

# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES

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## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3523](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3523)

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**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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## ABSTRACT

Medical Representatives are a group of highly educated, smart, well-groomed people with good personality and behavior. Their role is to influence healthcare professionals to prescribe their product brand to their customers. The role of medical representative is very challenging one as they are the backbone of pharmaceutical industry. They inform and present their brand features in front of the physician, try to influence them for prescribing their product. They also try to understand the needs of physicians and communicate the same with higher officials. Thus, their feedback is very much useful to the research and development of the company. Medical representatives work as an intermediate between the company and healthcare professionals they are so much updated regarding their competitor's product, price and its features. They build good relationships with doctors, chemists, stockiest as well as administrators by providing information about their brand and persuade them to promote their company products by prescribing the same to the patients. They also organize conferences for physicians for informing them about their company's new product launch, features etc. briefly they perform versatile tasks and duties as a mediator of their company.

**Keywords:** Medical Representatives, Mediator, Pharmaceutical Industry, Healthcare Professionals

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical company product is promoted through an intermediate group of sales persons called medical representatives. The prescription deed is agreed between the physician and the medical representatives after effective communication between them regarding the detailing of company products and policies. Pharmaceutical company product cannot be directly sold to the end customer like any other products, there is a direct control of physician is involved as he prescribes a particular brand product to their patients. So, there is a need of an intermediate person between the company and the physician in order to explain about the product features and convincing for a prescription. Pharmaceutical company products are promoted through an intermediate group of sales persons called "medical representatives". They are very much influential to the prescription made by a health practitioner. They have to deal with a great strategy of creation and maintaining demand for their company product. Medical representatives are known as the brand representatives of their company products. They work hard to increase and maintain the sales growth for their company. Pharmaceutical companies provide regular training to their sales team to make them efficient and send them to the health practitioner. It is very important that a medical representative should have a strong knowledge about

their brand, with good communication skills, convincing attitude, and patience. As a marketing professional they present their products in front of the health practitioner convince them for getting a prescription for their product. Medical representatives meet not only the physician but the administrative authorities, stockiest and chemist in a regular interval. Their job becomes very difficult and challenging one because it is their duty to study and explain about the unique selling proposition (USP) to their client. For this purpose, they use product monographs and other digital tools. They also offer complements and gifts, foreign trips, monetary benefits to their client as well. It is very important that medical representatives should be very cautious in seeking the positive impression of physicians. Their attitude, dress code, language and communication skill, presentation skills are very much important to catch the attention of their client.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Being the building blocks of a pharmaceutical company, the medical representatives lay a foundation for the growth of their company business. Their job role is really very difficult and challenging as a brand representative. The progress of a brand is truly depending on the performance and efficiency of a medical representative. Each representative has assigned an area to manage the work and they are responsible for the ups and downs of the sales in that area as well as to build stronger relationships with the client. Their job profile involves establishing and maintaining contact with the company clients and meeting the targets at the end of the month. Their role is thus demands for flexibility, adaptability, continuous hard work and improvement to sell pharma products effectively and maintain a stable demand. All these duties and responsibilities makes their job more complex and stressful. Although their job role is sales-targeted, they additionally play other roles in offering information, engaging in product demonstrations, etc. It is more important to ensure that healthcare suppliers are well-informed about medical advancements and new medicines options. Medical representatives also meet and keep relationships with medical practitioners, pharmacists, stockiest and hospitals to enhance product visibility growth and profits. They work closely with their marketing team and sales managers to achieve sales objectives and make contributions to the company's growth. They are also responsible for meeting sales goals, adhering to ethical compliance, and complying with regulatory requirements. They frequently set up and take part in different medical conferences, seminars, and promotional activities in order to increase the focus and visibility of their company products. Therefore, the role of a Medical Representative combines salesmanship with healthcare education, aiming to enhance patient care through strong conversation and product knowledge. In short, the Role of Medical Representative is not only about promoting pharmaceutical products but also developing professional relationships, promoting health education and patient treatment decisions etc.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To study about the personal and professional qualities of medical representatives
- To study about the role of medical representative in influencing the physician's prescription.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The primary for the present study was gathered through a well-structured interview schedule. Data collected from 200 medical representatives in different national as well as International pharmaceutical companies operating in Thiruvananthapuram district. Secondary data for the study collected from published sources like journals, research publications and magazines.

## **HYPOTHESIS FOR THE STUDY**

- There is no significant relationship between physicians' prescription behavior and personal traits of the medical representatives.
- There is no significant relationship between the physician's prescription behavior and the influence of the medical representatives.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**Table 2**  
**Demographic profile of the respondents**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 25 years	20	10
25-30	80	40
30-35	70	35
Above 35	30	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	138	69
Unmarried	62	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
Degree	142	71
P. G	28	14
B. Pharm	20	10
Others	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Experience</b>		
Less than 5 years	32	16
5-10	112	56
10-15	46	23
Above 15 years	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Less than 50000	8	4
50000-100000	130	65
100000-150000	24	12
Above 150000	38	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Primary data**

It has been observed from Table 1 that most (40%) of the respondents were under the age groups of 25-30, and 35 percent of the respondents were under the age group of 30-35. It is also observed that majority (69%) of the respondents of the unit were married; and 71% of the members of the respondents are degree holders. The study also reveals that majority (56%) of the respondents have experience between 5-10 years. it is clear from the table that majority (65%) of the group have a monthly income between 50000-100000.

**Table 2**  
**Factors affecting physicians' prescription behaviour**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Percentile position</b>	<b>Garret value</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Cost of the medicine	2.5	88	I
Influence of medical representatives	7.5	78	II
Safety of the medicine	12.5	73	III
Patient status	17.5	70	IV
Availability in the pharmacy	22.5	65	V
Product information	27.5	62	VI

Experience	32.5	59	VII
Hospital policy	37.5	57	VIII
Branded product	42.5	54	IX
Information from conference	47.5	51	X

**Source: Computed Data**

It is clear from the above table that among the factors affecting physicians prescription behaviour, the cost of medicine scores high and ranked first, influence of medical representatives holds second rank and third rank for Safety of the medicine, fourth rank for Patient status, fifth rank for Availability in the pharmacy, sixth rank for Product information seventh rank for Experience eighth rank for Hospital policy ninth rank was given to Branded product and tenth rank was for Information from conference.

**Table 3**  
**Traits of medical representatives**

Sl. No	Factors	Weighted Mean	Rank
<b>I</b>	<b>Personal qualities</b>		
1	Time management	3.32	2
2	Inter personal communication	3.98	1
3	Dress code	3.08	4
4	Patience	2.48	6
5	Willingness to learn	2.84	5
6	Communication skills	3.19	3
7	Self confidence	2.32	7
<b>II</b>	<b>Professional qualities</b>		
1	Presentation skills	3.24	2
2	Marketing skills	3.18	3
3	Persuasion	2.72	4
4	Listening skills	2.56	5
5	Positive attitude	2.35	6
6	Team work	2.28	7
7	Product knowledge	3.42	1

**Source: Computed Data**

The above table shows the weighted average analysis of the different qualities required for medical representatives. It is categorised in to personal and professional qualities. In the personal qualities, the first rank was given to inter personal communication, second to time management, third to the communication skill, fourth for dress code, fifth for the willingness to learn, sixth for patience and seventh rank was given for self-confidence. In the professional qualities, the first rank was given to product knowledge, second to presentation skills, third to the marketing skill, fourth for persuasion, fifth for the listening skill, sixth for positive attitude and seventh rank was given for team work.

**Table 4**  
**Chi square table**

Factors	Calculated value	Table value	Degree of freedom	Inference
Prescription behavior and influence of respondents	29.6	26.3	16	Rejected
Prescription behavior and traits of respondents	43.7	32.67	21	Rejected

**Source: Computed Data**

From the above table it is inferred that the factors such as Prescription behaviour and influence of respondents are dependent as the calculated value for the factors are 29.6 which is greater than the table value that is 26.3 at the degree of freedom level 16. So null hypotheses are rejected and thus there is a significant relationship between physician's prescription behaviour and the influence of the respondents. The calculated value that is 43.7 is greater than the table value 32.67 at the degree of freedom level 21. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and there is significant relationship between physicians' prescription behaviour and traits of the respondents.

### 3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Most (40%) of the respondents were under the age groups of 25-30.
- Majority (35) percent of the respondents were under the age group of 30-35.
- Majority (69%) of the respondents of the unit were married.
- Majority (71%) of the members of the respondents are degree holders.
- Majority (56%) of the respondents have experience between 5-10 years.
- Majority (65%) of the group have a monthly income between 50000-100000
- It is clear from the study that among the factors affecting physicians' prescription behaviour, the cost of medicine scores high and ranked first, influence of medical representatives holds second rank and third rank for Safety of the medicine.
- In the personal qualities required for the respondents, the first rank was given to inter personal communication.
- In the professional quality required for the respondents, the first rank was given to product knowledge.
- It is found that thus there is a significant relationship between physician's prescription behaviour and the influence of the respondents.
- It is found from the study that and there is significant relationship between physicians' prescription behaviour and traits of the respondents.

### 4. SUGGESTION

It is very clear from the study that medical representatives are the most impactful marketing tool of pharmaceutical business. As they are the only powerful way through which a pharma company can approach and influence their client and sell their product through them, they shall be considered as most valuable asset of their company. They should be treated with good working environment; attainable targets shall be assigned to them. Companies should support their employees by working a favourable working condition to them where they can enjoy their work without stress. Also, management must ensure the quality of their employees work life and change their policies, if necessary, in order to support them to balance their work and life.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Employees are the most significant asset for any organization, in the case of pharmaceutical industry, medical representative is the crucial part in marketing, and sales promotion. Their personal and professional qualities can create a positive image in physicians minds, which turns in to prescription generation. The study confirms that there is positive impact of medical representatives' personal qualities like dress code, interpersonal skills, patience, time management and professional qualities like detailing, product knowledge, marketing and communication skills, influence on doctor's prescription behaviour. Pharmaceutical marketing is all about a good relationship between physician and medical representatives. It is because they are called the "Brand ambassadors" of pharma businesses as their personal and professional qualities play a significant role in the betterment of this association and prescription generation.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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