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ANALYSIS OF PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES' ACTIVITIES THAT ARE DIRECTED TO PHYSICIANS IN EGYPT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. Pharmaceutical market is one of the largest world markets with its own conditions. In Middle East, Egypt is a major pharmaceutical emerging market and has geographical, historical and political effective leading role among Arab countries. This research aims to investigate pharmaceutical companies' activities in Egypt directed to physicians.

Methodology. Urveying through simple random probability sampling is the approach appropriate for broad and representative overview of situation in research. Therefore, a survey of 1068 physicians was conducted through interviews and establishing structured data collection questionnaire.

Originality. This is the first empirical paper to investigate pharmaceutical companies' activities directed to physicians in pharmaceutical market of Egypt. These activities include identifying pharmaceutical companies through visits of medical representatives, analysis of those visits, frequency of medical representatives' visits, characteristics of information introduced by medical representatives to physicians, physicians' trust in provided information, spending of pharmaceutical companies on physicians, promotional techniques applied by medical representatives. These findings are useful for managers in pharmaceutical industry. They can be also useful in other industries such as medical equipment.

Findings. Pharmaceutical companies are employing medical representatives widely, as the most effective and widely-applied promotion tool in Egypt.

Practical Implications. Coordinate marketing management vision with pharmaceutical market real context will lead to synergism effect in utilizing medical representatives' activities.

KEY WORDS: pharmaceutical companies, medical representatives, physicians, egyptian pharmaceutical market.

Introduction

Pharmaceutical market is one of the largest world markets that has its own conditions. In Middle East, Egypt is a major pharmaceutical emerging market with geographical, historical and political effective leading position among Arab countries. Accordingly, this market has a great economic value. There is a valuable need to investigate promotional tools thereof. This should be done in real market situation and life context.

Promotional tools have a highly recognized significance. Marketing promotion (or marketing communications) is generally divided into two groups: mass communications and personal communications.

1. Mass Communications

Mass communications include public relations, advertising and sales promotions. However, there is an

increase, on the one hand, in using personal communications, because of internet technology revolution in addition to other electronic communication factors. On the other hand, mass communications have a high effect on promotion, e.g., companies' resources and brands.

2. Personal Communications

Personal communications have two forms, i.e., direct marketing and personal selling. Sale to customers depends on not only working hard, but also working smart. It is a two-way interaction between company and customer. The basic idea is not only how pharmaceutical company can reach customer, but also how it can enable customers reach it and its product. As a result of technological development, people are moving from traditional media (e.g., newspapers) to advanced media (e.g., smart mobile phones). By the time, pharmaceutical companies move to more advanced communications media, because of cost effectiveness and ability of better targeted communications. Personal

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communications enable identifying the right time for the best action with more effect on the targeted customer.

In other research, we evaluated marketing promotional tools in Egyptian pharmaceutical market and found that medical representative is the most applied promotional tool [1]. According to these results, we investigated in this research applying personal selling (employing medical representatives) in pharmaceutical field with physicians in Egypt by pharmaceutical companies. Such activity concerned physicians, frequency of medical representatives visits, characteristics of provided information, physicians' trust in provided information, spending of pharmaceutical companies and applied promotion means.

Literature Review

Most pharmaceutical companies depend on sales force and a lot of customers consider that the salesperson is the company. He is the link between the company and customer and is important in international business. They use professional sales force to locate prospects, develop them into customers and expand business. Pharmaceutical foreign companies can focus on large cities. Sales force enables them to reach other small cities [2, 3].

Although sales force is important, it requires high cost due to salaries, travel expenses, commissions and bonuses. Companies try because of high costs to increase their sales force productivity. They focus to achieve high productivity on better selection, motivation, supervision and training.

Sales representatives have different six forms depending on the task [4, 5]:

1 Deliverer: Product delivery to customer;

2 Order taker: There are two types of order taker, i.e., inside order taker who works inside the company behind its counter; and outside order taker who calls on customers;

3 Missionary: His task is to educate and build goodwill with potential customers, i.e., pharmaceutical industry's medical representatives try to build goodwill and educate physicians and/or patients;

4 Technician: He supports his client with technical knowledge;

5 Demand creator: He uses creative methods for selling tangibles or intangibles;

6 Solution vendor: He solves customers' problem, e.g., concerning communication systems.

The company should manage sales force with high professionalism. It should employ effective salespersons, train them to enhance their skills, pharmaceutical product knowledge and supervise them to ensure achieving the company's strategic and financial goals. An international salesperson should have high qualifications and emotional stability, enjoy travel allowance, flexibility, cultural empathy and working context to ensure his effectiveness [6–8].

In pharmaceutical field, a medical representative is

the image of company and the link with customer. Each pharmaceutical company focuses on medical representatives' selection, training, supervision and motivation.

Recruiting sales force in international companies has different forms. The Company in one country may have three sources of salespersons, i.e., local nationals, expatriates and third-country nationals. Presence and proportion of each type depends on company needs, qualifications and availability [9].

1. Local Nationals

They are preferred due to their knowledge about structure and barriers of legal, cultural and business system in their country [10–12]. Their cost is lower than other types. Major disadvantages thereof are as follows: low trust between them and the headquarter office, which leads to ignoring their advice; their lack of understanding with regard to "how the headquarter office works"; weak communication skills and the language used at the headquarters.

2. Expatriates

On the one hand, employing expatriates declines nowadays due to high cost, legal and cultural barriers. On the other hand, their employing has a lot of advantages, e.g., high knowledge about product and pharmaceutical company, a kind of pharmaceutical company's prestigious image and also high ability to communicate with the headquarters.

3. Third-country Nationals

Employing third-country nationals is increasing due to international business expansion and multinational companies' existence. A third-country national is a person who has nationality different from the company's and who works for it in another country (neither his own country nor the company's). He is usually a well-trained person with competitive advantage, several languages and good knowledge of culture and legal system of the country where he works [2].

Many companies focus more on developing functional skills and less on developing cultural awareness. A lot of foreign companies may fail in a certain country not because of lacking technical and managerial skills, but due to lacking understanding of country culture. It is an important issue as international business becomes more interdependent and companies depend more on their profits from foreign market. Culture skills and knowledge can be developed and learned as other social and functional skills [13–17].

In our previous research, we evaluated different marketing promotional tools and found that personal selling (a medical representative) is the most applied marketing promotional tool in Egyptian pharmaceutical market [1]. According to these results, our research aims to studying personal selling as an important promotional tool in Egyptian pharmaceutical market.

Medical sales force structure has four factors (role of sales force and selling partners, size, degree of specialization and resource allocation). Using these factors should be accommodated to the stage of business life cycle (figure 1).

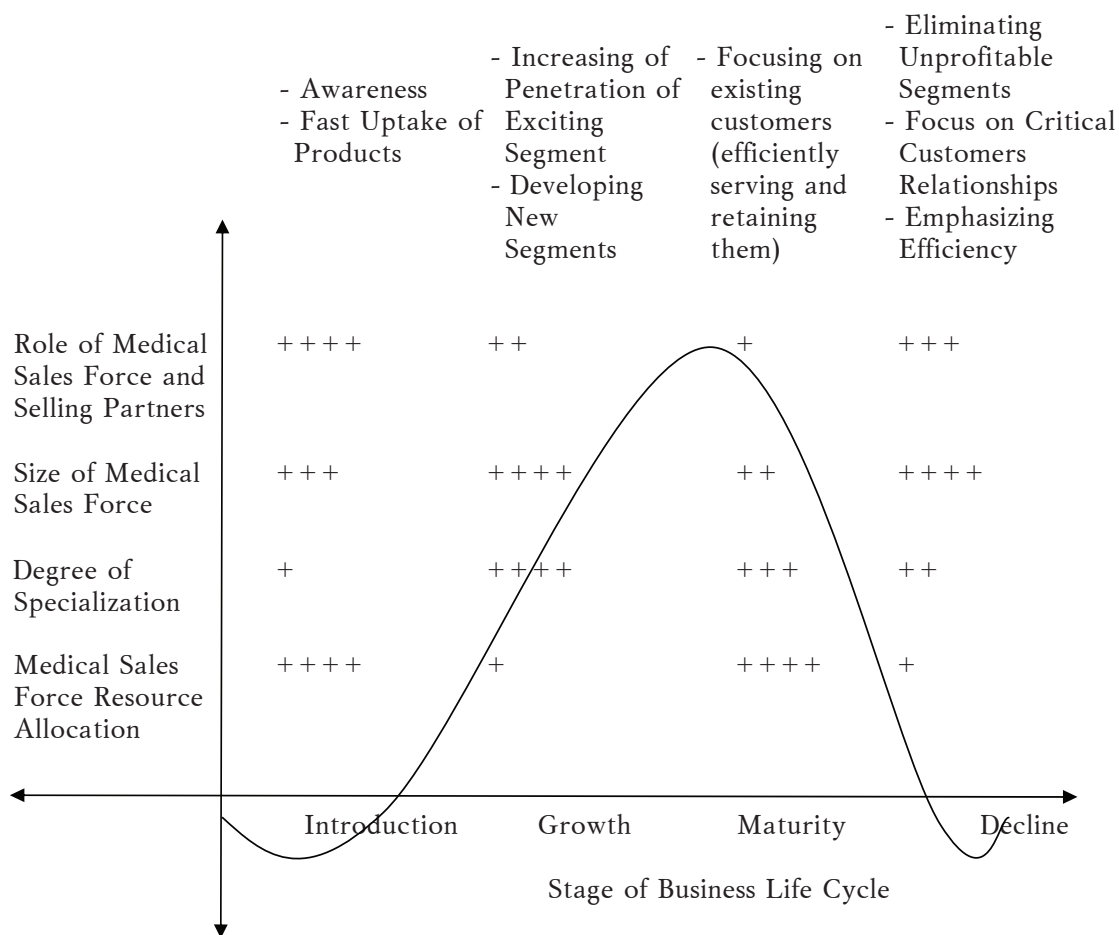


Figure 1. The four factors of successful sales force (adapted from Zoltners, 2006)

Research Methods

This research aims to studying pharmaceutical companies' activities that employ personal selling to promote drugs to physicians in Egypt. When we need a broad and representative overview of situation in research, survey is the appropriate approach [18]. Accordingly, for data gathering in this research we used the survey, where we resorted to personal interviews.

Sampling

In this research, we used simple random probability sampling, where physicians were asked to answer questionnaires in Egypt. We collected 1068 questionnaires from physicians at clinics and hospitals who answered questionnaires.

Data Collection

In this research, we focused on *Pharmaceutical Companies'* activities with physicians in Egypt. Our information sources were secondary and primary data. Firstly, we reviewed literatures of personal sales and promotions in pharmaceutical field. Then, the next step was represented in establishing structured questionnaire for data collection from physicians.

We used both questionnaires and interviews with physicians for information collection. We applied the Sta-

tistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to develop reliable and valuable information from collected the questionnaires. Answering open-end questions was good value as a source of qualitative information. We collected questionnaires over nine months (from July 2014 to May 2015).

Findings and Discussion

This research aims to studying pharmaceutical companies' activities that employ personal selling to promote drugs to physicians according to the following criteria:

- activity concerning physicians;
- frequency of medical representatives visits;
- characteristics of provided information;
- physicians' trust in provided information;
- spending of pharmaceutical companies;
- promotion means.

Activity concerning Physicians

When studying activities of companies whose medical representatives work with physicians, we found from surveying physicians that the most active pharmaceutical companies that directed their activities to physicians are: Egyptian International Pharmaceutical Industries Company (EIPICO); Pharco Pharmaceuticals; Amoun Pharmaceutical Company; GlaxoSmith-Kline (GSK) plc; and Novartis Pharma (table 1).

Table 1

Pharmaceutical companies which are most actively employing medical representatives activity to work with physicians for promoting their drugs		
Rank	Company Name	Percentage of respondents who called on this firm, %
1	EIPICO	46.4
2	Pharco	25.4
3	Amoun	22.1
4	GlaxoSmithKline	21.7
5	Novartis	18.4
6	Medical Union Pharma	10.4
7	SEDICO	9
8	Eva	8.9
9	Pfizer	8.2
10	Egyphar	7.4
11	Delta	7.2
12	Sanofi Aventis	6.4
13	Abbott	5.9
14	Top-z	5.4
15	Sandoz	4.6
16	Global NAPI	4.5
17	Al Ameria	4.4
18	Multiapex	3.5
19	Adwia	3.2
20	Sigma	3
21	Andalous	2.1
22-23	CID	2.1
22-23	M.S.D	1.9
24-25	Hikma	1.3
24-25	Nile	1.3
26	Servier	1.1
27-30	Minapharm	1
27-30	AstraZeneca	1
27-30	Minapharm	1
27-30	Merck Serono	1
31	MEPACO	0.7
32-34	Atoz	0.6
32-34	Liptis	0.6
32-34	October Pahrma	0.6
35	Egyptian European	0.5
36-41	Pyramids office	0.4
36-41	Memphis	0.4
36-41	Alkan	0.4
36-41	Leo	0.4
36-41	Advocure	0.4
36-41	Hi pharma	0.4
42-45	Ema	0.3
42-45	Acapi	0.3
42-45	Rameda	0.3
42-45	Orchidia	0.3
46-53	Janssen-Cilag	0.2
46-53	Nerhadou	0.2
46-53	Tabuk	0.2
46-53	Devert lab	0.2
46-53	IBSA	0.2
46-53	Bio pharma	0.2
46-53	Pharma cure	0.2
46-53	Utopia	0.2
54-64	Kahira	0.1
54-64	Nycomed	0.1
54-64	Eli lily	0.1
54-64	Al esraa	0.1
54-64	Debiky	0.1
54-64	Alcon	0.1
54-64	Novonordisk	0.1
54-64	Bayer	0.1
54-64	Jamjoom	0.1
54-64	Julphar	0.1
54-64	Borg	0.1

However, if we consider frequency of medical representatives of the same pharmaceutical companies visits, the results are different: in this case, superiority belongs to other pharmaceutical companies (table 2).

Table 2

Pharmaceutical companies which medical representatives visit doctors most often					
Company Name	Percentage of respondents who mentioned this pharmaceutical company, %				
	1 time per two weeks	1 time per month	7-11 times per year	4-6 times per year	1-3 times per year
EIPICO	73.4	25.5	1	0.2	----
Pharco	63.6	28.3	6	0.7	1.4
Amoun	54.7	34.8	6.5	3.6	0.4
GlaxoSmithKline	49.6	38.8	9.5	21	----
Novartis	48.8	36.1	9.8	2	3.4
Medical Union Pharma	56.9	25	15.5	1.7	0.9
SEDICO	60	28	9	1	2
Eva	63.6	27.3	7.1	2	----
Pfizer	34.1	38.5	17.6	5.5	4.4
Egyphar	75.9	18.1	4.8	1.2	----
Delta	61.3	28.8	7.5	2.5	----
Sanofi Aventis	40.8	46.5	5.6	1.4	5.6
Abbott	47	36.4	10.6	1.5	4.5
Top-z	98.3	----	----	----	1.7
Sandoz	43.1	29.4	13.7	7.8	5.9
Global NAPI	60	30	10	----	----
Al Ameria	77.6	18.4	4.1	----	----
Multiapex	59	20.5	12.8	7.7	----
Adwia	44.4	38.9	13.9	2.8	----
Sigma	66.7	30.3	----	----	1.3
Andalous	78.3	8.7	13	----	----
CID	60.9	17.4	21.7	----	----
M.S.D	33.3	47.6	9.5	9.5	----
Hikma	64.3	35.7	----	----	----
Nile	53.3	13.3	20	6.7	6.7
Servier	66.7	16.7	8.3	----	8.3
Minapharm	54.5	36.4	----	9.1	----
AstraZeneca	54.5	27.3	18.2	----	----
Minapharm	54.5	36.4	----	9.1	----
Merck Serono	27.3	63.6	----	----	9.1
MEPACO	87.5	----	12.5	----	----
Atoz	42.9	42.9	14.3	----	----
Liptis	28.6	57.1	14.3	----	----
October Pahrma	42.9	42.9	14.3	----	----
Egyptian European	16.7	50	33.3	----	----
Pyramids office	80	20	----	----	----
Memphis	75	25	----	----	----
Alkan	25	25	25	----	25
Leo	40	----	40	20	----
Advocure	40	40	20	----	----
Hi pharma	40	60	----	----	----
Ema	33.3	66.7	----	----	----
Acapi	33.3	33.3	----	33.3	----
Rameda	66.7	33.3	----	----	----
Orchidia	33.3	66.7	----	----	----
Janssen-Cilag	50	50	----	----	----
Nerhadou	100	----	----	----	----
Tabuk	50	50	----	----	----
Devert lab	100	----	----	----	----
IBSA	100	----	----	----	----

Table 2

Company Name	Percentage of respondents who mentioned this pharmaceutical company, %				
	1 time per two weeks	1 time per month	7-11 times per year	4-6 times per year	1-3 times per year
Bio pharma	100	----	----	----	----
Pharma cure	100	----	----	----	----
Utopia	100	----	----	----	----
Kahira	100	----	----	----	----
Nycomed	100	----	----	----	----
Eli lily	100	----	----	----	----
Al esraa	100	----	----	----	----
Debiky	100	----	----	----	----
Alcon	----	100	----	----	----
Novonordisk	100	----	----	----	----
Bayer	100	----	----	----	----
Jamjoom	----	----	100	----	----
Julphar	100	----	----	----	----
Borg	100	----	----	----	----

We can explain such distinction of lists by the fact that a certain pharmaceutical company can work with smaller number of physicians (i.e., coverage of intermediate customers at this pharmaceutical company is low), but to be more active (intensity of work is higher). So, two options are possible: pharmaceutical company actively works with either a small number of physicians (promotion intensive tactics), or a large number of physicians with a smaller frequency of visits to one physician (promotion extensive tactics).

Frequency of Medical Representatives Visits

When we asked physicians about the number of visits per month, the answers were as follows: 0.6% expressed less than one visit per month; 3.6% expressed one to two visits per month; 7% expressed three to five visits per month; 17.2% expressed six to ten visits per month; and 71.6% expressed more than ten visits per month (table 3). The average number of medical representatives' visits to physicians is 10 visits per month.

Table 3

Total number of visits of medical representatives to physicians	
Number of visits per month	Percentage of physicians who answered psitively, %
less 1	0.6
1-2	3.6
3-5	7
6-10	17.2
More than 10	71.6

Characteristics of Provided Information

An important point in medical representatives' activity is the information they provided and degree of trust with physicians. Therefore, we asked physicians about the most remembered visit of pharmaceutical companies' medical representatives (table 4) to estimate most remembered companies which their contents of oral information provided by medical representatives.

Table 4

Name of pharmaceutical companies which visits of medical representative were most remembered by physicians		
Rank	Company Name	Percentage of respondents who mentioned this pharmaceutical company, %
1	EIPICO	57.9
2	GLAXOSMITHKLINE	5.8
3	PHARCO	5.1
4	NOVARTIS	4.4
5	AMOUN	4.2
6	PFIZER	2.2
7-8	EVA PHARMA	2
7-8	MEDICAL.UNION.	2
9	TOP Z Pharma	1.9
10	SANOFI AVENTIS	1.6
11	SEDICO	1.4
12	DELTA	1.2
13-15	Abbott	0.9
13-15	Multiapex	0.9
13-15	EGYPHAR	0.9
16	SANDOZ	0.8
17-18	AL AMERIA	0.6
17-18	M.S.D	0.6
19-21	ADWIA	0.5
19-21	ALCON	0.5
19-21	HIKMA	0.5
22-26	ANDALOUS	0.3
22-26	GLOBAL NAPI	0.3
22-26	MEPACO	0.3
22-26	MINAPHARM	0.3
22-26	SERVIER	0.3
27-41	ADVOCURE	0.2
27-41	ASTRAZENECA	0.2
27-41	BIOMED	0.2
27-41	DEBEIKY	0.2
27-41	DEVERT LAB	0.2
27-41	EGYPTIANEUROPIAN	0.2
27-41	JULPHAR	0.2
27-41	LEO	0.2
27-41	LIPTIS	0.2
27-41	NERHADOU	0.2
27-41	OCTOBER PHARMA	0.2
27-41	RAMEDA	0.2
27-41	SEKEM	0.2
27-41	SIGMA	0.2
27-41	UTOPIA	0.2

Physicians' trust in provided information

Physicians have more trust in pharmaceutical companies' medical representatives than advertising of drugs (table 5). This is apparently due to presence of two-way communication, conversational mode of communication that allows medical representatives to make quick adjustments to character and content of communication in case of personal selling and to direct communication where medical representatives demand a certain reaction.

Table 5

The relation of physicians to drug advertising	
The Relation of physicians	Percentage of respondents, %
Negative.	14.4
Positive in case of advertising of non-prescribed drugs.	34.5
Positive in case of advertising of non-prescribed drugs and prescribed drugs in specialized editions and tools for health workers.	48.1

About half of physicians, i.e., 47.3%, said that pharmaceutical companies medical representatives offer information about promoted drug which content is related to advertising materials as same as educational materials; more than third of physicians, i.e., 36.7% said that pharmaceutical companies medical representatives offer information about promoted drug which content is related to advertising materials and only 15.9% of physicians said that pharmaceutical companies medical representatives offer information about promoted drug which content is related to educational materials. In conclusion, according to physicians' opinion, medical representatives offer educational task but they pre-all seek to induce them to prescribe drugs to patients.

Spending of Pharmaceutical Companies

In this study, we investigated how much the pharmaceutical company is spending for promoting their products through medical representatives' work. We were interested in knowing physicians opinion on pharmaceutical companies' expenses for promoting their products to a physician (per year). Quarter of physicians, i.e., 25.5% said that pharmaceutical companies do not spend money; half approximately of physicians said that pharmaceutical companies spend less than \$100; 30% approximately of them mentioned that expenses were from \$100 to \$1000; and only less than 10% of physicians said that pharmaceutical companies spend more than \$1000 on a physician per year (table 6).

Table 6

Spending of pharmaceutical companies on a physician per year (according to physicians opinion)	
Sum in \$	Percentage of respondents who chose this answer %
0	25.5
Less than 10	10.2
10-20	10.9
20-100	16.2
100-500	20.5
500-1000	9
More than 1000	7.7

The results are a subjective opinion of physician surveyed

Promotion Means

In this study, we identified promotion means applied by pharmaceutical companies in relation to physicians (figure 2). The received results become quite justified by comparison of these results to promotion means applied by pharmaceutical companies with physicians. The most widely-applied promotion techniques are: distribution of specialized literature according to 21.6% of respondents; inexpensive gifts granted in medicine according to 30.5% of respondents; invitations to parties organized by pharmaceutical companies according to 7.7% of respondents; offering free medicines for charity events according to 32.2% of respondents; financial incentives, gifts and souvenirs according to 31.5% of respondents; financial participation in organizing trips to symposia, workshops and congresses according to 56.8% of respondents; sponsorship of scientific papers accord-

ing to 18.6% of respondents; and helping by technical equipment in consulting offices according to 18.2% of respondents. We observed that the most common promotion technique applied by pharmaceutical companies in relation to physicians is represented in providing free sample drugs 88.7% of respondents (which are not a batch of medicinal preparations).

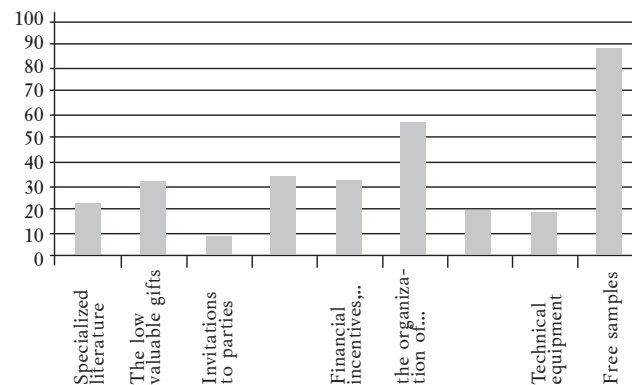


Figure 2. Promotion methods utilized by pharmaceutical companies with physicians

Conclusion

By studying pharmaceutical companies' activities directed to physicians, we found on the one hand that the most active pharmaceutical companies are the following: EIPICO, Pharco, Amoun, GSK and Novartis. On the other hand, pharmaceutical companies' order will be different, if it depends on frequency of medical representatives' visits to physicians. We can explain that by differentiating tactics chosen by pharmaceutical companies, i.e., intensive or extensive tactics of promotion, ten visits per month is the medical representative's average number of visits to physicians.

Physicians have less trust in advertising than medical representatives. This can be explained by conversational mode of communication and two-way communication in case of personal selling. Information provided by medical representatives is related to either advertising and/or educational materials. So, 47.3% of physicians mentioned that provided information is both advertising and educational, 36.7% of physician related information to advertising materials and 15.9% related them to educational materials.

According to physicians' opinion about spending on a physician by pharmaceutical companies, 25.5% mentioned that pharmaceutical companies do not spend any money; 50% approximately stated that they spend less than \$100; 30% approximately pointed out that they spend from \$100 to \$1000; and less than 10% mentioned that they spend more than \$1000.

Pharmaceutical companies' most widely-applied promotion techniques are: distribution of specialized literature; inexpensive gifts granted in medicine; invitations to parties organized by pharmaceutical companies; offering free medicines for charity events; financial incentives, gifts and souvenirs; financial participation in organizing trips to symposia, workshops and congresses; sponsorship of scientific papers; and helping

by technical equipment in consulting offices. However, providing free sample drugs is the most common promotion technique applied with physicians

Finally, we can say that a medical representative is widely employed by pharmaceutical companies in Egypt. Aligning marketing management vision with market real situation will lead to synergism effect in employing medical representatives.

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АНАЛИЗ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ ФАРМАЦЕВТИЧЕСКИХ КОМПАНИЙ В ЕГИПТЕ, НАПРАВЛЕННОЙ НА СПЕЦИАЛИСТОВ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Цель. Фармацевтический рынок – один из крупнейших мировых рынков, который также обладает своей спецификой. На Ближнем востоке Египет обладает самым крупным развивающимся фармацевтическим рынком. Эта страна лидирует среди других арабских стран по географическим, историческим и политическим соображениям.

Методология исследования. Исследование с использованием простой вероятностной выборки является подходящим методом для широкого и репрезентативного анализа исследуемой ситуации. Таким образом, исследование, включающее 1068 специалистов, было проведено при помощи интервью и структурированного опросника для сбора необходимой информации.

Новизна исследования. Это первая эмпирическая работа по исследованию деятельности фармацевтических компаний, предназначенная для специалистов на фармацевтическом рынке Египта. Данная деятельность включает осмотр фармацевтических компаний медицинскими представителями, анализ их визитов, частоту их посещений, характеристику информации, предоставленной специалистам медицинскими представителями, ответственность специалистов за данную информацию, затраты фармацевтических компаний на специалистов, а также техники продвижения, применяемые медицинскими представителями. Данные результаты являются важными для менеджеров фармацевтической промышленности. Их также возможно использовать в других отраслях в качестве средств продвижения.

Результаты исследования. Фармацевтические компании нанимают медицинских представителей повсеместно, так как их услуги по продвижению являются самыми эффективными и востребованными в Египте.

Практическая значимость. Согласованное видение маркетингового менеджмента с учетом реального контекста фармацевтического рынка приведет к эффекту синергизма в слаженных действиях представителей.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: фармацевтические компании, медицинские представители, врачи, египетский фармацевтический рынок

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