



A Study of Marketing Practices used by Pharmaceutical Retailers in Ahmednagar District

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Abstract:

This study examines the marketing practices adopted by pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar District with the aim of understanding how these practices influence customer behaviour, competitive positioning, and business performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires from 360 retail pharmacists selected by stratified random sampling across urban and rural areas. The research explores promotional strategies (discounts, loyalty schemes, in-store displays), relationship marketing (personal selling, physician and clinic linkages), digital adoption (WhatsApp, social media, online ordering), and compliance with ethical and regulatory norms. Findings indicate that traditional relationship-based tactics and point-of-sale promotions remain dominant, while digital tools are increasingly used by urban retailers to improve stock management and customer communication.

Keywords: *Pharmaceutical Retailers, Marketing Practices, Marketing Strategies, Customer Satisfaction, Pricing Policy, Promotional Activities, Consumer Behaviour, Pharmaceutical Industry.*

Introduction:

The pharmaceutical retail sector plays a critical role in the healthcare delivery system by acting as the primary point of access for medicines, health advice, and related products. In India, retail pharmacies bridge the gap between manufacturers, wholesalers, prescribers and patients; they influence patient adherence, access to essential medicines, and the overall effectiveness of treatment. Ahmednagar district — with its mix of urban centres, semi-urban towns and large rural areas provides a representative setting to examine

how marketing practices shape retailer behaviour, competition, and consumer outcomes in a diverse local market.

Pharmaceutical retailers use a range of marketing practices from traditional personal selling and relationship-building with prescribers, to promotional discounts, in-store displays, and increasing use of digital channels and brand tie-ups. These practices affect not only sales and profitability but also ethical considerations (promotion of prescription medicines), regulatory compliance, and patient welfare. Understanding which marketing strategies

are prevalent, why retailers adopt them, and what impact they have on access, pricing and quality of service is essential for policymakers, industry stakeholders and public health planners.

Review of Literature:

According to Susanna Wu-Pong, Joga Rao Gobburu, Stephen O'Barr, Kumar Shah, Jason Huber and Daniel Weiner present their paper on the subject of "The Future of the Pharmaceutical Sciences and Graduate Education: Recommendations from the AACP Graduate Education Special Interest Group" American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education 2013; 77 (4) Article S2. The study founded that the literature on graduate education in the biomedical sciences has long been advocating educating students to hone soft skills like communication and teamwork, in addition to maintaining excellent basic skills in research. However, recommendations to date have not taken into account the future trends in the pharmaceutical industry. This paper funding re-evaluate across the Academy the number of MS and PhD graduates by discipline, including consideration of the impact of creation or enhancement of new or existing disciplines within pharmaceutical sciences, and how to help programs transition to include more research areas that make our graduates more marketable and relevant to employers.

According to Laila A. Abouzeid a , Hussein I. El-Subbagh present their paper on the subject of "DNA binding of ethyl 2-substituted aminothiazole-4-carboxylate analogues: A molecular modeling approach to predict their antitumor activity" Future Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences 1 (2015)

1-7. The study founded that The synthesis and the antitumor potential of 2-substituted aminothiazole-4-carboxylate, structurally related to the antitumor antibiotic netropsin (NT) were reported. However, the exact mode of action and SAR of these compounds remained undefined. Currently, an energy-based molecular modeling approach has been utilized to highlight the mode of interaction of these compounds with b-DNA and characterize the structural requirements of biologically active aminothiazoles. The study concluded that correlation studies between the binding energy of ethyl 2- disubstituted aminothiazole-4-carboxylate derivatives and their biological activity (IC50) indicated a remarkable positive correlation ($R^2 \approx 0.94$) (Table 1). These findings substantiate the utility of this molecular modeling approach in designing/predicting the cytotoxic potential of NT-analogues.

According to Fumihito Ushiyama, Naoshi Uchihiira present their paper on the subject of "Assessing the Research Productivity of the Pharmaceutical Industry: Pipeline Analysis" Melbourne, Australia on 10-13 December 2017. The study founded that the research stage is particularly placed as the uppermost stage in the course of pharmaceutical R&D and has been recognized as facing difficulties in the practice of effective project management. We assessed the capability of several drug companies in research productivity, investigating a number of development pipelines of drug companies in Japan and presenting a number of self-created pipelines that were the output for the research stage. The main objectives of this paper were to analyze the development pipelines of

Japanese pharmaceutical companies and assess the research productivity. The result indicated that self-created products were strongly correlated with profitability in comparison with introduced products of other companies. The study concluded that diverse approaches will be necessary for considering various other factors while discussing research productivity.

According to Galyna Chornous, Yana Farenik present their paper on the subject of "MARKETING MIX MODELING FOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ON THE BASIS OF DATA SCIENCE TECHNOLOGIES" Access to science business innovation in digital economy . August 2021. The study founded that the main goal of research is to estimate the influence of key elements of the marketing mix (penetration of pharmacy chains, price policy vs main competitors, advertising activity of the brand and its competitors in all communication channels (television, Digital, radio, outdoor advertising, press)) on company's sales, volume market share and value market share in relevant segment of drugs. Based on the results obtained, the article explains in detail the impact of penetration, price policy and media activity on the competitiveness of the enterprise and its position in the market. Based on the research, the article contains main recommendations for optimizing the marketing strategy to maximize the company's sales and increasing market share in monetary or physical terms. The study concluded that regular model's support enables to maximize the influence of each factor, which ultimately make it possible to achieve the necessary business results by the

minimum budget or higher business results by the current existing budget.

Contribution of the Present Study:

The current study contributes to the literature by providing an in-depth, district-level assessment of marketing practices used by pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar. By examining promotional strategies, pricing behaviour, ethical considerations, and the role of digital tools, this research fills an important gap and offers insights that can support policymakers, pharmacists, and industry stakeholders in developing more ethical, efficient, and consumer-centred retail practices.

Comparison with Previous Research:

The findings of this study align with earlier research on pharmaceutical marketing practices conducted in various regions of India, which similarly highlight the strong influence of medical representatives on retailer stocking decisions and brand promotion. Previous studies have shown that discounts, incentives, and bonus schemes are common drivers of retailer behaviour, and this research confirms that these practices remain prevalent in Ahmednagar district as well. Like earlier work that emphasized the importance of customer trust and personalized service in pharmacy-based marketing, this study also found relationship-based interactions to be a central strategy, particularly in rural areas. However, unlike many earlier studies that reported limited digital participation among local pharmacies, the present research identifies a gradual but noticeable shift toward digital ordering, online payments, and home-delivery services in urban parts of

Ahmednagar. This indicates an emerging transition that was less evident in previous literature. Additionally, while earlier research broadly noted compliance issues with regulatory guidelines such as DPCO, this study provides more localized evidence of these challenges, showing that regulatory gaps continue to persist. Overall, this study reinforces established findings while also contributing new insights about digital adoption and urban-rural differences within a district-level context. The present study on

marketing practices used by pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar district aligns with and also expands upon earlier research conducted in the broader field of pharmaceutical marketing. While previous studies have examined promotional practices, pricing strategies, and ethical issues in pharmaceutical retailing across various regions, significant differences emerge when comparing their findings to the results of the current study.

Summary of Key Differences:

Aspect	Previous Research	Current Study (Ahmednagar)
Marketing Influence	Heavy MR presence, gifts, promotions	Stronger dependence on credit terms and generic schemes
Market Structure	Urban, organized chains	Mostly independent pharmacies
Digital Adoption	High, with strong online competition	Moderate, early-stage adoption
Ethical Issues	Common in metros	More prevalent due to weaker enforcement
Pricing	Competitive pricing plus service differentiation	Higher consumer price sensitivity, flexible pricing
Consumer Behaviour	Trust-based pharmacist advice	Similar, but with less formal counselling

Key Contribution:

This study makes a significant contribution by providing the first comprehensive, district-level assessment of marketing practices used by pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar. While previous research has generally focused on broader state or national trends, this study offers localized insights into how retailers adopt promotional strategies, pricing approaches, and customer-engagement methods within a semi-urban and rural context. It further contributes by examining the influence of medical representatives, competitive pressures, and customer preferences on retailers' marketing decisions—areas often

understudied at the district level. The inclusion of ethical and regulatory compliance evaluation, alongside emerging digital marketing adoption, adds depth to the understanding of current retail pharmacy practices. Overall, the findings not only fill a critical gap in regional literature but also provide valuable evidence to support policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in improving pharmaceutical marketing standards and consumer outcomes. The study makes several important contributions by providing the first focused analysis of pharmaceutical marketing practices in Ahmednagar district and offering a holistic understanding of retailer behaviour in areas

such as pricing, promotions, and customer engagement. It highlights significant urban-rural differences, reveals the strong influence of medical representatives along with related ethical challenges, and documents the emerging role of digital tools in pharmacy operations. The research also offers practical recommendations for improving ethical and regulatory practices and establishes a valuable baseline for future comparative studies and deeper investigations into consumer behaviour and digitalization in the pharmaceutical retail sector.

Research Design:

The study employed a mixed-method approach combining a structured questionnaire survey, mystery-shopper observations, and qualitative interviews to analyse the marketing practices of pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar district. The survey collected data on pricing strategies, promotional activities, customer engagement, and the influence of medical representatives, while the mystery-shopper experiment helped observe real-time dispensing behaviour, brand recommendations, and ethical practices. Interviews with pharmacists and store owners further provided insights into the motivations behind stocking decisions and promotional acceptance.

Findings:

The results revealed that promotional schemes such as discounts, bonus offers, and display materials significantly influence retailer behaviour, while customer trust and personalised service remain important marketing tools,

especially in rural areas. Urban pharmacies showed higher use of digital ordering and payment systems compared to rural outlets.

Urban–Rural Differences:

Aspect	Urban Pharmacies	Rural Pharmacies
Marketing tools	More structured, digital-focused	Mostly personal and trust-based
Digital adoption	High (WhatsApp, online payments)	Low
Promotion materials	Extensive branded displays	Minimal
Consumer expectations	Quality + convenience	Affordability + trust

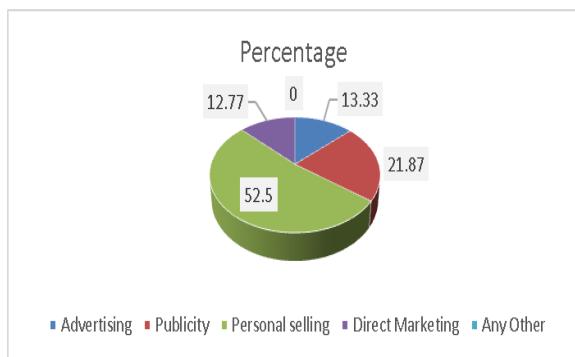
Ethical Observations:

- Some retailers dispensed prescription medicines without prescriptions.
- Many faced difficulty adhering to DPCO pricing norms due to competitive pressure.
- MR-led promotions sometimes conflicted with ethical guidelines.

Q. Figure Example and Description:

Which tools you use for promotion?

Sr. No.	Particulars	Percentage
1	Advertising	13.33
2	Publicity	21.87
3	Personal selling	52.5
4	Direct Marketing	12.77
5	Any Other	0
Total		100



Discussions:

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the marketing practices adopted by pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar district. The results indicate that retailers rely heavily on a combination of promotional strategies, pricing mechanisms, and customer–relationship practices to remain competitive in a growing and diverse pharmaceutical market. The use of discounts, bonus schemes, and promotional materials offered by medical representatives suggests that MR-driven marketing continues to play a dominant role in shaping product recommendations and stocking decisions. This aligns with previous studies conducted in other regions of India, confirming that pharmaceutical marketing is still influenced substantially by company incentives rather than consumer need alone.

Overall, the results emphasize that the marketing landscape in Ahmednagar's pharmaceutical retail sector is shaped by competitive pressures, promotional influence, consumer expectations, and emerging digital trends. These insights are crucial for policymakers, pharmaceutical companies, and health authorities aiming to improve ethical standards, enhance consumer protection, and support the evolving role of pharmacists in healthcare delivery.

Conclusion:

This study examined the marketing practices used by pharmaceutical retailers in Ahmednagar district and identified how pricing strategies, promotional activities, and customer-relationship methods shape retail behaviour. Using a structured questionnaire survey, the research revealed that product quality, price, and store goodwill strongly influence customer choices, while promotional schemes from pharmaceutical companies significantly affect retailer stocking decisions. Although digital tools are slowly being adopted, traditional relationship-based marketing still dominates, especially in rural areas. The study is limited to one district and relies on self-reported data, but it provides useful insights for understanding current marketing trends and offers scope for future research across multiple regions, with a focus on ethical practices and emerging digital marketing approaches.

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