consumer’s concerns and develop proper strategies in alignment with the rural market needs. It is also felt that there is a need to find out the differences in the rural and urban market situations and consumer behavior with reference to the healthcare needs so that suitable strategies can be adopted by local healthcare players and by corporates which operate on national level. The rural marketing forays of healthcare companies are very recent and it will be interesting to study the spread of modern healthcare facilities in the rural market in India and in Madhya Pradesh.

Statement of Problem

As seen from the above discussion, it is evident that healthcare has never received due attention of the Indian government, as on date just 0.9% of the GDP is being spent on this sector by the government. Both the government and the private sector have till now neglected the rural population in terms of health, thus it would be worthwhile to study.

* The present healthcare scenario in the rural area.
The level of satisfaction among the healthcare consumers.

The level of satisfaction among the healthcare professionals regarding the facilities prevailing in the rural area.

The opportunities and challenges for the promotion and growth of healthcare companies in rural area.

The study is expected to contribute to the mass of knowledge significantly as the findings can be used by managers and strategy formulators of healthcare sector for better understanding of the trials and tribulations faced by them in approaching the rural markets.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The healthcare industry in India promises to be one of the fastest growing ones and the country has world class hospitals and highly qualified medical personnel, however, the delivery of healthcare services for a large section of the rural population is still inadequate.

According to Gupta Sumit D. (2006) rural marketing in developing countries like India has often been borrowed from the western world. His paper there by presents the modified version of Philip Kotler’s famous rural marketing mix consisting of 4P’s. The focus is on its modification and subsequent customization to Indian rural market’s perspective.

As per Duggal R. (1997) the total expenditure on health in India is estimated as 5.2% of the GDP, public health investment is only 0.9%, which is by far too inadequate to meet the requirements of poor and needy people. While 75% of India’s population lives in rural areas, less than 10% of the total health budget is allocated to this sector. Kumar Pawan, Dangi Neha (2013) proposed that in the recent years rural market have acquired significance and attract the attention of marketers as 68.84% population of India reside in 6, 38,000 villages and overall growth of economy has resulted into substantial increase in the purchasing power of the rural communities.

**OBJECTIVES & HYPOTHESIS**

The research was conducted with the following objectives:

**Objectives**

1) To identify the various types of healthcare facilities and services that already exists in the rural market.

2) To assess the need for promotion and distribution of healthcare facilities and services in rural markets.

3) To design and develop a model of distribution and promotion in rural markets enlisting the probable do’s and don’ts for use by healthcare companies.

**Hypothesis of the study:**

The following hypothesis has been formulated for testing in the study: -

**Hypothesis 1:**

H0: There is no relationship whatsoever between the availability of healthcare facilities in rural area and the satisfaction of the rural customer

H1: The rural customer is satisfied with the availability of healthcare facilities in rural areas.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out with the use of primary and secondary data collected. The universe for the study
comprises of the total population present in the selected towns of Madhya Pradesh. These rural towns have been selected because demographically they truly represent the rural population of the country.

Sample selection and design
Non probability convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data for the proposed research work.

Keeping in view the constrains of time, cost, geographical accessibility and the convenience of survey, a feasible sample size of 100 medical healthcare consumers and 50 healthcare professionals from each of the three selected towns was taken.

Research Tool
In order to carry out the survey two separate questionnaires for healthcare consumer and professional were used.

Statistical Tools:
The primary data collected has been analyzed by the use of various appropriate statistical and mathematical tools for significant analysis. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS16.0) was used for primary data analysis in which dependent and independent variables are systematically defined and correlated. The selected methods of data analysis include reliability and validity analysis, Chi square test, and the correlation regression techniques were used to test the hypothesis and have been presented in the findings.

Findings

Medical Healthcare Consumer

The findings from the analysis of the data collected from the interview of the healthcare consumer are as follows,

1. 74% of the respondents of the sample is not satisfied with the prevailing healthcare facilities in the rural area, while only 26% seem to be satisfied.

2. 34% of the users avail the medical facilities available in the government hospitals while 32% of the users go to the private doctors.

3. 69% (40+29) of the healthcare services users in rural markets expect that they should have good hospitals either government or private close to their homes or else should have easier access to the available hospitals in the area.

4. 66% of the respondents do not have proper chemist shop in their area and only 34% of the respondents claim to have a chemist shop in their area.

5. It was also indicated that 78% (27+51) of the population expects better hospitals and doctors in their area, and 21% found the facilities like Ultrasound and X-Rays insufficient.

6. It was observed from the data that while almost 50% of the sample population spends moderately (between Rs.100 and 200 per month) on the healthcare a reasonably large population 21% spends around Rs.1000 per month on healthcare.

7. Almost 70% of the respondents do not have healthcare insurance, and out of the remaining
30% who have the coverage, majority are either insured through their employers or are covered under some kind of government healthcare insurance scheme.

Medical Healthcare Professional

The findings from the analysis of the data collected from the interview of the healthcare professionals are as follows,

1. Out of the sample collected by the researcher majority of the population are MBBS / MD.
2. It is also seen that the surgical and super specialties are acutely lacking in these areas.
3. Majority of the sample population i.e. 61% was of more than 10 years of experience,
4. A majority of the healthcare professional prefer to send the patients to the government hospitals and some of them to the tertiary care hospitals in the nearby cities.
5. Once again the response from the healthcare professionals confirmed that there is a lack of required modern medical facilities in rural India.
6. It was replied by the professional that the major problem is of the availability of good doctors.
7. more than 75% of the medical practice in the rural area is either government hospital based or is individual clinic based,

Hypothesis Testing:

Hypothesis number 1: The rural customer is not satisfied with the availability of healthcare facilities in rural areas.

The Chi square test was applied and value is calculated to be 34.56, refereeing to the table of significance, the value is statistically significant at 0.001 level (N=300, dF=1, p<0.001).

This means that a statistically significant number of the rural healthcare consumers are dissatisfied with the available healthcare facilities in the rural area.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

After collecting the data and analyzing it carefully the researcher has arrived to certain conclusions some of the prominent are as follows,

1) Majority of the rural population is not satisfied with the available healthcare facilities.
2) While soft drinks and bottled mineral water has reached almost all the nook and corner of rural area, there is a vast paucity of chemist shops in these rural areas.
3) It is a myth that majority of the rural population is poor, in fact 70% of the rural population falls under the bracket of middle and higher middle class,
4) A pleasant surprise is that approx. 90% of the rural population is either aware of internet facility or has used it at least once.
5) The detailed discussion of conclusion and recommendation for both, medical healthcare consumer and medical healthcare professional in the rural areas is mentioned below,

Medical Healthcare Consumer

A majority of the rural healthcare consumer is not satisfied with the prevailing healthcare facilities in the rural area, which even statistically from the data analysis is a significant amount and clearly re confirms the need of the study and is indicating that whatever is
being done presently to improve the healthcare facilities in rural India is falling very short of the needs of the rural population.

**Recommendations**

As revealed from the primary data collected a sizable number i.e 74% of the consumer of healthcare in rural India is not satisfied, it is obvious that their expectations about the facilities are not fulfilled and hence the opportunity for healthcare in rural India is huge.

Therefore the following things can be implemented at the earliest by anyone who intends to develop healthcare in rural India,

1) A majority of consumers are using their personal vehicles and are to drive long distances in order to get even the basic healthcare facilities such as medicines, therefore their lies a huge opportunity for the graduating pharmacists in the urban institutions to consider putting up chemist shops in the rural areas which will be win-win solution for all.

2) The good quality diagnostic facilities in government hospitals in rural areas under PPP (Public Private Partnership)model should be encouraged, which would once again open new horizons for the industry as well as for the consumer of healthcare facilities in rural area and would create a win-win situation.

3) It has been observed from the primary data that communication between the consumer and the service provider is at time an issue. Also, the education level of the majority of the consumers of healthcare facility in rural area is compromised hence promotion of the availability of the facilities and their application should be done by the professionals, the healthcare facility providers and the NGO in the local languages from time to time.

4) Looking at the vast spread of Information Technology even in rural India as confirmed by the primary data, the researcher strongly recommend the huge opportunity for promotion of tele-medicine facility which will not only improve the healthcare in rural areas but will also provide huge job opportunities for the software service providers across the board.

5) Healthcare insurance companies need to target the rural consumer keeping in mind his unique characteristics and developing a different way to approach them and make them aware of the facility, because if some organization can break this barrier a large fortune is waiting for them ahead.

**REFERENCES**


