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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	PREPARATION AND ANALYSIS OF VALUE ADDED STATEMENT OF VISAKHAPATNAM PORT TRUST <i>ARUNA POLISETTY &amp; SHEELA.P</i>	1
2.	A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS SAKTHI MILK WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY <i>M. DEVARAJAN &amp; S. KIRTHIKA</i>	8
3.	EMPOWERING HEALTH SECTOR THROUGH DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVES <i>CHINNASAMY. V</i>	10
4.	COACHING: TRY FEEDFORWARD INSTEAD FEEDBACK FOR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE <i>C. NIKHILA REDDY, JYOTI ADHIKARI &amp; DR. RAVINDER KAUR</i>	14
5.	ROLE OF LOGISTICS IN BUILDING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION <i>DR. S. SUDHA</i>	17
6.	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ENABLED SERVICES IN PROMOTING SERVICES MARKETING <i>GUDDATI ARCHANA</i>	20
7.	INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE & BRAND BUILDING <i>K. SRIKANTH &amp; DR. SAPNA SINGH</i>	22
8.	A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON EMOTIONAL STABILITY AND WORK LIFE BALANCE OF EMPLOYEES OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN MADHYA PRADESH <i>NEHA SOMANI &amp; DR. SANDEEP MALU</i>	26
9.	A STUDY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON INTERNET BANKING SERVICES: AN EVALUATION <i>DR. J. RAMOLA PREMALATHA &amp; V. BHARATHKUMAR</i>	29
10.	THE ROLE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN THE IRAQI ECONOMY <i>HIKMAT SALMAN KHUDHAIR</i>	33
11.	FOOD SECURITY IN IGAD COUNTRIES: UNFINISHED AGENDA OR UNATTAINABLE GOAL? <i>MELAKE TEWOLDE</i>	39
12.	CASH CONVERSION CYCLE AND FIRM PROFITABILITY IN CEMENT MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN TELANGANA STATE-INDIA <i>P LAKSHMI NARASA REDDY</i>	47
13.	THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE <i>SREEJA NAIR</i>	50
14.	PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENTS' PERSISTENCE IN BUSINESS APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING CENTRES (BATCs): IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA <i>IBRAHIM SHITTU KAILANI</i>	53
15.	THE CAUSES OF PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL CREDIT SOCIETIES' OVERDUES IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A STUDY OF WEST GODAVARI DISTRICT <i>DR. K. SUDHAKARA RAO</i>	63
16.	U-COMMERCE OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES <i>SREEJA.E.S</i>	68
17.	ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF OLD AGE HOMES IN INDIA, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MYSURU CITY IN KARNATAKA <i>DIVYA M &amp; VIDYA D AVADHANI</i>	71
18.	A STUDY ON CONSUMER'S PERCEPTION ON MOBILE BANKING IN INDIA <i>AMALKUMAR.P</i>	76
19.	A CASE STUDY REGARDING NOT USING CREDIT CARD BY PEOPLE OF TINSUKIA DISTRICT <i>DR. NARENDRA KUMAR</i>	79
20.	IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN: A STUDY OF MANDI DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH <i>KHEM RAJ</i>	85
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>	<b>88</b>

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**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE & BRAND BUILDING**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Healthcare is one of the India's largest and fastest-growing sectors comprising of Hospitals, Medical Infrastructure, Medical Devices, Clinical Trials, Outsourcing, Telemedicine, Health Insurance all of which delivers goods and services to treat patients on preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care basis. The Indian healthcare industry is expected to reach US\$ 160 billion by 2017. Emerging trends in healthcare industry includes the rise of medical tourism, emerging health insurance market, the growth of telemedicine, expansion of healthcare infrastructure, rising opportunities in pharmaceutical industry, and the rise of clinical trials. Hospitals which is one of the most crucial and integral setting for preventive care relies primarily upon its employees who are the most vital force and communication medium contributing to successful promotion of hospital healthcare systems. In an era of patient driven healthcare, with patients being more informative, knowledgeable and challenging, hospitals need effective marketing to drive their strategies, convey their expanding range of services, make an emotional connection with patients, and create long lasting relationships thereby generating profits. Unless branding becomes central to the marketing director's agenda, it will not have the desired effect and can potentially create a backlash. Hence this paper is an attempt to revisit the literature that will examine the relevance of marketing in healthcare and how healthcare organizations will be incorporating Integrated Marketing Communications throughout their patient management as healthcare organizations are moving from a paper based business model to a "patient-centric" provider network.*

**KEYWORDS**

branding, healthcare, integrated marketing communication, patient centric.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In an era of economic liberalization in India, service sector predominantly occupies a pivotal role in the society. Unlike the primary agricultural sector or secondary industrial sector, which is concerned with production of tangible goods, the service is basically intangible and perishable, in the sense that neither the service provider nor the service receiver can store a service.

Healthcare industry which is one of the most crucial components of service sector unlike banking, insurance, hotel, transportation, education is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries and this health care can form an enormous part of a country's economy. Healthcare industry includes many subsectors in it comprising of Hospitals, Medical Infrastructure, Medical Devices, Clinical Trials, Outsourcing, Telemedicine, Health Insurance all of which delivers goods and services to treat patients on preventive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care basis. Emerging trends in healthcare includes the rise of medical tourism, emerging health insurance market, the growth of telemedicine, expansion of healthcare infrastructure, rising opportunities in pharmaceutical industry, and the rise of clinical trials. Leading the healthcare from the front is the hospital industry which is the vital component growing at a faster pace and is expected to be worth US\$ 81.2 billion by 2015.

The Indian hospital service sector generated revenue of over US\$ 45 billion in 2012. This revenue is expected to increase at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 20 percent during 2012-2017. Aging baby boomers, advances in medical technology, dramatic government reforms and a call for increased transparency in the healthcare delivery are a few of the challenges facing today's hospital healthcare industry. Getting a secured position in this competitive healthcare environment calls for an innovative approach to communication and this is where can IMC help in healthcare delivery system.

**2. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

1. To study the growth and significance of private sector in healthcare.
2. To study the influence of Integrated Marketing Communication in private healthcare.
3. To study the emergence of Brand Building elements through Integrated Marketing Communication.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative content analysis has been done to analyze secondary data sources so as to examine the relevance of IMC in healthcare along with the impact of IMC elements in healthcare branding.

**4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE****4.1 REFORMS IN HEALTHCARE SECTOR**

Healthcare industry in India has undergone change in its structure with the increased role of private sector, the emergence of corporate hospitals, and the diffusion of modern healthcare technology. The concept of corporatization of healthcare services has been developed in India in the early 1980's (Sukanya, 1995).

**4.2 PRIVATE HEALTHCARE SECTOR IN INDIA**

Private sector plays an important role in India's healthcare delivery system. Through a wide network of healthcare facilities, this sector caters to the needs of both urban and rural populations and has expanded widely to meet increasing demands. The significance of private healthcare sector in India can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Total health expenditure in India is estimated to be about 6% of GDP, of which private healthcare expenditure is 75% or 4.25% of GDP. About one-third of this expenditure is on secondary and tertiary inpatient care, the rest meeting the curative needs at primary level (World Bank, 1995).
- 2) Private healthcare expenditure in India has grown at a rate of 12.5% per annum since 1960-61. For each 1% increase in per capita income, private healthcare expenditure has increased by 1.47% (Bhat, 1996).
- 3) About 57% of hospitals and 32% of hospital beds are in the private sector. The share of private sector investment in total health infrastructure e.g. hospitals, investment in medical technology, are also quite significant.



- 4) At present about 80% of 390000 qualified allopathic doctors registered with medical councils in India are working in the private sector (Jassani, 1989; Bhat, 1996). There are 650000 providers of other systems of medicine practicing in India (planning commission, 1998) and most of them are in a private practice.
- 5) Utilization studies show that one third of inpatients and three quarters of outpatients utilize private healthcare facilities (Duggal & Amin, 1989; Yesudian, 1990; Visaria & Gumber, 1994).

The growth of this sector has been quite significant during recent times. There are several reasons for this. The budgetary support of government has not kept pace with the growing population healthcare needs. Moreover, the growth of private sector has also been triggered by factors such as new economic policy regime in India, the rapid influx of medical technology, predominantly urban base and a rising middle class. The dominance of private hospitals, high competition among them and emerging philosophy of viewing hospital enterprises as a commercial business entity have made a large number of medical practitioners to move into private practice.

As the penetration of private sector in healthcare has taken a strong pace from nearly insignificant to one of the biggest proportion in health service delivery and as the private hospitals emerging rapidly in response to increasing population, hospitals need effective marketing to drive their strategies, convey their expanding range of clinical & supportive services, make an emotional connection with patients, and create long lasting relationships thereby generating profits.

#### 4.3 MARKETING IN HEALTHCARE

Hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, physician practices, managed care organizations, rehabilitation centers and other healthcare organizations didn't think about marketing until the early 1970's. Physician to patient communication was very poor and patients had no choice rather than relying solely on physicians for health information. A study by Deloitte Center for Health Solutions stated that physicians influence almost every dollar spent in the \$2.5 trillion U.S. healthcare industry, and their orders are directly responsible for 80% of healthcare spending (Deloitte Center for Health Solutions, 2011). Later on due to the rapid advances in science and technology, communication delivery has taken a strong pace because mass of health information was readily available just on a push of a button, and with so many choices and options available to reach the target audience, patients started relying on other sources for their health information. Patients are able to play a more active role in their treatment decision making with information readily available through the Internet, dedicated health publications and television shows (Anne Gibson, 2002). And as the healthcare delivery system has been moving from provider centric to patient centric brand communications, marketers started designing customized marketing strategies to suit the needs and wants of each individual patient according to their healthcare requirements.

#### 4.4 BRANDING OF HEALTHCARE

Every hospital stands for a certain image or brand value either low cost care or specialized clinical services. It is of essential importance that everyone on staff from CEO to executive at the reception desk should communicate the organization's mission effectively. The result is a brand guided organization (Naveen, Anil, & Smuthi, 2014).

#### 4.5 BRAND IMAGE

In the healthcare context (Kotler & Shalowitz, 2008) suggested that hospital brand image is the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a patient holds towards a hospital. A brand image of a hospital is not absolute; it is relative to brand image of competing hospitals. The patients often form a brand image of a hospital from their own medical examination and treatment experiences (Kim et al., 2008). The growth of senior citizen's population in our country and growing focus on health are dynamically increasing particularly health wants and needs within the general populace. The current medical service market favors the buyer rather than the seller (Lee et al., 2010). Thus in the competitive healthcare environment, hospitals should focus their marketing efforts on effective and strategic brand management.

The nature of healthcare organizations is such that, branding is not strategic but only tactical and frequently is limited to controlling the use of the corporate identity. This is where marketing in healthcare plays an important role in strategic brand management. Brand management involves the design and implementation of marketing activities and programs to build measure and manage brands to maximize their value. Brand management is being performed under the strategies which include Corporate Social Responsibility, Loyalty programmes and Integrated Marketing Communication (Naveen, Anil, & Smuthi, 2014).

#### 4.6 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

A marketing campaign is not a press release. It's not an advertisement or media placement. It's not a promotion. It's not training, offers, direct mail, web sites, etc. It's all of these items used as part of integrated marketing communications to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.

Integrated marketing communications is all the buzz these days (Ericka Olin, 2013). American Association of Advertising Agencies (1989) defined Integrated Marketing Communication as the approach to achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign through a well-coordinated use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other. The main advantage of IMC is that it uses the intrinsic strengths of each communication channel in order to achieve a greater impact together.

Some organizations have separate marketing and communications teams and others treat marketing and communications as one integrated effort. As a part of IMC, the marketing department should incorporate various strategies in order to help to build the brand of the hospital. Through IMC the following marketing strategies can be used:

##### 4.6.1 ADVERTISING & PRINT MEDIA

Without advertising patients will not know that you exist. Eye catching ads would help in creating health awareness through exposure and would generate sales. Advertising media helps in projecting about a healthcare organization and the various services it offers e.g.:

TABLE 1: VARIOUS FORMS OF ADVERTISING

Marketing machinery	Frequency	Example
Pamphlets	New service offerings	PPE Entities –Arogyasree
Invites	Conferences	Continual Medical Education (CME) programmes
Television(local TV)	Modified services	Introduction of new diagnostic facilities.
Newspaper	New service offerings	Arogya Card

Source: (Naveen, Anil, & Smuthi, 2014).

Print involves advertisements in newspaper health sections, niche magazines and industry trade publications (Anne Gibson, 2002)

##### 4.6.2 PROMOTION OF SERVICES

Every hospital looks to promote their services in a variety of ways. Hospitals engage in promoting their services by using the help of various other media. For ex Public Private Partnership entity which offers free services to Below Poverty Line card holders. The corporate empanelment between hospitals and health insurance companies helps in gaining recognition and indirect publicity.

##### 4.6.3 HEALTH EVENTS

Targeted events are a great way to gather patients or position the organization's corporate strategy and/or marketing strategy before key prospects and influencers. Hospitals need to follow a health calendar and celebrates special and important days in the year. Some examples of events are Diabetes day, Cancer day, Tuberculosis day. These events are organized to publicize the various services offered. It facilitates word of mouth communication which enables the community to take notice of the hospitals and services offered by the hospitals. These events can be advertised by use of hoardings, pamphlet distribution and banners.

##### 4.6.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hospitals maintain public relations through press coverage while organizing community screening camps and by offering health checks to corporate firms under the brand name of specific hospital. Public relations also involve public and patient education regarding diseases, illnesses and available drug treatments and contributions to patient-advocacy groups for ex: National Kidney Foundation and American Cancer Society (Anne Gibson, 2002). Hospitals use this public relations tactic to increase awareness of unfamiliar medical conditions (Wall Street Journal, April 2002).

**4.6.5 DIRECT MARKETING (CONTINUAL MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES)**

Many hospitals conduct conferences almost once every month, where doctors from the hospital interact with doctors in the surrounding area which lack the facilities of a tertiary care hospital. There is exchange of information and direct marketing of services provided. These doctors then refer serious and chronic cases while the follow up cases are attended to by the doctors. This forms a symbiotic relationship between the hospital and the doctors.

**4.6.6 BRANDING & CORPORATE IDENTITY PROGRAMS**

IMC helps organizations to gain advantage on existing brands and build new identity programs for those who are in need of market repositioning. Innovative ways of communication help the company names, logos and taglines to be adequately represented in their respective markets and position them positively against their competition. Outreach programmes helps in building brand awareness and ultimately brand equity. Corporate Identity not only makes the brand distinguishable, but also gives a persona to the company. Identity also lays the foundation for key communication materials such as brochures, letterheads and newsletters.

**4.6.7 INTELLIGENT RELATIONSHIP MARKETING**

Intelligent Relationship Marketing is a platform that redefines customer relationship management for hospitals and healthcare systems. It is a service that starts with taking patient’s entire database through an automated Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act compliant extract. It helps the organization to identify where you have the best opportunities for growing service line profitability, improving payer mix, and population health management. Then it uses propensity modeling to determine the best audience of most likely users in service areas been offered.

**4.6.8 MOBILE MARKETING**

Mobile marketing deals with extracting the most clinically relevant information to identify patients who should receive reminders for preventive/post-operative and follow-up care and sending reminders to patients as per patient preference either through S.M.S, video, customized apps or through other platforms.

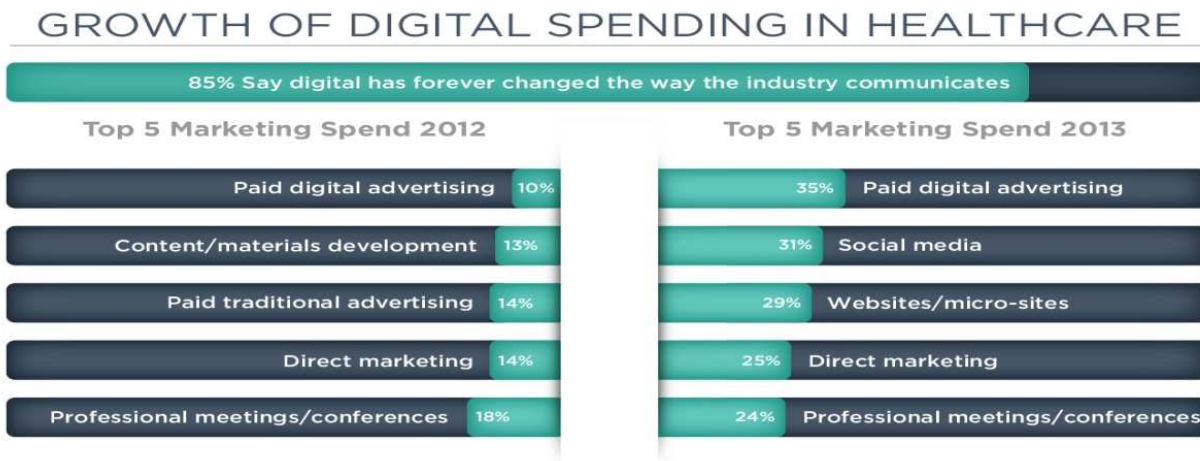
**4.6.9 INTERNET MARKETING**

Health Information is hot online and Internet Marketing is the hottest trend today. 80% of Americans use internet to research health information which includes accessing for diseases, procedures, doctors, hospitals, drugs, test results and insurance. 20% of users contribute towards comments, reviews and updates. Internet Marketing is a point of differentiation for healthcare providers as patients are becoming e-patients and are more involved in the decision making process through Internet Marketing.

**4.6.10 DIGITAL SPENDING IN HEALTHCARE**

Although traditional marketing tools such as tradeshows/conferences, direct marketing and print/TV ads remains most popular within the healthcare industry, digital spending has grown the most in the last several years. Of all the marketing tactics, paid digital advertising and social media spending increased the most.

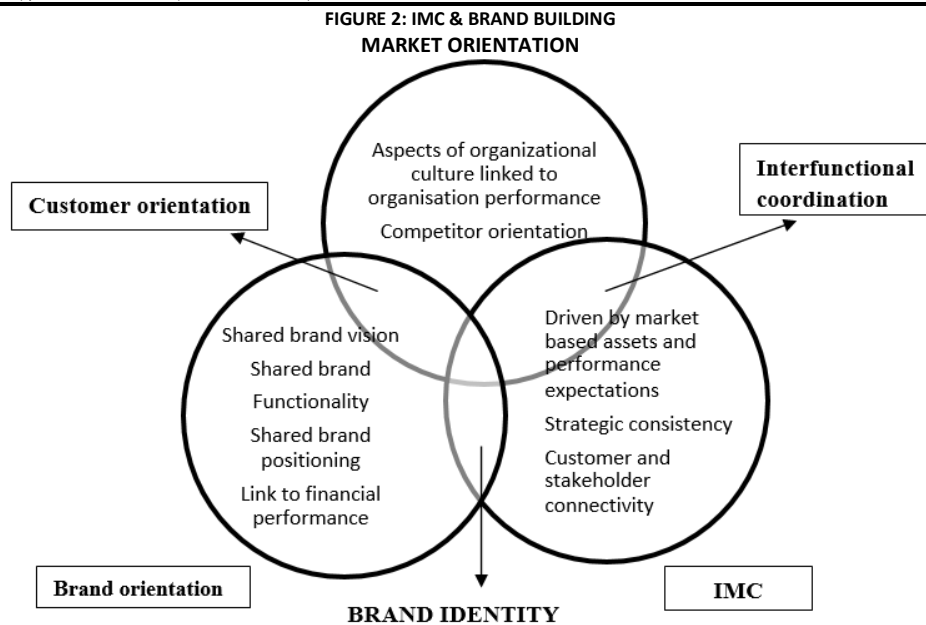
**FIGURE 1: GROWTH OF DIGITAL SPENDING IN HEALTHCARE**



Source: Healthcare Marketers Trends report by Medical Marketing and Media (MM&M) & Ogilvy CommonHealth Worldwide, 2013.

**4.7 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMC AND BRAND BUILDING**

Using IMC in which advertising, public relations, direct marketing and other tools are utilized; the organizations are able to convey clear and consistent messages to patients and doctors about a brand. Umbrella corporate marketing can support an organization’s overall mission and company promise. When the correct message is conveyed, it adds credibility and trust to a hospital’s services. Market orientation represents the culture of the organization through the adoption of the marketing concept and the systems and process that underlie being market oriented. Brand orientation represents the functional or business unit focus on brands and brand strategies that support strong customer and stakeholder relationship. IMC in this model represents the development of Integrated Marketing Communication to achieve started brand and communication objectives and also provide the bridge between brand strategy and actions taken to build the necessary customer and stakeholder relationships.



Source: Integrated Marketing Communication (B.Balaji & Sunali Talwar, 2011).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Reputation of a health care brand is extremely dynamic in nature, and never constant. It is ever changing according to the nature of external forces. One way of maintaining good reputation is with ideal marketing of services. There are various strategies to highlight the services of a hospital. One of the most important elements is print and advertising media. Internet is also a great equalizer and the most vital IMC element as in the current healthcare delivery system patients are willing for more information and greater level of detail, prefer immediate access to providers and insurers and also expect better tools to use in managing decisions about their health. With this, it can be concluded that with IMC patients become more informed with customized marketing strategies, in turn helping patients to make smarter healthcare decisions and the responsibility lies with healthcare providers in determining the preferred or most effective channel to communicate with the patient, other providers, insurers etc.

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