

# Influence of Pharmacist on Consumer's Buying of Pharmaceutical Product with Specific Preference to Gujarat and Maharashtra

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**Abstract.** To cope up with the competition among the existing pharmaceutical industries and new entrance, there is always a challenge for the pharmaceutical industries to innovate for new marketing strategies which would help the industries to survive in the competitive market. This paper provides perceptions of the consumer regarding the purchase of the pharmaceutical products. Consumer data are collected from two major states of India, Gujarat and Maharashtra and 516 respondent's data were collected who provided their responses to the questionnaire designed for this study. The data collected are of the consumer's perception or action steps over the possible scenarios while there is unavailability of the drug or the prescribed drug is costly. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data from both groups to compare perceptions of the consumers. The objective was to evaluate the perspective of consumers. Results from analysis shows that there is positive impact of the Pharmacist on the purchasing decision of the consumers.

**KEYWORDS:** Pharmaceutical Marketing, Medicine, Advertisement

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## 1. Introduction

The Indian Pharmaceutical Industry today is in the front rank of India's science-based industries with wide ranging capabilities in the complex field of drug manufacture and technology. It ranks very high in the third world, in terms of technology, quality and range of medicines manufactured. From simple headache pills to sophisticated antibiotics and complex cardiac compounds, almost every type of medicine is now made indigenously.

Drug promotion directed toward health care professionals is one method of marketing used by the pharmaceutical industry. Most pharmacists support the practice of evidence-based medicine and believe that they have an obligation to make drug recommendations based on the best evidence available. Nonetheless, 45% of practising pharmacists said that they lacked the time to perform the literature searches required to make evidence-based decisions, and 11% stated that they did not have the resources to do so. Hence, pharmacists often rely on summaries

of evidence to obtain drug information and make therapeutic decisions. Time constraints may increase the vulnerability of pharmacists to the ready accessibility of pharmaceutical industry representatives, who provide information in a quick and simple manner, and to readily available pharmaceutical industry–sponsored education events. Reliance on these sources of information exposes pharmacists to unknown biases, some of which may result in undesirable behaviours similar to those of physicians. Some of these behaviours may be detrimental to the fulfilment of pharmacists’ professional responsibilities to their patients and to society and may also be inconsistent with evidence-based practice.

## 2. Literature Review

In the literature review conducted on more than 20 research paper out of which, more than 10 were found relevant to this study. With the review done, researcher found that not enough work has been done on the pharmacist influence on the consumer. Also in this study, researcher had focused on two major states of India, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Out of the top ten Pharmaceutical Industries of India, more than 50% of the companies listed below are based out in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Maharashtra being the capital of Pharmaceutical industries and Gujarat leads India in pharmaceuticals and enjoys the share between 35% and 46% of the national share in pharmaceutical production over the last two decades. And the was not enough research was carried out using these two states’ respondents.

Convenience continues to be the primary patronage motive for using a particular pharmacy, followed by price and service. Satisfaction with pharmacy services remains high, with 85% of respondents reporting being satisfied with the process of filling a new prescription and 90% being satisfied with the refill process. Exploratory analyses showed that respondents who reported they always asked questions of their pharmacists were consistently more satisfied with pharmacy services. Consumers ranked physicians and pharmacists as the first and second most important sources for drug information, and they were more satisfied with information obtained from these sources than they were with information obtained from print or electronic information sources. Thirty-six per cent of respondents had searched the Internet for information on prescription medications within the past year.

Physicians’ prescription choices between medically equivalent pharmaceutical products and therapeutic alternatives have been studied by researchers such as Hellerstein (1998); Coscelli

(2000); Richard and Van Horn (2004), and Rizzo and Zeckhauser (2005). Using data from a survey of physicians and their patients, Hellerstein (1998) found significant differences between physicians' likelihood to prescribe generics and also found that it is difficult to determine why some physicians are more likely to prescribe generic drugs. Coscelli (2000) used information about doctor and patient characteristics, as well as information about when and how patients switch physicians.

### **3. Rationale of the Study**

The lack of a professional supervision may expose consumers of natural products to risks; pharmacists play an important role in giving information about these substances. A survey was designed to investigate the attitudes and knowledge of consumers and pharmacists toward the safety of natural products. One key feature of pharmaceutical marketing is that each of the consumer shows different characteristics. As obvious, in most of the cases, it is the doctor who directly influences the consumers decision of buying the medicines but when certain conditions arises, that time even the pharmacist also plays a vital role in selling the pharmaceutical products. Two of such conditions were identified and listed below:

- Cost of the drug
- Unavailability of the drug

These are two such conditions while the consumer also consults with the pharmacist on whether to go with the same drug as prescribed by the doctor or go for the alternate drug. And in such conditions, pharmacist if he is trained and educated plays vital role. In most of the cases, doctor's decision would be considered as final as these are lifesaving product, but in many cases and situations are such while pharmacist plays an important role.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

This study was conducted with two main objectives as mentioned below.

- i. The study emphases on finding the consumer preference and whether there is any influence of the Pharmacist while the pharmaceutical drug is not available as prescribed by doctor.
- ii. The study emphases on finding the consumer preference and whether there is any influence of the Pharmacist while the pharmaceutical drug prescribed by doctor is very costly.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

To conduct this study, exploratory research was used conducted. Secondary data was also used. For this study researcher had used both Primary as well as secondary data. A group of 516 respondents (consumers of the pharmaceutical products) were reached out and set of questions were asked. A questionnaire was designed to gather the primary data from the consumers. Data tabulation had been done state wise which is used for interpretation and analysis. Chi-square analysis is done for arriving at the results.

Based on the sample size calculation, it was calculated with the help of formula that 384 respondents are required for this study which was rounded off to 400 where, Confidence level was 95%, Confidence interval was 5% and Population of these two states was 172 million). While the questionnaire was sent to the respondents, 516 responses were received which was used to carry out the analysis. Out of the 516 respondents, 387 respondents are from Gujarat and 129 respondents are from Maharashtra.

#### **5. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This question was framed to understand the consumer's perception while the specific drug prescribed by the doctors is not available. The rationale behind framing this question is to check whether the consumer reach out to Pharmacist while the drug is not available and whether the pharmacist play any role in influencing the consumer's decision in buying the drug. To evaluate this scenario, the question was framed considering the mentioned below possible ways that consumer prefer while the drug is not available. Consumer's best possible option are listed below, while the prescribed drug is not available:

- Inform doctor for unavailability of the medicine and ask for alternate medicine
- Tell the Medical shop to provide similar medicine of other company
- Wait for a day until the similar medicine is available

**Table 1: Consumer's preference on unavailability of drug**

<b>If any drug prescribed by the doctor is not available for now in the market, what you do?</b>				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Inform doctor for unavailability of the medicine and ask for alternate medicine	302	58.5	58.5	58.5
Tell the Medical shop to provide similar medicine of other company	154	29.8	29.8	88.4
Wait for a day until the similar medicine is available	60	11.6	11.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*(Source: Authors' Calculation)*

The question was framed to check the influence of the costly drug over the buying decision of the consumer. With this question, researcher tries to evaluate whether the cost has major implication on the buying behaviour of the consumer or not. To evaluate this scenario, the question was framed considering the mentioned below possible ways that consumer prefer while the drug is not available. Consumer's best possible behaviour characteristics are listed below, while the prescribed drug is not available:

- Ask for similar content drug which is cheaper
- Consult with Medical shop and seek advice whether you can go for another similar drug which is cheaper than the one prescribed by doctor
- Purchase the same drug as prescribed by doctor

**Table 2: Effect of the Cost of the Drug**

<b>If any drug prescribed by the doctor is costly, what you do?</b>				
	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Ask for similar content drug which is cheaper	132	25.6	25.6	25.6
Consult with Medical shop and seek advice whether you can go for other similar drug which is cheaper than the one prescribed by doctor	152	29.5	29.5	55.0
Purchase the same drug as prescribed by doctor	232	45.0	45.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*(Source: Authors' Calculation)*

## Setting of Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>: Consumer of Gujarat and Maharashtra were having similar behaviour.

H<sub>1</sub>: Consumer of Gujarat and Maharashtra were having different behaviour.

**Table 3: Behavior of Gujarat and Maharashtra' respondents**

	Inform doctor for unavailability of the medicine and ask for alternate medicine	Tell the Medical shop to provide similar medicine	Wait for a day until the similar medicine is available
Gujarat (N = 387)	232 (59.9%)	108 (28.0%)	47 (12.1)
Maharashtra (N = 129)	72 (55.8)	42 (32.6%)	15 (11.6%)

From the Table above, it can be inferred that both Gujarat and Maharashtra show the similar response over the unavailability of drug. We used Chi-square statistics to testing the hypothesis of no difference in the behaviour of the consumer from Gujarat and Maharashtra, the observed p-value =0.6834 clearly indicates that null hypothesis cannot be rejected and the behaviour of the consumers from the two states is similar.

## 6. Conclusions

### *Consumer's Preference while un-availability of the drug*

From the above results, it can be observed that 58.5% of the consumer do reach out to Doctors and inform about the drug un-availability. So, this means that in 58.5% cases, the doctors play vital role and consumer's first preference is to consult with doctors. Also, the Pharmacists are consulted for the alternative drug.

### *Consumer's Preference while cost of the drug is high*

As the pharmaceutical products are kind of life saving drug or products which are mandatory required, it is obvious that consumers prefer the specific drug over the cost. Based on the analysis, it is proved that 45% of the consumer prefer the same drug which has been prescribed by the doctors even that is costly. But here, the distributor will also play vital role and with 29.5% result value, consumer do consult with Pharmacist for the alternate cheap drug. Consumer prefer the alternate drug over the one prescribed by the doctors.

### *Behaviour of Gujarat and Maharashtra's respondents over unavailability of drug*

It was observed that both Gujarat and Maharashtra show the similar response over the unavailability of drug.

There has been little change in consumer and pharmacist attitudes. In order to improve the pharmaceutical sales, training must aim to increase pharmacists' confidence in convenience the consumers. Confident, well trained pharmacists should be able to influence the consumer and which will have positive impact on customer attitudes and health. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that with 29.8% cases, Pharmacist also plays a vital role in influencing the consumer. At the time of unavailability of any drug, consumer prefer reaching out to doctors for alternative. But consumer also prefer discussing with distributor to suggest alternative medicine. And in terms of the cost, 25.6% of the cases where consumer do prefer consulting with doctor and ask for the alternate drug but in 29.5% of the cases, consumer do prefer discussing with pharmacist and prefer the drug that has been prescribed by pharmacist. Having said this, it is important for the pharmaceutical industries to concentrate on pharmacist as they influence the buying of pharmaceutical products.

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