

Marketing Technique in Healthcare Services: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

The marketing strategy used in tertiary care hospital medical services uses a variety of tactics to attract, keep, and engage patients. The primary objective is to provide patients with excellent medical care and positive practice. The methods are intended to increase the confidence and trustworthiness while giving them a unique and memorable experience. Digital marketing is one of the most critical marketing strategies for healthcare services. Social media, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), and other powerful techniques are required to attract new patients and keep them interested in the hospital. Another strategy to encourage current patients to tell their friends about the hospital is to use patient referral programmes and word-of-mouth advertising. Implementing patient-centred services and individualized treatment is another tactical approach.

Keywords: Healthcare Marketing, Marketing Technique, PR Exercise, Digital Marketing, Advertising, Website, Social Media, and Print Media

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing techniques in healthcare services in tertiary care hospitals involve a combination of traditional and digital marketing strategies to promote hospital services, facilities, and medical expertise to potential patients, their families, and referring physicians.¹ Hospitals have now invested money in marketing directly to consumers since the advertising ban for healthcare services was lifted.² Healthcare organisations communicate with their patient populations in a variety of ways. The external channels of the marketing communication mix include advertising, marketing, public relations, sales promotion, and individual sales.³ Direct marketing is the practice of communicating with customers directly. It is a highly quantitative type of communication because responses to different requests can be documented.⁴ Direct marketing is the practice of communicating with customers directly. It is a highly quantitative type of communication because responses to different requests can be documents.⁵ The marketing mix is the primary element distinguishing social marketing from the interaction and advertising tactics it occasionally confuses. Positive social change can result from the behaviour of individuals who influence public policy through social marketing.^{6,7} Product, price, location, and promotion are the four essential elements of the pharmaceutical advertising mix.⁸ Using marketing methods in public hospitals benefits management and strengthens patient and employee bonds.⁹ To investigate the distribution of funds and costs across nonprofit hospitals in situations where the provider payment rate is greater than that of the commercial sector.^{10,11} Internal marketing also increases employee productivity and customer happiness, which increases profits.¹² Social marketing is increasingly used in illness prevention and health promotion to persuade people to adopt healthy behaviours.¹³ Better hospitals were expected to use advertising to showcase their improved performance, draw in more business than lower-quality hospitals, and, in the end, make it more financially advantageous for all hospitals to make investments in quality improvement investments.^{14,15} Most scientific research on experiential marketing focusses on the product experience.¹⁶ Urban hospitals operate in a very different competitive market than other markets.¹⁷ Advertising is included in the traditional mix of marketing communication.¹⁸ The management process known as marketing is in charge of finding, satisfying, and profitably addressing client needs.¹⁹ Segmentation, targeting, and item placement are three interconnected aspects of target marketing, a strategy used better to satisfy clients' wants and needs.²⁰ Market analysis in pharmaceutical companies entails more than just coverage and commercial data, to investigate the impact of hospital and physician market structures on the diffusion of medical technology.²¹ Hospitals are using creative marketing techniques. Therefore, this study focused on the best approaches to create marketing mixes in a few ter-

tiary care hospitals in the healthcare sector.²² The study aims to investigate the dynamic landscape of marketing methods used in tertiary care institutions. The study explores the many communication channels used, considers the impact of banned advertising, assesses the function of marketing mix, and determines how marketing tactics affect hospital visibility, patient involvement, and healthcare results. This study aims to offer insights into efficient marketing strategies that improve hospital-patient relationships, worker productivity, and budget allocations in the healthcare industry through a comprehensive investigation.

REVIEW

Table no. 1 presents a comprehensive overview of various research studies conducted to evaluate marketing techniques in healthcare services. Each study is attributed to a specific author or group of authors, along with the method used, insights collected, and conclusions drawn from their research findings.

Developing services, increasing health literacy, and using the 7Ps model of the healthcare marketing mix (people, product, pricing, location, promotion, process, and physical environment) are all important strategies, and improving financial resources are some of the marketing strategies used in healthcare services in tertiary care hospitals.²³ The use of marketing communication, particularly public relations, is emphasised in the health sector.²⁴ Additionally, the application of lean methodology can be used to streamline processes, eliminate wasteful practices, reduce variation, and improve the utilisation of hospital resources.³² The aim of marketing in healthcare is to increase public satisfaction, provide high-quality medical care, and improve standard of living.³³ However, there are limitations in the available data on the diversity of service providers and the impact of different care services on healthcare marketing.³⁴ In general, marketing techniques in healthcare care aim to inform and convince patients about the benefits of services, facilitate service delivery, and improve quality and safety of care.

Standard marketing techniques used in healthcare services

Some standard marketing techniques used in healthcare services in tertiary care hospitals include Branding, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Educational blogging, and email marketing.

Branding: Brand marketing is the process of promoting a business's products or services in a way that enhances the brand as a whole. It comprises building and maintaining relationships between brands and customers, as well as promoting brand traits, or the qualities that come to mind when a consumer thinks about a particular brand. We will cover a broad overview of branding in this guide, including brand types, brand awareness, brand equity, brand relevance, and brand recognition.

Table 1: Overview of various research studies

Name of author	Year	Conclusion	Key findings	Types of marketing
A. Nakenova ²³	2021	Healthcare marketing improves patient happiness and quality of care.	Public satisfaction and healthcare quality are improved through healthcare marketing.	Healthcare Marketing
Ramin Ravangard et al ²⁴	2020	Promotion" is the least influential factor in hospital selection. - The "physical environment" is the most crucial factor affecting selection	The participants gave the "speciality of health service providers" the highest rating.	Advertising Marketing
Abdel Mahdi Masri ²⁵	2016	Marketing strategies can help create a positive environment.	The techniques used in marketing can result in happiness.	Social Marketing
Mariana Birsas ²⁶	2011	Public services marketing must include the promotion of healthcare.	The patients were given an anonymous question survey and the results were presented graphically for analysis.	Public Marketing
Cazacu Lavinia ²⁷	2015	Healthcare providers put patients' needs ahead of profits.	Traditional marketing, highlighting the significance of connections in this industry.	Traditional Marketing
Susanto Teuku Rezki Amriza ²⁸	2017	The marketing mix affects patients with national health insurance	Implementing marketing techniques helps businesses gain a competitive edge, boost visibility, and build a positive patient reputation.	Digital Marketing
Andreas Aryo Risky Prasetyo, Wachyu Sulistiadi et.al ²⁹	2019	The hospital marketing strategy can be developed effectively using electronic media.	Hospitals can communicate with digital marketing because of the simplicity of IT.	Digital Marketing
Nery Suarez Lugo ³⁰	2008	Marketing can help solve public health problems.	It can be used as a tool for health-related activities.	Public Health Marketing
Laura Catalina Timiras ³¹	2020	Healthcare marketing has unique components and characteristics.	Healthcare marketing differs from marketing in other industries.	Healthcare Marketing

Hospitals these days find it challenging to rely solely on "word of mouth" promotion to draw patients. This is due to the creation of brand image, which is bolstered by the corporatization of healthcare, India's promotion as a sought-after destination for medical tourism, and the threat posed by the proliferation of new hospitals.³⁵

Patient success stories and testimonials with special value: Share success stories and actual patient testimonials to demonstrate the hospital's expertise and compassion. Positive patient experiences have a strong influence on how people view facility.³⁵

Social media promotion: Social media promotion involves the use of various platforms to increase the visibility, engagement, and reach of a brand, product, service, or individual. It encompasses creating and sharing content, running ads, engaging with followers, and collaborating with influencers to attract and retain a target audience. Effective social media promotion requires understanding the platform's algorithms, tailoring content to the audience, and analysing metrics to optimise strategies for better results. Content Management: Create a balanced content strategy that combines informative and exciting content, including health tips, patient success stories, educational motion pictures, and news about medical advancements to add value to your audience. Visual elements Use high-quality images, such as pictures, infographics, and videos, to make your material more captivating and shareable.^{36,37}

Creating content: Tertiary care hospitals produce excellent content for blogs, movies, and infographics

to educate patients and family members about medical conditions, possible treatments, and hospital services.³⁸ Hospitals that provide tertiary care can use content advertising as a powerful tool to engage with their audience, provide useful information, and win over potential patients. Several content marketing techniques are employed in the highest level of care hospitals' medical programmes.

Bloggin for Education: Setting up a blog on the hospital website provides a platform for disseminating informative material. A few examples of prospective themes are specific medical conditions; suggestions for preventive care; the most recent advances in healthcare. The hospital may become a recognised authority in the medical field by offering accurate and reliable information. To promote services and interact with potential patients, hospitals host health fairs, social gatherings, and other outreach initiatives.^{39,40}

Why is email marketing essential for hospitals?

An effective and implemented email marketing initiative facilitates the establishment and maintenance of enduring client relationships in the context of a hospital setting. This objective can be achieved by executing the following strategies: Dissemination of timely and customised email communications, providing instructive content by email to enlighten clients and cultivating organisational distinctiveness versus competitors.⁴¹ Hospitals use marketing emails to inform people about upcoming events, new services, and health advice. Tertiary care hospitals can benefit significantly from email marketing to main-

tain patient contact, disseminate pertinent health information, advertise services, and foster partnerships. Some efficient email marketing strategies are used in tertiary care hospitals' healthcare services.⁴¹

Marketing strategies for the hospital: Given that healthcare is a more patient-focused, highly qualified, and technically driven industry, the hospital needs to create a comprehensive marketing plan to attract its patients and consumers. This will require collaboration efforts between the marketing team and the doctors. Healthcare marketing is a strategic outreach and communications plan that aims to draw in new healthcare consumers, assist them on their healthcare journey, and maintain their interest in the healthcare system, service, or product. The following is a list of particular marketing techniques that Indian hospitals use.⁴²

Strategic marketing plan: The hospital management must develop a comprehensive marketing plan immediately. The starting point is to conduct thorough research and development on patient traffic, patient happiness, technology improvements, etc. The strategic plan must be implemented. The hospital's marketing team needs to conduct a SWOT analysis for both its advertising campaigns and the hospital's services. Additionally, they should establish measurable objectives within a specific time frame. The team should choose a marketing budget for the coming year and analyse its rivals. Set clear and

measurable marketing goals for the hospital.⁴³

Ensure the objectives align with the hospital's overall mission and business strategy.

Develop the marketing message: Craft a compelling and unique value proposition that differentiates the hospital from competitors. Create messaging that resonates with the target audience, focussing on the hospital's specialities and services.⁴⁴

Allocate budget and resources: Determine the budget for the marketing plan and allocate resources effectively.⁴⁵

Planning camps for medical health check-ups: An essential and successful marketing tactic that hospitals can use is to organise medical health check-up camps, which are typically free. This will improve the hospital's visibility, particularly in remote areas. Days before the real camp is organised, the hospital's health field staff should conduct a detailed survey to better understand the health issues and requirements of the local population. They will help field personnel in earning the trust of the local population. Hospitals should offer free health and immunisation camps periodically. Organising medical health check-up camps can be an effective marketing technique for a tertiary care hospital. It allows the hospital to reach a wider audience, create awareness of its services, and promote preventive healthcare.⁴⁶

Table 2: Medical health check-up camps

Marketing tactics	Description
Identify the target audience	Determine the specific target audience for the health check-up camp. Consider demographics, location, and health concerns prevalent in the community. Choose the right services: Select health check-up services that align with the needs of the target audience. Include basic health assessments such as blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and BP measurements, along with specialised screenings related to prevalent health issues. ⁴⁷
Collaborate with local organisations	Partner with local community groups, schools, corporate offices, or NGOs to expand outreach and participation. Collaborative efforts can spread the word more effectively.
Set a date and location	Decide on a convenient date and location for the camp. Ensure that the venue is easily accessible and has adequate space for various screening stations.
Promote in advance	Start by promoting the health check-up camp well in advance using multiple channels. Use social media, local newspapers, radio, posters, and banners to create awareness. ⁴⁵

Table 3: 7p's of the marketing

7p's	Description
Product	Because the products provided by healthcare organisations are intangible, the product mix is crucial for marketers. The hospital is completely equipped with various facilities, rendering services in the form of intangibility to give efficient and dependable services, such as ambulance, pharmacy, diagnostic, and emergency services ²⁴
Price	Price is the most crucial aspect and component of the marketing mix when choosing a specific hospital treatment. ⁵¹
Place	The availability of healthcare and the location of the hospital are significant determinants of the treatment patients can receive. ⁵²
Promotion	After considering the target audience, media type, channels employed, and sales promotion, the hospital uses either P.R., advertising, or both. e.g., informal and formal, T.V., word of mouth. ⁵³
People	As a marketing mix variable, people include all individuals engaged in providing services, encompassing medical, nursing, and ancillary personnel, regardless of their specific roles. ⁵⁴
Physical evidence	Physical evidence is crucial in healthcare services because it helps patients diagnose and treat their conditions correctly. ⁵⁵
Process	The hospital's many tasks are often organised by process, which largely depends on its size and services, such as outpatient and inpatient care. ⁵⁶

Quality seals of approval: The National Hospital Quality Council of India and other reputable bodies should offer more quality accreditations to hospitals, particularly private hospitals. For hospitals, accreditations such as NABH, ISO, and JCI are crucial. The hospital will benefit from these accreditations by improving both the quality of its customer service standards and procedures and its ability to attract more commercial clients. Accreditations also help hospitals in establishing a good name and reputation in the field.³⁷

Planning academic programmes like C.M.E. and C.N.E: Hospitals should offer academic programmes such as continuing medical education (CME) and continuing education for nurses (CNE) to promote a scientific and intellectual culture within the organisation. It is crucial that technical personnel such as doctors, nurses, and technicians regularly enhance their abilities because the healthcare industry is highly dependent on technical talent. Once again, this will improve patients' perceptions of hospitals. The CME and CNE aid the organisation in expanding its industry networking and fostering an intellectual environment. They can connect with and invite Resources Persons from disciplines around the nation and the globe.⁴⁸

Internal marketing: An internal marketing plan is crucial for a hospital in addition to traditional external marketing tactics because front-line staff members and healthcare professionals frequently interact with patients or parties associated with patients. The internal marketing plan should include programs for front-line staff members to learn how to communicate with patients. That would comprise educating them on the requirements that need to be maintained in the areas of consumer safety, the confidentiality of patient data, and patient relations, as well as developing a relationship of trust and respect with the patients. The hospital's floor managers and floor supervisors should monitor the proper patient input system that is in place.⁴⁹

Public relations: The hospital should have a separate department for public relations and public relations officers with the appropriate job descriptions. The PR division would strive to keep an excellent connection with the media and do numerous interviews and media appearances in health-related programmes. The hospital should also plan community development events as part of its P.R. strategy. To educate the public on various diseases and health-related issues, hospitals can also utilise cause marketing techniques.⁵⁰

There are 7p's of the marketing mix used for marketing mix strategy for sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Marketing techniques can be essential in promoting healthcare services at tertiary care hospitals. Still, it

is crucial to use ethical and patient-centred approaches to ensure that patient care and safety remain the top priority. Healthcare marketing is essential in assisting healthcare professionals in developing, interacting with, and satisfying their target market. Instead of starting with items or services, modern marketers focus on the consumer's needs. More critical than executing a single transaction is developing a long-lasting relationship. The goal of a healthcare service provider should be to increase customer satisfaction to the point where they use the same service provider again and again. According to the survey, hospitals face several difficulties when trying to promote their services, but there are also opportunities for the industry that healthcare organisations can take advantage of. The hospitals can remain open with a well-thought-out marketing approach.

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