



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Management

### 'ASSESSMENT OF DOCTOR'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES'

**KEY WORDS:** Medical Representatives, Missionary Selling, Promotional tool.

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#### ABSTRACT

Personal selling is one of the most effective medium of promotional techniques. Personal selling in pharmaceutical industry is done through missionary selling i.e. medical representatives (MR). The role of MR is to create awareness of his product and convince doctor about the benefits of his brand. But over a period of time, it has become difficult for MR's to take time from the Doctors, as they have become quite busy with their patients and many MR's are visiting them at the same time. Moreover, due to immense competition and me-too-brands, it is difficult for the Doctor's to remember and prescribe a particular brand. Therefore, it is important for MR's to understand, as to how effectively they can convince them to prescribe their brands.

The present study aims to improve the effectiveness of medical representatives by finding out the expectations of Doctors from them.

A semi-structure questionnaire was distributed to 55 doctors, which include 35 Physicians, 13 Family physicians (GP), 05 Cardiologist and 02 Dietitians. The questionnaire includes both Close and Open ended questions.

It was concluded from the study that for increasing effectiveness, Medical representative should be regular in his Visits with Right Frequency. He should possess good Communication skills; update himself with adequate Knowledge of Disease, Drugs and product. It is desirable for him to be a science graduate or at least have D-Pharmacy degree. It was also revealed that sponsorship for conference was widely accepted as one of the most widely accepted promotional tool by doctors.

#### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

##### Marketing:

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. (American Marketing Association, 2018)

##### Personal selling and Pharmaceutical industry

Personal selling is one of the oldest and most reliable methods of business promotion. Although expensive, it is often indispensable due to increasing competition and growing sophistication of both customers as well as products.

In a fiercely competitive market, such as the Pharmaceutical industry, where many companies offer same or similar ('me-too') products, it is often the person behind the product who makes the difference!

The fact that personal selling is the single most important promotional method used in the Pharmaceutical industry has resulted in a unique situation as far as the marketing orientation in Pharmaceutical industry is concerned. (Pharma wisdom, 2018)

The pharmaceutical industry discovers, develops, produces, and markets drugs or pharmaceutical drugs for use as medications. Pharmaceutical companies may deal in generic or brand medications and medical devices. (Wikipedia, 2018)

##### Missionary Selling

Pharmaceutical selling comes under Missionary selling. It is a form of indirect selling in which a salesperson tries to give information about the particular product to a prospective customer or decision maker who has an influence on the buying decision rather than directly selling the product. This is used to convince a person who has never used a product to buy it.

Likewise, pharmaceutical detailers, instead of selling their products directly to doctors or medical practitioners, provide them with brochures and pamphlets containing information about the product who then determine whether the medicines can be prescribed to their patients. A pharmaceutical detailer must have thorough knowledge about his product and must be able to answer the doctor's queries to utmost satisfaction in order to convince him to prescribe the medicine to his patients. (MBASKOOL, 2018)

##### MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVE

Medical representatives are the key link between pharmaceutical

or medical equipment companies and healthcare professionals. They are responsible for building a network with healthcare professionals to promote product awareness, answer queries regarding usage of products, provide advice and help introduce new products.

##### The Job Role and Responsibilities

Medical representatives are usually assigned a geographical territory within which they work. Their primary responsibility is to establish and maintain contact with the customers. Some of their duties include:

- Identify and meet potential customers including doctors, hospital staff and other medical professionals and facilities
- Promote and educate about various product offerings
- Develop and manage assigned territory with the goal of maximizing sales
- Manage and develop top customers through regular interactions
- Provide feedback from customers to the company
- Maintain records and achieve sales targets

##### Competencies and Skills Required

Being a niche and knowledge-driven sector, medical companies generally prefer graduates with relevant qualifications in life sciences, pharmacy, medicine, nursing or dentistry to be able to understand the products well. A very important quality that medical companies seek in candidates is strong ethics, as it is vital to keep data and sensitive information secured. Some of the other competencies that employers look for while hiring medical representatives are:

- **Strong communication skills** - Medical representative are the key link between companies and customers and hence it is very important that the representative is able to effectively communicate about the superiority and benefit of product and brand to doctors and other medical staff.
- **Good interpersonal skills** - Being able to establish contact, build trust and grow network is an important part of the job. Employers look for candidates with good interpersonal skills.
- **Strong understanding of product** - The candidate must not only have a basic understanding of products and industry, but should also be able to learn about new products and technology quickly. He/ she should be able to understand and present clinical data.
- **Sales and results** - The candidate should be result driven and have good planning and organizational skills. He/she should be able to handle stress of targets and deadlines. (aspiring minds, 2018)

## MR Should Act as a Catalyst for Sharing Knowledge, But Not a Salesperson

Doctors share very strong and unusual relationships with Medical Representatives. They are essentially a catalyst who conveys knowledge on most recent trends in medical diagnostic and treatment to the doctors. However, they are being treated only as sales personals, but in reality they are channel for conveying information to medical fraternity.

Doctors suggested that regular MR visits are useful for brand recall. Usually, MR hesitates to meet doctor after first or second visit because MR believes that doctor already know the required brand message communicated in the initial visit. However, it takes a little time for doctors to get familiar to brand and develop some sort of likeness for the brand. It might happen that doctors may not have an opportunity to use your product for days. Brand recall becomes very important for the companies. Hence, regular visits and repeating message can have favourable impact on prescription. It might take 7-10 repetitions of MR visits to change physician behaviour. If MR wants to make every visit convincing and effective, then what would work is – profound knowledge in detailing, good rapport and superior soft skills.

While it would be really not possible for all Medical representative to challenge the MD with more depth of knowledge and science; but proper training and preparation will help communicate right and required information about drugs to doctors. Further, it would be more effective if MR can convince doctor through strong and persuasive communication skills. Unlike other promotional tools, sales representatives have option to discuss and prove their points such as why their drugs are more effective and what treatment conditions they fit, more specifically. The focus on improving the quality of meetings between MR and Doctors can be effective to improve the current image of MR from “unwanted sales visits to more knowledgeable/engaging session” thus promoting brand effectively. (BrandCare, 2018)

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the expectation of doctors from medical representatives.
2. To gain an insight into doctor's perception for improving MR's effectiveness for generating prescriptions.

## Limitation of Study

The study is conducted in Nagpur city only with a sample size of 55 Doctors only.

## METHODOLOGY

Research Design

**Questionnaire Design:** A structured questionnaire was designed; the survey was conducted with 55 doctors of Nagpur city, which include 35 Physicians, 13 MBBS Doctors (GP'S), 05 Cardiologist & 02 Diabetologists.

**Primary Data:** Primary data is collected through structured questionnaire from doctors of Nagpur city.

**Secondary Data:** Secondary data is collected from various journals, books & articles published in business newspapers & on internet.

**Sample size:** 55 doctors were randomly/stratified selected

## Hypothesis:

**H0:-** 'Sponsorship in conferences is not the widely accepted promotional tool adopted by pharmaceutical companies for doctors'.

**H1:** 'Sponsorship in conferences is one of the most widely accepted promotional tools adopted by pharmaceutical companies for doctors'.

## Analysis of Data:

TABLE 1 (Profile of Doctors)

Profile of Doctors	No.	%
GP	13	24
Physician	35	64
Cardiologist	5	9
Diabetologist	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

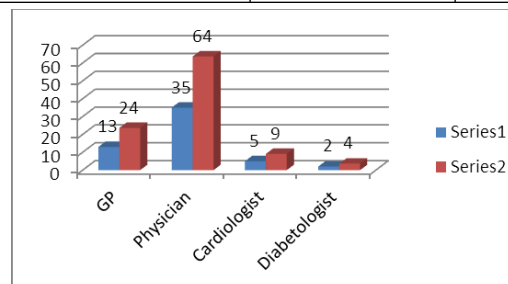


Table 1 represents the total sample of Doctors i.e. 55, out of which 64% are Physicians, 24% are GP's 9% are Cardiologist and remaining 4% are diabetologist.

TABLE 2 (Type of Practice)

Type of Practice	No.	%
Government Hospital	2	4
Corporate Hospital	9	16
Private	44	80
	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

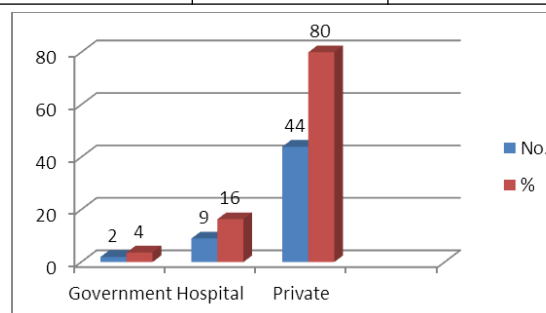


Table 2 shows the type of practice of doctors. The graph clearly indicates, 80% of them are having private practice, 16% are attached with Hospitals and remaining 4% are attached with Government Hospitals.

TABLE 3 (Experience in Years)

Experience in Years	No.	%
0-5 Yrs	4	7
6-10 Yrs	13	24
11-15 Yrs	19	35
16-20 Yrs	12	22
>20 Yrs	7	13
		<b>100</b>

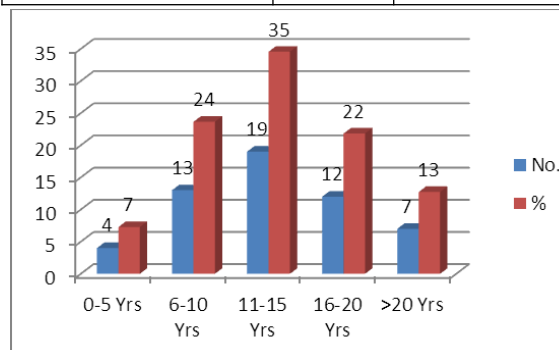


Table 3 represents experience in years of doctors. Maximum 35%

of Doctors are having experience between 11-15 yrs, 24% of them are experienced between 6-10 yrs, 22% between 16-20 Yrs, 13% greater than 20 Years and remaining 7% are experience between 0-5 yrs.

**TABLE 4 (No. of Representatives Visiting each week)**

No. of Representative visiting each week	No.	%
1-10 Reps.	7	13
11-20 Reps.	15	27
21-30 Reps.	22	40
31-40 Reps.	7	13
> 40 Reps.	4	7
	100	

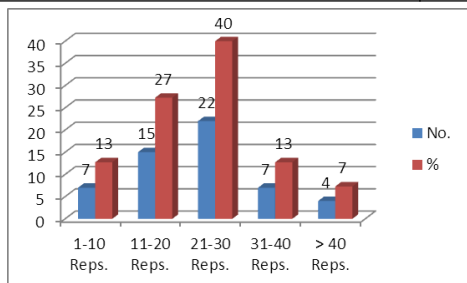


Table 4 indicates representatives visiting doctors every week, 40% doctors allow 21-30 reps., 27% doctors allow 11-20 reps., 13% doctors allow 31-40 reps., 13% of them allow only 1-10 reps. and remaining 7% allow greater than 40 reps to meet them every week.

**TABLE No. 5 (Gap Between 2 consecutive Visits of MR)**

Interval Between 2 Visits (Days) of MR	No.	%
1-10 Days	3	5
11-20 Days	30	55
21-30 Days	15	27
31-40 Days	6	11
> 40 Days	1	2
	100	

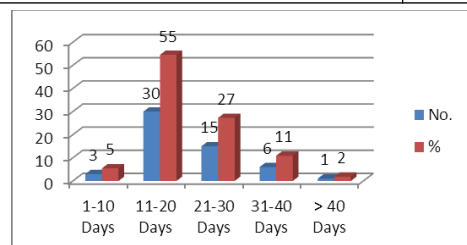


Table 5 represents the expected gap (days) between two visits of MR. It clearly states, 55% of doctor expects the gap of 11-20 days, 27% expects the gap of 21-30 days, 11% expects the gap of 31-40 days, 5% expect the gap of 1-10 days and remaining 2% expects the gap to be greater than 40 days.

**TABLE No. 6 (Qualification of Mr's)**

Minimum Qualification Expected from MR's	No.	%
B.Pharmacy	13	24
D.Pharmacy	15	27
B.Sc.	15	27
Any Graduate	9	16
Under Graduate	3	5
	100	

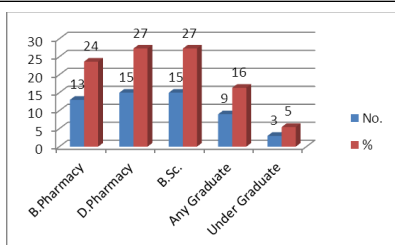


Table 6 represents the minimum qualification expected from medical representatives. It clearly states, 27% of doctor expects their qualifications to be B.Sc. And D.Pharmacy, 24% expects their qualification to be B.Pharmacy, 16% to be graduates and remaining 5% says even if they are under graduates it does not effect.

**TABLE No. 7 (Avg. time Doctors spend with Mr's)**

Time you wish to spend with MR's.	No.	%
1-3 Min	12	22
4-6 Min	29	53
7-9 Min	13	24
10-12 Min	1	2
> 12 Mins	0	0

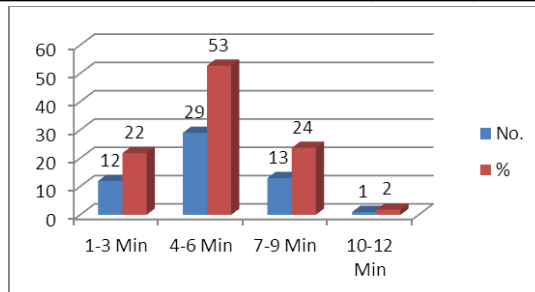
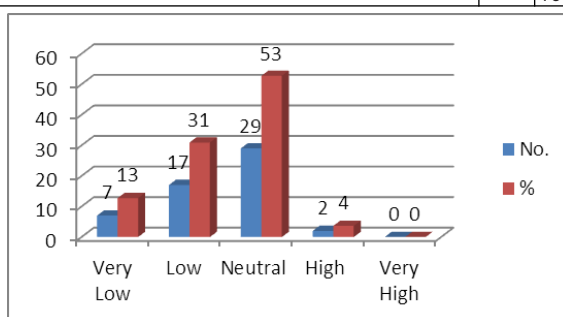


Table 7 represents the time doctors wish to spend with MR's. 53% of them wish to spend 4-6 mins, 24% 7-9 mins, 22% 1-3 mins, and remaining 2% wish to spend 10-12 mins.

**TABLE No. 8 (Influence of MR on Drugs)**

Does MR influences your choice of Drugs	No.	%
Very Low	7	13
Low	17	31
Neutral	29	53
High	2	4
Very High	0	0
	100	



**TABLE No. 9 (Right Frequency)**

Regular Visits with Right Frequency is Important	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	9	16
NEUTRAL	18	33
AGREE	21	38
STRONGLY AGREE	7	13
	100	

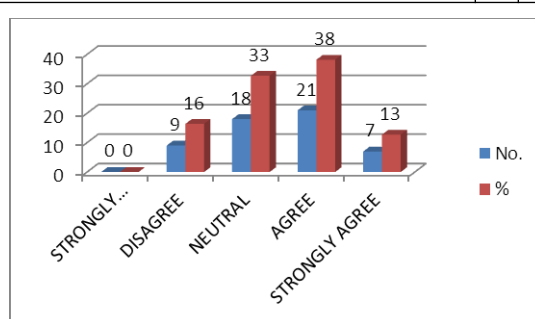


Table 9 indicates the importance of regular visits with right frequency. 38% of Doctors Agree that regular visits with right frequency is important, 33% are neutral to it, 16% disagree and remaining 13% strongly agree with regular visits with right frequency.

TABLE No. 10 (Communication)

Is Good Communication Important for MR's?	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	5	9
NEUTRAL	19	35
AGREE	27	49
STRONGLY AGREE	4	7
		100

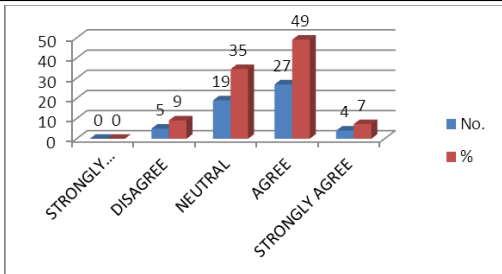


Table 10 indicates the importance of Communication. 49% of Doctors Agree that Good communication is important for medical representatives, 35% are neutral to it, 9% disagree and remaining 7% strongly agree with Communication of Mr's.

TABLE No. 11 (Good scientific knowledge)

Importance of Good Scientific Knowledge	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	1	2
DISAGREE	10	18
NEUTRAL	25	45
AGREE	15	27
STRONGLY AGREE	4	7
		100

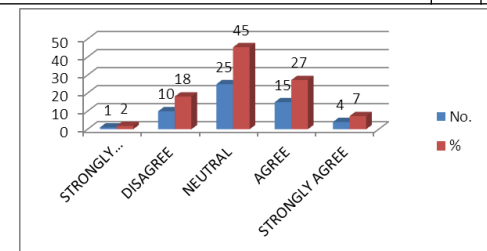


Table 11 Signifies the importance of Scientific knowledge required by an Medical Representative, 45% of the doctors are neutral about the scientific knowledge expectation from MR's, 27% of them agree, 18% disagree, 7% strogly agree & remaining 2% strongly disagree.

TABLE No. 12 (Update Information about Disease and drugs)

Information about disease and drugs	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	4
DISAGREE	5	9
NEUTRAL	17	31
AGREE	20	36
STRONGLY AGREE	11	20
		100

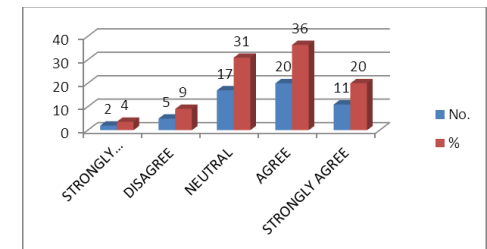


Table 12, represents should MR give updated information about disease and drugs. 36% of doctors agree to the same, 31% are neutral, 20% strongly agree, 9% of them disagree & remaining 4% strongly disagree for the same.

TABLE No. 13 (Complete dose of Samples)

Importance towards Complete dose of samples	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	7	13
DISAGREE	18	33
NEUTRAL	18	33
AGREE	9	16
STRONGLY AGREE	3	5
		100

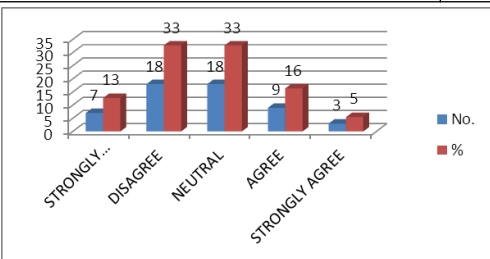


Table 13 represents whether MR should give complete dose of samples or not. 33% of the Doctors Agree & Disagree for distributing samples, 16% agree, 13% strongly disagree & remaining 5% strongly disagree for the same.

TABLE No. 14 (Patient related services)

Preference of Patient Related Services	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	4	7
DISAGREE	15	27
NEUTRAL	19	35
AGREE	12	22
STRONGLY AGREE	5	9
		100

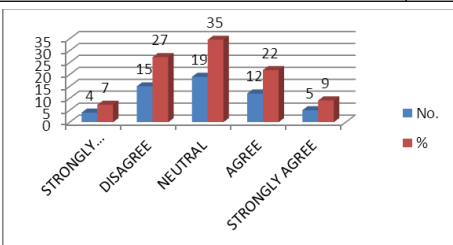


Table 14 represents the importance of patient related servcies. 35% of the doctors agree to patient related services, 27% disagree, 22% agree, 9% strongly agree & remaining 7% strongly disagree for the same.

TABLE No. 15 (Educational Inputs)

Preference of Educational Inputs like Books, Journals	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	9	16
NEUTRAL	32	58
AGREE	13	24
STRONGLY AGREE	1	2
		100

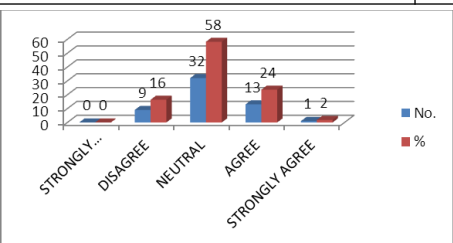


Table 15 represents about sponsoring Educational Inputs like Books, Journals etc. 58% of doctors are neutral, 24% doctors agree, 16% doctors disagree, whereas 2% doctors strongly agree i.e. recommended sponsoring educational inputs.

**TABLE No. 16 (CME sponsorship)**

Preference of CME Sponsorship	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	4
DISAGREE	19	35
NEUTRAL	19	35
AGREE	14	25
STRONGLY AGREE	1	2
		100

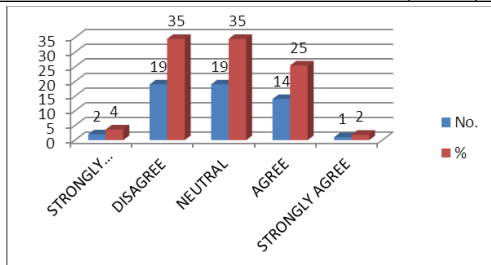


Table 16, represents the importance of Sponsoring CME for Doctors, 35% of doctors are Neutral as well as they disagree, 25% of them agree for sponsoring CME, 4% strongly disagree, whereas 2% of them strongly agree for the same.

**TABLE no. 17 (Conference Sponsorship)**

Preference of Sponsorship for Conference	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	5	9
NEUTRAL	14	25
AGREE	25	45
STRONGLY AGREE	11	20
		100

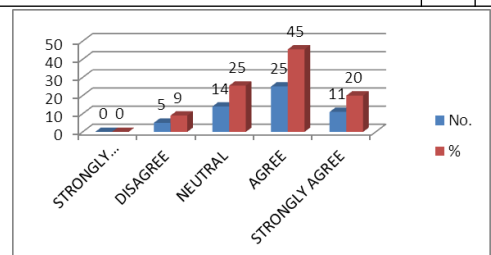


Table 17 represents, the importance of sponsoring for conference. 45% of them agree, 25% of them are neutral, 20% of them strongly agree for sponsoring CME and remaining 9% disagree for the same.

**TABLE No. 18 (Marketing Surveillance/Clinical Trials)**

Preference of Marketing Surveillance/Clinical Trials	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	8	15
DISAGREE	24	44
NEUTRAL	21	38
AGREE	2	4
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0
		100

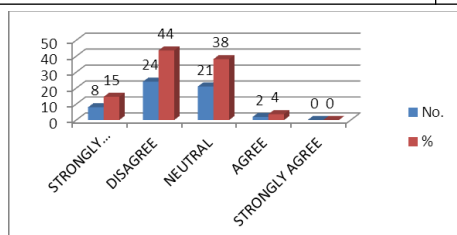


Table 18 represents the importance of Marketing Surveillance. 44% of the doctor disagree for clinical trials, 38% of them are neutral, 15% of them strongly disagree, whereas remaining 4% strongly agree for the same.

**TABLE No. 19 (Service Promptness)**

Preference towards Promptness in Service	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	10	18
NEUTRAL	31	56
AGREE	13	24
STRONGLY AGREE	1	2
		100

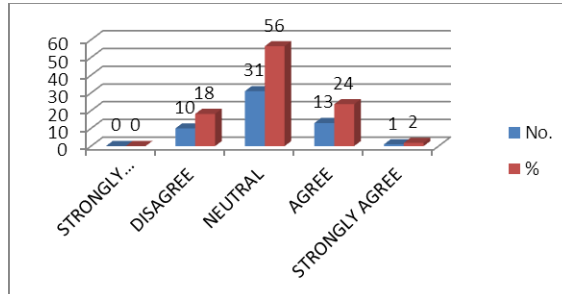


Table 19 represents promptness in service of medical representatives. 56% of Doctors are neutral, 24% of them agree, 18% disagree, remaining 2% strongly disagree for the same.

**TABLE No. 20 (Updating Price)**

Information about Updates with Price	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	5	9
NEUTRAL	31	56
AGREE	19	35
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0
		100

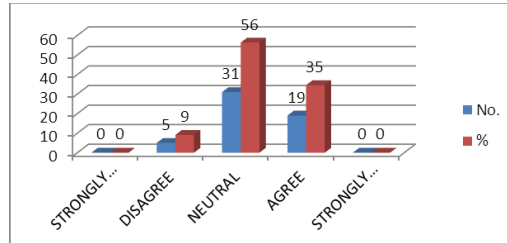


Table 20 represents the importance of updation of price to doctors. 56% of them are neutral to it, 35% agree, whereas remaining 9% disagree for the same.

**TABLE No. 21 (Pleasing Personality)**

Importance of Pleasing Personality of MR's	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	5	9
NEUTRAL	29	53
AGREE	19	35
STRONGLY AGREE	2	4
		100

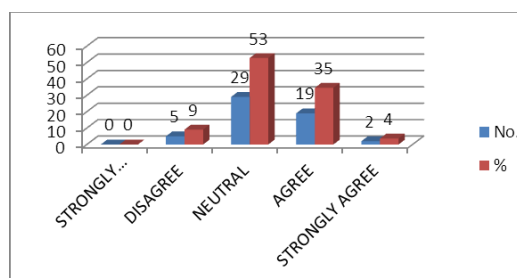


Table 21 represents the importance of pleasing personality of medical representatives. 53% of the doctors are neutral, 35% of them agree, 9% disagree whereas 4% strongly agree for the same.

**TABLE No. 22 (Needs of Practice)**

Importance of Understanding the needs of Practice	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	1	2
DISAGREE	14	25
NEUTRAL	27	49
AGREE	13	24
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0
		100

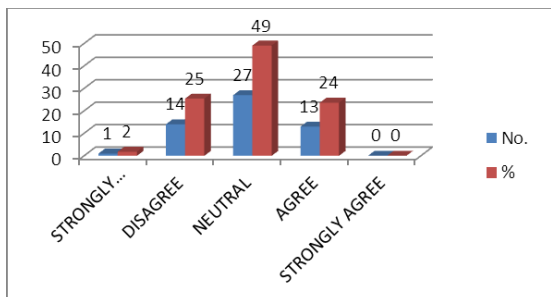


Table 22 represents the importance of understanding the needs of practice by MR's. 49% of doctors are neutral, 25% of them disagree, 24% agree, whereas remaining 2% strongly disagree with the same..

**TABLE No. 23 (Personalized Greetings)**

Importance of Personalized Greetings	No.	%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0
DISAGREE	25	45
NEUTRAL	30	55
AGREE	0	0
STRONGLY AGREE	0	0
		100

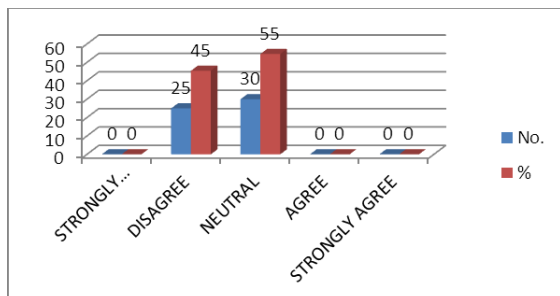


Table 23 represents the importance of personalized greetings by MR's. 55% of them agree whereas remaining 45% disagree with the importance of personalized greetings by MR's.

## CONCLUSION

One of the most crucial techniques in pharmaceutical marketing is selling through Medical representative. But due to increased competition, and me-too brands pharmaceutical selling has become very difficult and cost oriented. It requires lot of training of medical representatives and promotional activities to be done for doctors. Therefore it becomes essential to understand what doctors expect from medical representatives for increasing their effectiveness.

The study helps to find out very basic but crucial findings about the perception and expectations of doctors from medical representatives which can contribute towards increasing their effectiveness. The following conclusions were derived.

1. 55% of Doctors prefer to meet Medical Representative after a gap of 11-20 days.
2. 54% of the doctors prefer either B.Sc (27%) or

D.Pharmacy(27%) as the minimum qualification of medical representatives.

3. 53% of them prefer to spend average 4-6 minutes with Mr's.
4. The important aspects for MR's are Regular Visits with Right Frequency (38%), Good Communication (49%), Scientific Knowledge (45%), Update information about Disease and Drugs (36%)
5. For promotional activities & other factors like Educational inputs (58%), CME Sponsorship (35%), Patient related services (35%) or complete dose of samples (33%), Promptness in Service (56%), Promptness in service (56%), Updates with price (56%), Pleasing Personality (53%), understanding the needs of practice (49%), Personalized Greetings (55%) they are neutral.
6. 65% of the doctors are in agreement towards the effectiveness of Sponsorship of Conference.

As per **conclusion no. 6**, it is proved that Doctors are in favour of sponsorship of conferences; therefore null hypothesis is rejected & alternative hypothesis i.e.

H1: 'Sponsorship in conferences is one of the most widely accepted promotional tools adopted by pharmaceutical companies for doctors' is accepted.

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