

Management's Perceptions on the Ability of Website Marketing in Enhancing and Maintaining Organizational Reputation: Evidence from Zimbabwe's Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector

Kumbirayi (nee Makuyana) Chowa¹, Nadia Farhana² and Vijayer Raj³

¹DBA Researcher, Binary University of Management and Entrepreneurship, Malaysia,

²Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Stamford University, Bangladesh and ³Lecturer, Binary University of Management & Entrepreneurship, Malaysia

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Abstract

The study is a direct response to the twenty-first century Marketing 4.0 digital quotient technologies, in which business activities have significantly been transformed due to technological innovations. Marketing 4.0 is a new era of marketing in which business transactions are done online. In that vein, the study provides a qualitative exploration of the perceptions of managers concerning the ability of Website Marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation within Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. The study engages a qualitative methodology on a sample size of 21 managers chosen purposively from the seven medicinal drug manufacturing companies located in Harare. This qualitative analysis is conducted using the Key Informant Interview Guide as the major research instrument. The results demonstrate that website marketing enhances and maintains organisational reputation through responding to clients promptly online, encouraging the promotion of organisational brands to manage positive organisation-client relationships as well as instilling a spirit of trust of the organisation among clients. Website marketing allows reputation marketing where businesses monitor, promote and highlight positive posts, feedback, comments, reviews and other content about their brand. Addressing customer issues and feedback enhance exceptional customer experience and help business in product improvement (high quality products), which will then lead to customer satisfaction and influence brand loyalty and hence become more loyal to the brand. Business organisations should engage website marketing as it provides a sense of confidence and trust in an organisation among clients. Customer reviews and feedback give businesses insight into customer satisfaction levels, guide organisations in detecting and addressing customer issues

instantly in order to build a base of loyal customers, thereby enhancing customer retention and organizational reputation.

Keywords: Management Perceptions, Organisational Reputation, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector, Website Marketing, Zimbabwe

Introduction

More recent evidence has demonstrated that the pharmaceutical sector is experiencing a problem of reputation damage among its own clients (Lon et al., 2020). In fact, in the more distant past, the sector was among the most respected industries, but its reputation has slowly waned (Kessel, 2014). The loss of this reputation owes much to the high levels of criticisms that have been levelled against the sector as a result of a transparent lack in some of the earlier clinical studies (Chen et al., 2017). Additionally, some pharmaceutical companies have been blamed for shady practices like deceptive marketing campaigns, often relaying misleading messages to their consumers and damaging their organisational reputation in that process (Kessel, 2014). Amidst these high levels of criticisms, the need to build and maintain a concrete corporate reputation must be conceptualised as a high priority issue (Chen et al., 2017; Wu & Kimura, 2018).

To restore, the reputation of business organisations, quite a number of strategies have been practised by different organisations (Wadhwa, 2020). The establishment of organisational websites to market business organisations' brands has not been an exception in this regard (Wadhwa, 2020) owing to the argument that with website marketing, business organisations are able to manage their reputation; for example, website marketing has been regarded as an important tool in managing the reputation of business organisations (Wadhwa, 2020). In view of that, this study provides a qualitative exploration of the perceptions of managers concerning the ability of Website Marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation within Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector.

The study is organised sequentially. In the first section, the study provides an outline of the problem statement, limitations and literature review. After this, the article presents the research questions, research objectives and then discusses the methodological framework that was followed. From there, the study discusses how data was analysed and then provides the findings and conclusion of the study. After this, the study provides recommendations and finally acknowledges the various players that made this study a reality and possibility.

Problem Statement

More recent evidence has demonstrated that the pharmaceutical sector is experiencing a problem of reputation damage among its own clients (Lon et al., 2020). To restore, the reputation of business organisations, quite a number of strategies have been practised by different organisations (Wadhwa, 2020). The establishment of organisational websites to market business organisations' brands has not been an exception in this regard (Wadhwa, 2020) owing to the argument that with website marketing, business organisations are able to manage their reputation; for example website marketing has been regarded as an important tool in managing the reputation of business organisations (Wadhwa, 2020). Additionally, the review of literature that has been discussed in this study shows that there is a research gap that needs to be filled. While many studies have been written from all manner of perspectives on website marketing, evidence show that, at least for Zimbabwe, there are limited studies that have been carried out with a special focus on the pharmaceutical Industry. Though Khoza (2018); Zanamwe et al (2012) have focused their studies within the retail pharmaceutical

Industry, the current study has opted to address the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation using the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe; an approach that has made this study unique and so contributed to original literature. In view of that, this study provides a qualitative exploration of the perceptions of managers concerning the ability of Website Marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation within Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector.

Limitations

The greatest challenge that this study faced had to do with methodological limitations. In other words, the study was not able to engage the clients of pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to understand their views and perceptions on the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation. In that vein, the study remained aligned to the management. To resolve this limitation, further probing into the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation was directed on the key informants, the management.

Literature Review

In this section, the study provides a discussion of the literature concerning the above stated objectives. Additionally, a brief discussion of some of the key concepts that define the scope of this study is provided. In that view, the working definitions of organisational reputation and website marketing are provided including the theoretical framework that guided this study.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is essentially grounded on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Originally projected by Fred Davies in 1985, the theory proposed that the utilisation of a new technological system is driven by a combination of factors that include the importance of the new system, its user friendliness as well as attitude of the users in harnessing a certain technological system. Thus the acceptance of a certain technological system, as advanced by Davis (1985), is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include the usefulness of the system, its user friendliness as well as the attitude of those willing to use, accept and adopt the system. On the other hand, external factors affecting the acceptance of the new system include the involvement of the user in the design of the technological system including training as well as the implementation process. Since the adoption and use of website marketing by pharmaceutical manufacturing organisations in Zimbabwe are an expression of accepting technology, the model is therefore considered to be relevant for the study. In the following sub-section, the study provides working definitions of organisational reputation and website marketing.

Working definitions

Organisational reputation relates to the global impression given by people to an organisation and this is expressed through peoples' loose structures of beliefs and knowledge concerning a business organisation (Lievens, 2017).

Website marketing means the promotion of organisational products and services on the web pages of business organisations (The Dictionary of Web marketing Terminology, 2020). In the following sub-section, the study provides a review of the literature by objective.

Factors influencing the adoption of website marketing

A number of studies based on understanding the factors behind the adoption of website marketing within the pharmaceutical Industry have been advanced. Setkute (2018), while carrying out his study in the United Kingdom, using semi-structured interviews in data collection, observed that internal, external and knowledge factors were among the most important reasons for the adoption of website marketing within the Oil and Gas Industry. These factors included the globalisation trends that have since captured the world in each and every way. On a similar note, Gayathiri and Ravindran (2020) argued that 'the present world is all around technological upliftment and developments happening around us. With the advent of the new Industrial Policy Strategies of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, it has become inevitable to learn and implement the new technological developments in every section of the business in the nation' (Gayathiri and Ravindran 2020:4015). The issue of Covid-19 has also been highlighted as a factor behind the use of website marketing as well as the need to reach global markets (Gayathiri and Ravindran, 2020).

Thus, the shift towards the adoption and use of website marketing has been a result of complete developments in technology as well as dynamics of contemporary markets (Mort et al., 2012). On another note, Teixeira et al., (2017:95) analyzed the factors that influence the adoption of technology, identifying them initially through the systematic literature review of similar scientific works. Typically, the success of innovation in SMEs is determined by the novelty, the power of new adoptions that translate into a growing number of opportunities for growth (Ariful et al., 2023).

In Zimbabwe et al (2013) examined the factors influencing the adoption of website marketing within Zimbabwe's Commercial Banking Sector. Using a questionnaire survey that was administered among 335 commercial bank clients, the study found that a rise in the use of internet and technological advancements have increased the use and adoption of website marketing in the Banking Sector. Additionally, Chigombe et al (2022) explored the factors influencing the adoption and use of social media in the Construction Industry in Zimbabwe. Using a questionnaire survey distributed among 119 research participants, the study found that global trends that included the influence of the environment as well as the characteristics of the Chief Executive Officers were among those factors that drove the adoption of website marketing technologies within the Construction Industry in Zimbabwe. In the next section, the study, gives a detailed review of literature on the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation.

Website marketing and organisational reputation

A considerable number of studies have been carried out in exploring the influence of website marketing on organisational reputation. Song (2001) stated that internet marketing is a powerful vehicle in marketing in the building of corporate brands and enable business organisations' to increase their chances of success. In measuring Returns on Investment (ROI), website marketing has been found to be cost-effective especially in the area of advertising as has been acknowledged by Pepelnjak (2008) and so enhances and maintains organisational reputation.

Web experiences affect the mental process of consumers and enhance their buying decision online (Cetină, Cristiana, Rădulescu, 2012). On a similar note, another scholar has observed that the internet has become the most powerful business tool after the turn of the millennium and those businesses that fail to take advantages of website marketing in conducting their business have no prospects of survival in this rapidly changing world (Yannopoulos, 2011). Website marketing, therefore, allows business stakeholders to interact, inspiring customer loyalty as well as enhancing brand visibility (Yannopoulos, 2011).

Intangible benefits arising from the use and adoption of website marketing include enhanced brand improvement, improved and quick communications, and enhanced and improved clients' services. These may also include the ability of companies to meet customers' expectations in future as a result of websites use as well as instilling a sense of trust and credibility (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019; Chaffey et al., 2009). Teixeira et al (2017) argues that website marketing helps in finding new clients, partners and better support for prevailing allies; better marketing management information including information concerning the feedback of certain products by customers and this overallly promotes the reputation of business organisations (Teixeira et al., 2017).

A Dubai-based study by Subramaniam et al (2019) studied the effectiveness of website marketing on a more general note. The study argued that to gain a better slice of the market in this globalised world, business organisations should adopt various marketing strategies and at the forefront is thus the concept of website marketing. Using semi-structured Interviews in data collection, the study established a positive relationship between website marketing and the creation of a strong and lasting brand image as well as its positive impact on the decision-making processes of the consumers. The study also found that website marketing inspire customer loyalty and organisations come to know what their customers want. Subramaniam et al (2019)'s study differs from this current study since the researcher examines the viability of website marketing within the Medicinal Drug Manufacturing Industry in Zimbabwe.

The adoption and use of website marketing by upcoming businesses is very important as these symbolizes a major communication tool between and amongst the concerned stakeholders. According to Teixeira et al (2017:98-101), one way in which website marketing is effective in enhancing organisational reputation is through giving a business organisation a higher level of trust among its respective clients.

Additionally, it has been observed that website marketing enables business organisations to monitor the activities of their customers and then find ways of improving their products and services and hence enhances organisational reputation (Yap and Lee, 2014; Yap et al., 2014). Similarly, it was also established that the pharmaceutical Industry in India use website marketing to make connections with clients and on this aspect, the web has been identified as an important platform it increases the visibility of an organisation's products and therefore increase its reputation (Bharskar and Siddheshwar, 2020). Website marketing additionally plays an important role in enhancing the quality of products and services offered by business organisations (Khan and Mahapatra, 2009). Due to these technological advances, salespersons and marketing agency and personnel make sure that brands are brought closer to the clients and that the role of the consumers have changed with the changing trends in

technology such that customers have increasingly become important stakeholders of businesses and in this manner organisational reputation is enhanced (Hossain et al., 2022; Khaled et al., 2019; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). In the next section, a review of literature on the challenges that business organisations face in adopting website marketing is advanced.

Challenges in using website marketing at a business organisational level

A number of studies have demonstrated that though current business organisations have embraced website marketing technologies within their marketing strategic plans, these attempts are not without challenges. This section of the literature review analyses the various challenges that business organisations have faced in their adoption and use of website marketing.

An Indian study by Mandal et al (2016) observed a number of challenges that the pharmaceutical industry faces in their attempt to harness website marketing. In their study of examining theories and strategies website marketing, which was based on an extensive review of literature, they found that one of the major challenges that the pharmaceutical industry face when it comes to website marketing are the conservative minds that are quite common within business organisations. They additionally pointed out that some areas are poorly networked or not connected at all, and this is compounded by power challenges that are prevalent in emerging economies. Henkel et al (2020) studied the challenges that firms are facing in adopting and using website marketing. Using semi-structured interviews to collect data, the study established that the pace at which business organisations are adopting and using web technologies is wearisomely slow due to lack of knowledge about these modern forms of marketing. Henkel et al.'s study is significantly different from this current study as it focusses on the drug manufacturing industry in Zimbabwe.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the factors influencing the adoption of website marketing within Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector.
2. To explore the perceptions of the managerial staff on the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe.
3. To examine the challenges that the Zimbabwean pharmaceutical manufacturing sector faces in harnessing website marketing in their day-to-day business operations.

Research Questions

1. What factors have influenced the adoption of website marketing within Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector?
2. To what extent has the adoption and use of website marketing been able to enhance and maintain organisational reputation within Zimbabwe's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector?
3. What are the challenges that the Zimbabwean pharmaceutical manufacturing sector faces in harnessing website marketing in their day-to-day business operations?

Research Methodology

Though medicinal drug manufacturers in Zimbabwe are found everywhere, the study utilised Harare based pharmaceutical manufacturing companies as the research population. The

study centred its focus on the traditional drug manufacturing companies and these included CAPS, Cospharm Pharmaceuticals, Graniteside, Gulf Drug, Pharmanova, SAPPS and Varichem. Other drug manufacturing companies that include Plus Five, Datlabs and ZimPharm are based in Bulawayo and likewise were outside the geographical scope of this research and therefore were excluded. Based on the argument that Harare houses the greater majority of the drug manufacturing companies (7 in total) than any other city, it became imperative to case-base the study in Harare.

In view of the above, Harare case was purposively and specifically chosen for the study since it provided excellent cases in terms of the geographical location of the cases in this study. The Medicine Control Authority estimates that there are 10 pharmaceutical manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe; with seven of these headquartered in Harare while three of these are Bulawayo-based (Medicine Control Authority Annual Report, 2022). This follows that the study collected data on the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation in Harare's pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. The study was therefore centred on the following pharmaceutical manufacturing business organisations: CAPS, Cospharm, Graniteside, Gulf Drug, Pharmanova, SAPPS and Varichem (See figure 1 below).

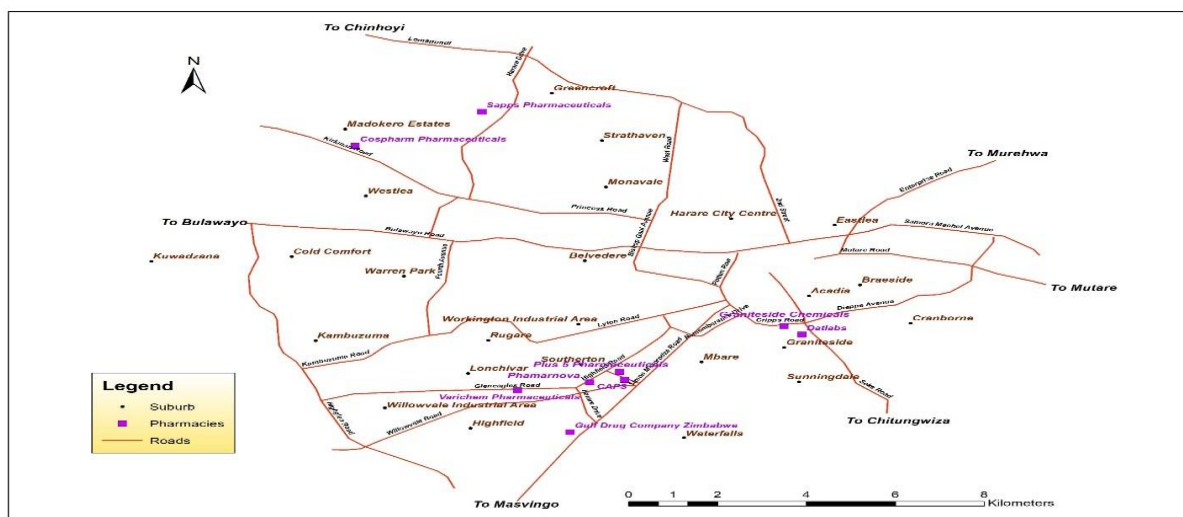


Figure 1: Map showing the location of Harare Pharmaceutical manufacturing companies

Source: Surveyor General 2023, Harare, Zimbabwe

Additionally, preliminary research undertaken has similarly shown the researcher that Harare was the best place for this research as the capital city happens to be the hub of economic activity, incomparable to any other town or city in Zimbabwe. Moreover, noteworthy concern for the Harare case was similarly decided as a result of the researcher's background who happened to have spent a lot of her time studying at the University of Zimbabwe and it is again in Harare where the researcher is currently stationed and working. This vast knowledge of Harare thus effectively made Harare to provide a suitable case study that was second to none. Research ethics were applied for at the Binary University of Management and Entrepreneurship, which was successfully granted. The researcher also applied for permission to carry out the research to the Harare Provincial Governor and it was similarly granted. Data was then collected qualitatively with the aid of Key Informant Interview Guide in which three research participants from each of the seven drug manufacturing companies were chosen to

participate in this study, making a total of 21 research participants. The decision to choose three respondents from each organisation was based on tracking consistence of responses that were given in order to make sure that the collected data was credible and reliable. In that regard, the field-work for this study was organised into three phases (See Table 1 below).

Table 1: The participants who took part in this study (2022-2023)

Table 3.2

The participants who took part in this study (2022-2023)

Respondent type	Number interviewed			Total
	First phase	second phase		
Third Phase				
Managers of different departments	7	7	7	21
Total	7	7	7	21

Source: Field-work (2022- 2023).

In all the three phases of this field-work, the researcher asked the participants for informed consent to participate in this research and this was done by asking participants to sign a consent form. For purposes of anonymity, the names of the respondents have been omitted and replaced with research respondent number. Thus, the study carried out key informant interviews with those respondents who were at managerial posts owing to the fact that these respondents were believed to be the real custodians of information relating to the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation.

Demographic Information of the research participants

Age distribution

It is necessary to provide an analysis of the respondents' age distribution (See Table 2 below).

Table 2

Respondents' age distribution

Age range	<25	25-45	>46	Total
Number of respondents	5	13	3	21

Source: Author (2023)

Table 2 above demonstrates that the age category 25 to 45 had the largest number of research participants. It was followed by the age category of less than 25 and the last one is the one comprising those who were 46 and above. The fact that the majority of the respondents were between 25 and 45 years means that this is the age category comprising the majority of workers in the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry.

Respondents' Gender Distribution

In terms of gender distribution, it was observed that there were twelve (12) male respondents while nine (9) were female. Such a trajectory demonstrates that Zimbabwe as a country is moving towards gender equality in general (See Table 1.2 below).

Table 4.2

Respondents' gender distribution

	Male	Female	Total
Respondents	12	9	21
Total	12	9	21

Source: Author (2023)

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed thematically using a computer-based program known as Nvivo. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software program, which helps the researcher to get a clear picture of the data (Allsop et al., 2022). The choice of this Nvivo software was necessitated by its ability to reduce a great number of manual tasks in research and therefore provided the researcher with ample time to discover the tendencies of the data, discover the emerging themes and ultimately enabled the researcher to derive and reach conclusions (Dallah et al., 2017).

The collected data was recorded digitally and then imported into NVivo program. The researcher explored the data and then made some nodes in the data (ie coding). After that, key words were used to create the themes in this research. Finally, the researcher recorded these insights after having discovered the themes that then formed the thematic areas of this study. The main themes were aligned with the research objectives and these are discussed individually in the next chapter.

Findings and Conclusion

It is interesting to note that this section is divided into three sub-sections, which are the results, discussion and the conclusion. The decision has been necessitated by the need to bring clarity so that the reader can follow the argument without difficulties.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study. It is interesting to note that the results presented here are presented objective by objective.

Factors influencing the use of website marketing

One of the major objectives of this study was to find the factors that are influencing the adoption and use of website marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. In view of that, this section presents and analyses field-work evidence specific to the factors influencing the adoption and use of digital marketing strategies.

Current Technological Advancements

According to field-work evidence, one of the factors that has made the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to adopt and use website marketing relates to the current technological changes that have fundamentally transformed the way businesses are operating in the current. From one of the research respondents, it was pointed out that

In fact, technological advancement has fundamentally changed the way we do business and online buying and selling has become the norm. The coming in of the internet has forced us, as business organisations, to come to terms with the needs of the moment. This current technology is irresistible and for business to maintain

and expand its client-base, there is need to fraternize with this technological age. For such reasons, it was necessary to adopt website marketing. With technology, business organisations must be able to accept change through embracing new technology and becoming innovative (Research respondent 8, male, 37 years, Harare. 13.02.23).

The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak

According to field-work findings, the outbreak of COVID-19 was another important factor in influencing pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to adopt and use website marketing. One of the research respondents thus observed that:

The Covid-19 pandemic reduced direct organisational contact with the clients. This meant that business organisations had to engage the online platforms, particularly the web, to stay and operate. Clients could not be reached physically, though the health sector in which the pharmaceutical industry belong was regarded as a critical sector and was allowed to open for business. This meant that business organisations had to devise means of communicating with their customers in order to make their businesses known (Research respondent 15, female, 44 years, Harare. 21.02.23).

The need to reach global markets

Another reason that has enabled pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to adopt and use website marketing is the need to reach global market in order to increase drug sales as well as to earn the much-needed business fame and reputation. Unlike other digital marketing platforms, website marketing enables businesses to run a single marketing campaign that aim to reach all customers even beyond the country's borders, regardless of their contacts. Globalisation led to the adoption of website marketing. In line with this observation, it was, thus, demonstrated that

The need to open up new markets in the global village has enabled our organisation to adopt and use the website channel of marketing targeted for internet surfers. We realised that harnessing traditional forms of marketing on Television, as well as engaging roadshows are no longer feasible in this age and it will create difficulties in opening up new markets for our products. Hence, we realised the need to engage the web to open up and expand our product markets and increase our reputation as a business (Research respondent 19, female, 40 years, Harare.31.03.23).

Ability of website marketing in enhancing organisational reputation

The second objective of this study was to explore the perceptions of the managerial staff on the ability of website marketing in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. Website marketing allows organizational reputation marketing as businesses can monitor, promote and highlight positive posts, feedback, comments, reviews and other content about their brand on their website. In that vein, this section presents the findings of the study with specific reference to this objective.

Website marketing instills a sense of organisational trust and credibility among clients

Field-work evidence demonstrated that website marketing instills a sense of trust of the organisation among its respective clients. Positive customer reviews and feedback on organizational website promote organizational reputation and instill a spirit of trust of the organisation among clients. It was highlighted during the course of field-work that websites are themselves representatives of organisations and in this manner instill a sense of trust. The study therefore learnt that

Website marketing instills a sense of organisational trust by clients. With website marketing, clients are able to render their full trust to an organization by reading positive customer reviews and feedback, to the extent that they will remain customers even under whatever circumstances. This is because clients are assured that the organisation will remain in continuity and in this manner the reputation of the organisation is enhanced and maintained (Research respondent 12, male, 36 years, Harare.22.02.23).

Website marketing Inspire customer loyalty

Closely connected to the spirit of organisational trust that is placed upon by clients on an organisation as a result of website marketing was the concept of customer loyalty. The way businesses timely deliver as per order and positively address customer issues highlighted on websites will help to build a base of loyal customers, thereby enhancing customer retention and organizational reputation. It was shown during the conduct of field-work that the practice of engaging website marketing produces customer loyalty to an organisation by the clients and so enhances organisational reputation. The study, thus, learnt that

Website marketing cultivates a spirit of customer loyalty such that an organisation will not lose its clients to other organisations since there will direct communication between the clients and the organisation. This is done through timely delivery of quality and non-defect products and properly addressing customer issues. As an organization, we address customer issues and feedback raised on website in an exceptional way that improve customer experience and help our business in product improvement (high quality products), thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and influencing brand loyalty. In this manner, the needs and demands of both the client and the organisation are addressed and so ensures commendable organisational reputation (Research respondent 16, 34 years, Harare 19.03.23).

Website marketing helps organisations to gain new clients

Additionally, field-work evidence similarly demonstrated that website marketing enable businesses to easily reach their general audience and internet surfers, as well as attract potential customers to enter their company's sales funnel. These people have greater chances of being converted into paying customers. The direct communication that takes place between clients and the organisational workers on web platforms enables pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to gain new clients and therefore enhances and maintains organisational reputation. In fact, when business organisations establish their own websites, it is highly likely that website visitors will be converted into clients. A well established and thought-out website enables a business to experience high internet traffic and therefore able

to reach its targeted audience. In this manner, website marketing improves an organisation's reputation through gaining of new clients. On this note, the study, thus, learnt that

Website marketing allows pharmaceutical manufacturing organisations to disseminate brand information to both clients and potential clients who surf on the internet, irrespective of their contacts or geographical location. In fact, organisations also put options where visitors can subscribe or enter their details on website and this is the way that website marketing help organisations gain new clients even beyond their business contacts since these website visitors are in most cases turned into organisational clients. As organisations gain new clients, their reputation similarly spreads (Research respondent 6, female, 45 years, Harare. 24.02. 2023).

Website marketing enhances brand visibility and so improves organisational reputation

Field-work evidence also demonstrated that website marketing has got the capacity to enhance brand visibility by promoting organizational brands or products and in this manner increases the reputation of the organisation. Organisations can use sponsored adverts targeted to their prospective customers. On this note, it was highlighted by one of the research respondents that

With website marketing, business organisations are able to showcase their products on offer. In that way, organisational clients remain well-informed of the products that a business organisation is offering. As a result, it is necessary to point out that website marketing enhances organisational brand visibility and so increases the fame of the organisation in this technologically driven business age (Research respondent 4, male, 28 years, Harare. 21.02.2023).

Website marketing enhances business reputation by allowing stakeholders to interact

Another way through which website marketing was commended for being highly useful in enhancing and maintaining organisational reputation was through its ability to interact with various stakeholders on the websites. Website marketing enable prospective customers to communicate their requests, feedback, comments and organisations to respond to clients promptly online, thereby enhancing organisation-client relationships and business reputation. Interaction between an organization and its customer can also help in customization of brands in the global market to match clients specific needs, as markets differ in economic and climatic conditions. In that vein, it was shown that

Website marketing makes use of websites as platforms through which business organisations have enhanced opportunities to interact with their respective stakeholders. In that manner, the business would be able to grow and resultantly increases its reputation among its varied stakeholders (Research respondent 16, male, 34 years, Harare.16.04.23).

Website marketing allows corporate entities to be highly knowledgeable

It was also highlighted that business organisations that are engaged in website marketing are highly knowledgeable in terms of what their clients want. By reviewing customer requests, comments and feedback, businesses get insight into customer satisfaction levels and are

guided in detecting and addressing customer issues and requirements in order to build a base of loyal customers (Polas et al., 2019). In this manner, an organisation would have the chance of correcting their mistakes and similarly gain a higher level of business reputation. The study, thus, observed that

Business organisations within the pharmaceutical sector need to know what is being said about their respective organisations and this is available with website marketing. The public sentiments from the various stakeholders including the clients would enable business organisations to improve if there is need to do so. The end result of this would be that the fame of the organisation would go even beyond its geographical national frontiers (Research respondent 19, female, 40 years, Harare.01.02.23).

Challenges faced by pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in the use of website marketing

Field-work evidence demonstrated quite a number of challenges that pharmaceutical manufacturing organisations face in their efforts to fully engage in website marketing operations in Zimbabwe. This section presents, analyses, interprets and discusses the challenges that pharmaceutical manufacturing companies are facing in their efforts to engage website marketing.

Poor Internet connection

One of the challenges that pharmaceutical manufacturing companies face in their attempt to fully engage in website marketing relates to a lack of a strong and reliable internet connection and back up. This challenge is closely linked to the problem of network challenges in the country. On this note, the study learnt that

Sometimes our quest to fully engage website marketing are disrupted by network challenges. The local network in our country is not yet well-advanced to the extent that sometimes you may have a consecutive 10 hours of network disruption. In this way, website marketing practices are severely disturbed (Research respondent 13, female, 43 years, Harare. 09.03.23)

Power challenges

Closely aligned to the problem of poor network connection are the challenges of electricity. Though Zimbabwe has not been left out in the race of power back-ups in the form of generators and solar panels, it was highlighted during field-work that the problem of electricity is still common in the country. This problem negatively affects the full utilisation of website marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing organisations. On this note, the study learnt that

Zimbabwe is still among those nations that are still struggling in the provision of adequate energy requirements to its people. Sometimes, we may be in darkness for the whole night or whole day as a result of electricity load shedding. In that manner, our systems of website marketing are disturbed (Research respondent 20, female, 44 years, Harare.12.06.23).

High Costs in acquiring and maintaining digital marketing devices

Evidence from field-work demonstrated quite a number of challenges that the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector is currently facing in their attempts to utilise website marketing on a full-time basis. According to one of the research respondents, the study learnt that

Multiple challenges face our organisation considering the state of the economy which in itself is struggling. These challenges include the high costs in acquiring the devices needed to harness full-time digital marketing. These may include the acquisition of advanced machinery like internet gadgets to install big data and artificial intelligence technologies (Research respondent 2, female 39 years, Harare. 03.04.2023).

Remote or Unconnected Areas

One of the challenges that was identified as a major challenge for pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to use website marketing is related to the remoteness of other areas that are far away from towns and cities. To carry out product awareness campaigns in those areas, business organisations are forced to resort to traditional means of marketing that include trade shows. On this point, it was pointed out that:

Our organization face difficulties in reaching remote rural areas though we have harnessed digital marketing practices. Some areas are still remote, yet the people who happen to live there need to know the drugs that we have manufactured including the knowledge of how these drugs work (Research respondent 14, male, 38 years, Harare. 18.04.2023).

Presence of conservative minds in the business organisations

Another challenge that was identified during the course of the field-work was related to the presence of staff or workers who were not willing to accept and adopt technology. It was highlighted that some old people who are sometimes the directors of the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies are still of the opinion that traditional forms of marketing that include road-shows are better methods of marketing than digital marketing platforms. On this point, it was observed that

Sometimes the people who are in control of companies are an old cohort cult who still believe that traditional forms of marketing like newspaper and billboard marketing are still efficient and effective. Even if you try to explain to them the pretty advantages of digital marketing, sometimes you will not convince them as they resist technology - laggards or late adopters (Key Informant Interview 10, male, 29 years, Harare. 16.05.23).

Discussion

The study has shown that there are various factors that have influenced the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector to adopt website marketing. These included technological advancements, the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak as well as the need to reach global markets. These findings are consistent with previous studies; for example, Setkute (2018) observed that internal, external and knowledge factors were among the most important reasons for the adoption of website marketing within the Oil and Gas Industry. These factors included the

globalisation trends that have since captured the world in each and every way. On a similar note, Gayathiri and Ravindran (2020) argued that 'the present world is all around technological upliftment and developments happening around us. With the advent of the new Industrial Policy Strategies of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, it has become inevitable to learn and implement the new technological developments in every section of the business in the nation' (Gayathiri and Ravindran 2020:4015). The issue of Covid-19 has also been highlighted as a factor behind the use of website marketing as well as the need to reach global markets (Gayathiri and Ravindran, 2020). Thus, the shift towards the adoption and use of website marketing has been a result of complete developments in technology as well as dynamics of contemporary markets (Mort et al., 2012).

The study has also shown that website marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector is particularly important as it enhances organisational reputation. The study has confirmed this role in quite a number of ways including its ability to instill a sense of trust and credibility among organisational clients, inspiring customer loyalty, gaining new clients, enhancing brand visibility, allowing stakeholder interaction as well as allowing business organisations to be highly knowledgeable, especially in terms of what corporate stakeholders expect from the business. These findings are in line with earlier literature; for example, Song (2001) stated that internet marketing is a powerful vehicle in marketing in the building of corporate brands and enable business organisations' to increase their chances of success. Website marketing has been found to be cost-effective especially in the area of advertising as has been acknowledged by Pepelnjak (2008) and so enhances and maintains organisational reputation. Website marketing has similarly been found to allow business stakeholders to interact, inspiring customer loyalty as well as enhancing brand visibility (Yannopoulos, 2011). Teixeira et al (2017) similarly observed that website marketing helps in finding new clients, partners and better support for prevailing allies; better marketing management information including information concerning the feedback of certain products by customers and this overallly promotes the reputation of business organisations (Teixeira et al., 2017).

The study has also demonstrated that in adopting and using website marketing, the pharmaceutical manufacturing companies face quite a number of challenges. These include poor internet connection, power challenges, high costs of acquiring and maintaining internet marketing devices, remoteness of certain areas as well as the presence of traditional minds who resist technology within business organisations. These findings are in close association with previous studies; for example Mandal et al (2016) observed a number of challenges that the pharmaceutical industry faces in India in their attempt to harness website marketing. In their study of examining theories and strategies of website marketing, which was based on an extensive review of literature, they found that one of the major challenges that the pharmaceutical industry face when it comes to website marketing are the conservative minds that are quite common within business organisations. They additionally pointed out that some areas are poorly networked and this is compounded by power challenges that are prevalent in emerging economies. Henkel et al (2020) similarly found that the pace at which business organisations are adopting and using web technologies is wearisomely slow due to lack of knowledge about these modern forms of marketing.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that technological advancements, the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak Hossain et al (2020) and the need to reach global markets are among the major factors influencing the adoption of website marketing within the pharmaceutical manufacturing

sector. It has also been shown that website marketing allows pharmaceutical manufacturing companies to earn a higher level of organisational reputation, notably through its ability to instill a sense of trust and credibility, inspiring and commanding customer loyalty, helping organisations to gain new clients, enhancing brand visibility, allowing the interaction of various stakeholders on the website platforms and allowing corporate entities to be highly knowledgeable on the needs and suggestions given to organisations by their varied stakeholders (Ong et al., 2020). Notwithstanding, the study has also shown that various challenges are still facing the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector in adopting and using website marketing. These challenges included poor internet connection, power challenges, and high costs of acquiring and maintaining internet marketing devices, remoteness of certain areas as well as the presence of traditional minds within business organisations.

Recommendations

Business organisations should engage website marketing as it provides a sense of confidence and trust in an organisation among clients. As business can get customer requests, reviews and feedback which help in product and service improvement and customization to match clients specific needs. Customer reviews and feedback give businesses insight into customer satisfaction levels, guide organisations in detecting and addressing customer issues instantly in order to build a base of loyal customers, thereby enhancing customer retention and organizational reputation.

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