

**IMPACT OF CAMPAIGNS ON BRANDING OF PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES**

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**ABSTRACT:**

This study explores how pharmaceutical marketing campaigns influence brand perception, trust, and consumer engagement in an increasingly competitive and regulated industry. Traditionally, pharmaceutical branding relied heavily on physician-targeted strategies, direct-to-consumer promotions, and print advertising. However, with the rise of digital platforms, companies have shifted toward more dynamic methods such as social media outreach, influencer collaborations, mobile ads, Patient Support Programs (PSPs) and content-driven storytelling. These modern approaches aim not just to increase visibility but also to build meaningful connections with audiences by offering health information, support, and transparency. By examining both industry practices and existing literature, the study highlights that multichannel and personalised campaigns tend to create stronger brand recognition and loyalty. Campaigns that offer clear messaging, credible sources, and an emotional or educational appeal are more likely to positively influence consumer perception. Interestingly, these strategies often resonate broadly across diverse audience segments, suggesting that well-crafted communication has the power to transcend demographic boundaries. The research also brings attention to ethical concerns within pharmaceutical marketing. While impactful campaigns can boost brand image, they also raise questions about misinformation, lack of transparency, and the potential prioritisation of commercial interests over public well-being. As pharmaceutical companies continue to refine their branding efforts, maintaining integrity and trust through responsible communication remains essential.

**KEYWORDS:** Branding, Consumer Engagement, Market Positioning, Advertisement, Brand Perception,

**INTRODUCTION :**

Branding is a critical element in the pharmaceutical industry, affecting accolades, creditability, and long-term ties with consumers. Unlike any other industry, pharmaceutical branding has to deal with a high degree of regulation, making branding efforts a lot more arduous and rigorous. In order to create a foothold in the markets, pharmaceutical companies rely heavily on marketing campaigns to develop brand identity so that by influencing consumer perceptions, it can be created as a competitive advantage <sup>1</sup>

Until not-too-long-ago, pharmaceutical branding was all about DTC advertising and promotions geared toward physicians. With the rapid growth of digital platforms, companies are now integrating social media, influencer partnerships, and content-driven marketing as part of their arsenal to engage their audiences. These newer techniques not only raise brand awareness but also impart valuable health-related insights to the consumer as well as the healthcare provider <sup>2</sup>.

These campaigns are a double-edged sword, with some positive and many negatives. It is said that a lot of health awareness campaigns are sponsored financially by corporations, thereby underlining the importance of transparency and responsible practices. Advertising practices in this domain are strictly controlled to guarantee ethicality by bodies like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) among others <sup>3</sup>.

This study aims at exploring the branding of pharmaceutical companies with marketing campaigns. The issues in branding impact brand awareness, trust from the consumers' side, positioning in the market, and more, which in itself opens the avenue for discussing the ethical problems within that. Thereafter, the paper discusses some important recommendations for the planning of successful regulation-abiding marketing strategies that resolve corporate goals and public health interests.

### **History of Branding of Pharmaceutical Companies**

#### **Early Days**

Imagine a scenario in which drugs are freely concocted, patented, and marketed – unchecked and with impunity to make any unsubstantiated claims leading to dire and even fatal consequences. Alas, this dystopian-sounding state-of-affairs is not absurd as it sounds. At a time when scientific rigour was yet to be established during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the lines between the chemical and pharma industries were blurry and posed a serious threat to public health <sup>4</sup>.

Mutlu Gunenc, Head of Marketing, Kiadis Pharma reflects: “...regulations have intensified due to informed patients demanding better treatment... the industry has been transforming its business models to meet their external stakeholders’ (physicians, payers, patients, policymakers) needs.”

By virtue of this freewheeling conduct, journalistic exposés on the subject prompted tighter regulatory rules. This would cement the status quo for generations to come, ushering in a new age of pharma marketing. For a long time, fraudulent intent still had to be proven, but stricter external regulatory bodies began requiring ingredients, side effects, and effectiveness to be outlined in all drug ads <sup>5</sup>.

By the end of the 1950s, 90% of big pharma marketing was targeted at doctors and in the 1960s, control of advertising was passed onto regulatory bodies. Cheap, generic drugs could no longer be marketed as expensive new ones under the guise of different name <sup>6</sup>.

#### **1980s and Early 2000s**

Rich Quelch, Global Head of Marketing, Origin Pharma Packaging, assesses this shift. “Interestingly, the 1980s saw the most transformational changes to medical marketing, brought about by the political and cultural ethos of the era which was more in support of big pharma as a consumer industry and empowering patients to make their own healthcare decisions.” Spearheading the direct-to-consumer marketing movement in the 1980s were Pfizer and Eli Lilly advertising medications treating hair loss, erectile dysfunction, and depression on television networks and radio stations. In 1983, Merck ran the first ever major modern direct-to-consumer TV ad for a prescription painkiller, and further controls gave rise to regulation-exempt reminder and help-seeking ads <sup>7</sup>.

The first-ever prescription drug advertisement aired on television on May 19th, 1983, by Boots Pharmaceuticals. The 22-second video featured the company's president informing viewers that

their version of Ibuprofen was cheaper than Motrin. Swarz Pharma aired the first generic drug commercial. Their product, a heartburn medicine, became a top seller <sup>8</sup>.

### **Here and Now**

Today, pharma marketing is dipping its toes into the digital pool by utilising apps, social media communities, and mobile ads. “Social media presents opportunities for pharma to partner with respected industry influencers to boost brand awareness and educate the public in a more authentic way than paid offline advertising ever could,” continues Quelch. Marketing in pharma has also begun deploying advanced analytics to generate potential patient profiles and understand prescribing behaviour that accurately targets providers <sup>9</sup>.

Pharmaceutical advertising is a crucial aspect of promoting and marketing drugs to the public. With the increase in competition, it has become essential for pharmaceutical companies to find the most effective methods of advertisement to reach their target audience <sup>10</sup>. In this article, we will discuss the most effective types of advertisement in the pharmaceutical industry and provide examples and statistics to support our findings.

### **Pharmaceutical Campaigns Advertising and Types**

Pharmaceutical marketing takes many forms, each designed to connect with a specific audience—whether it's patients or medical professionals. One widely recognized approach is Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) advertising, where companies communicate health information directly to the public through TV, print, or digital platforms. For example, campaigns like Lipitor encouraged individuals to take charge of their heart health, while Viagra opened up dialogue around male health issues. In 2020, DTC advertising spending in the U.S. alone reached approximately \$7.2 billion<sup>11</sup>. Another important strategy is Professional or Direct-to-Professional (DTP) advertising, which targets healthcare providers such as doctors and pharmacists. These campaigns focus on delivering clinical data and product benefits, as seen in Pfizer's promotion of Lyrica for nerve pain or Roche's educational efforts around Tamiflu for flu treatment<sup>12</sup>. In addition, disease awareness campaigns aim to inform the public about specific health conditions and treatment options without directly promoting a specific product. For instance, Janssen raised awareness about schizophrenia, while Lilly focused on educating people about depression <sup>13</sup>. A more interactive approach involves Sponsorship and Event Advertising, where pharmaceutical companies participate in or support conferences and professional gatherings. Examples include Roche's involvement with the American Society of Hematology's annual event and Bristol-Myers Squibb's partnership with the American Heart Association. These strategies help build relationships, enhance knowledge, and promote responsible healthcare communication <sup>14</sup>.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both primary and secondary research methods to analyze the impact of pharmaceutical campaigns on branding. The research focused on consumer perception, trust, and decision-making influenced by pharmaceutical advertisements.

### **Primary Research: Google Forms Survey**

To gain firsthand insights from consumers, a survey was created using Google Forms and shared for voluntary participation. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended and multiple-choice questions, making it simple for respondents to complete and easy to analyze. A convenience sampling method was used, allowing individuals from a variety of demographic backgrounds to take part. In total, 106 responses were collected from general consumers, offering a broad perspective on the topic under study.

### **Survey Objectives:**

1. Understanding the general perception of pharmaceutical campaigns.

2. Identifying factors influencing consumer perception.
3. Assessing the impact of advertising on trust and decision-making.

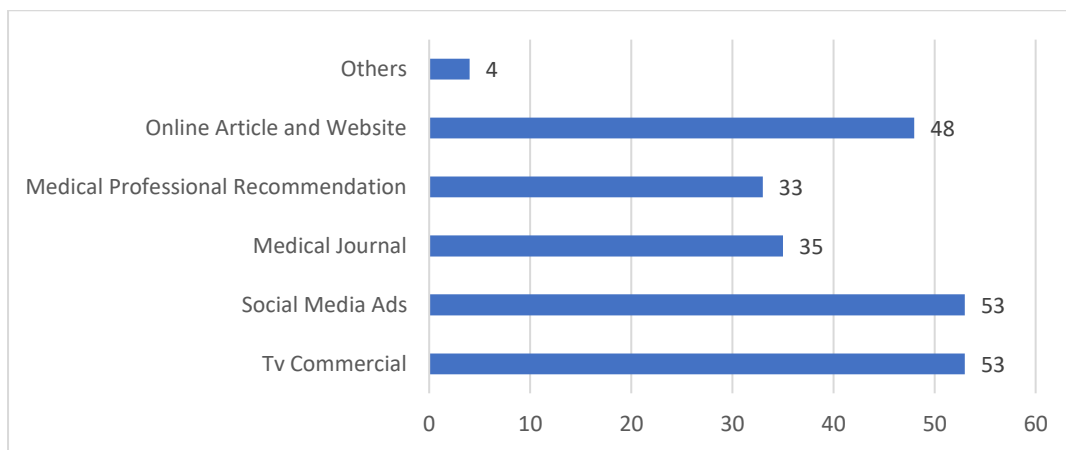
The data collected from the survey was quantitatively analysed to derive patterns and insights.

### **Secondary Research: Literature Review**

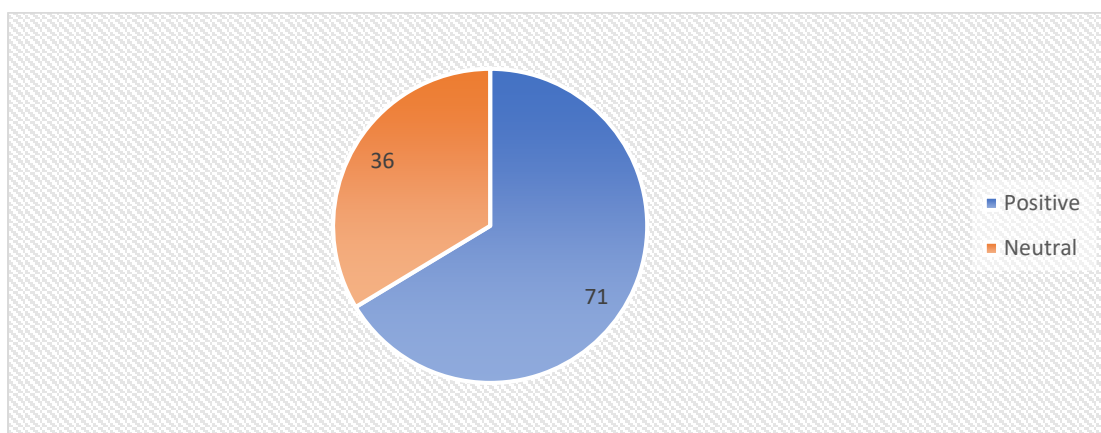
To support the primary research, secondary data was collected through an in-depth review of existing literature related to pharmaceutical marketing. This included academic journals, marketing research articles, case studies of successful pharmaceutical campaigns, and regulatory guidelines that govern pharmaceutical advertising. These sources provided a comprehensive understanding of how branding strategies are developed and implemented in the pharmaceutical industry. The literature review not only offered theoretical insights but also highlighted real-world applications and challenges faced by marketers. This background information was instrumental in interpreting the survey findings, allowing for a more meaningful comparison between consumer perceptions and established industry practices and trends.

### **Survey Results:**

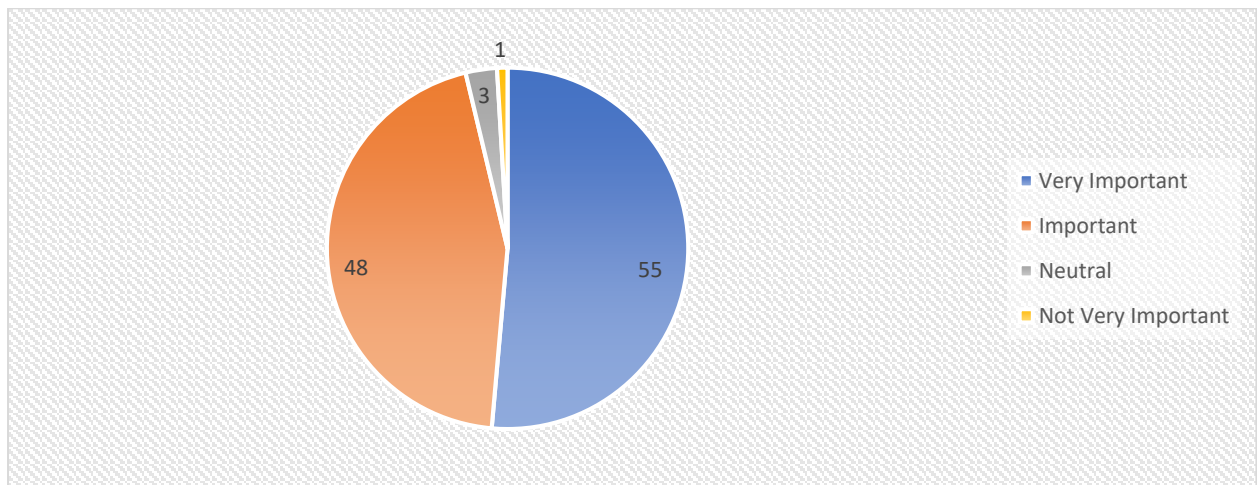
#### **1. Where do you most commonly see pharmaceutical campaigns?**



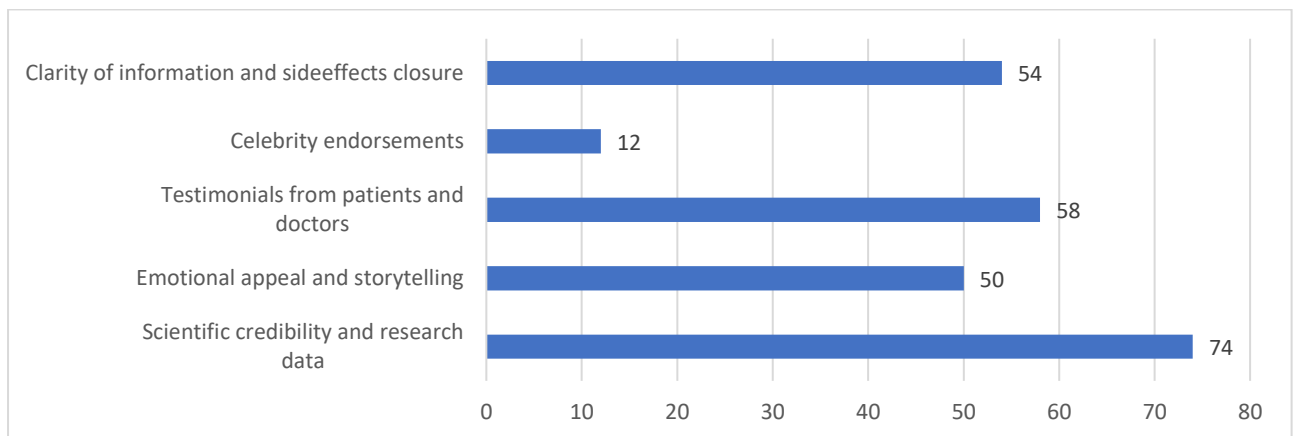
#### **2. What is your general perception of pharmaceutical advertising?**



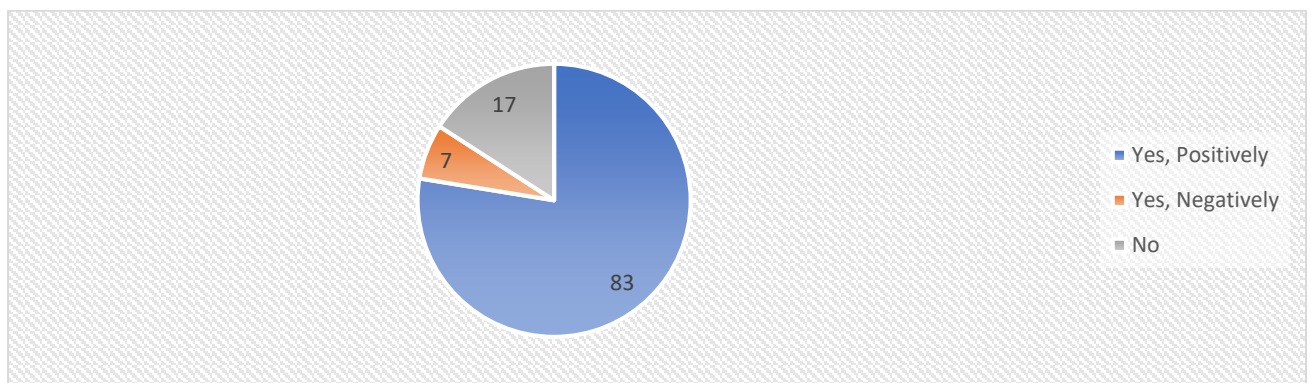
**3. How important are pharmaceutical campaigns in shaping your perception of the pharmaceutical industry?**



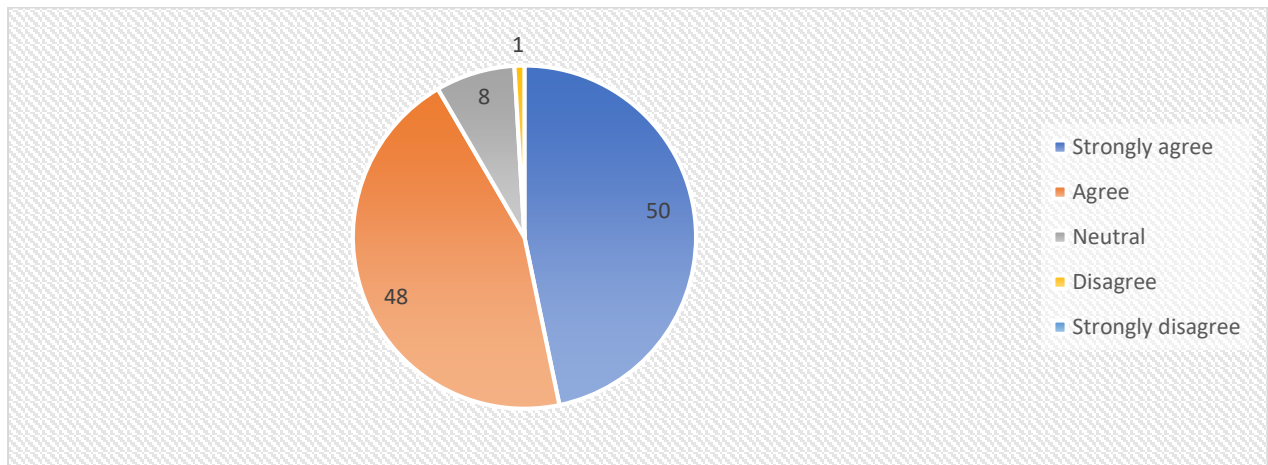
**4. What factors in pharmaceutical campaigns influence your perception the most? (Check all that apply)**



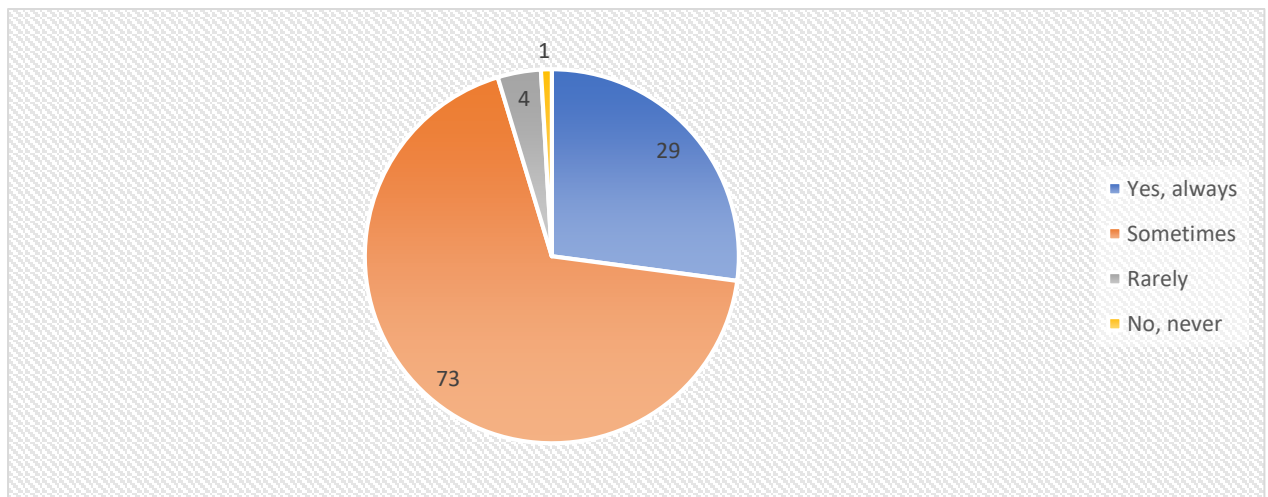
**5. Have you ever changed your perception of a pharmaceutical company due to a specific marketing campaign?**



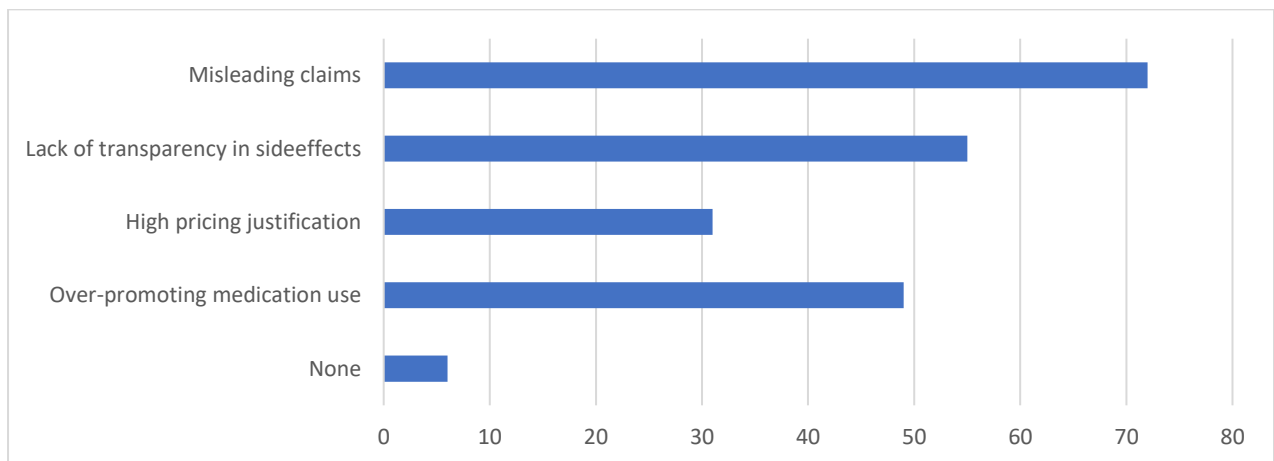
**6. In your opinion, do pharmaceutical campaigns contribute to building trust in a brand?**



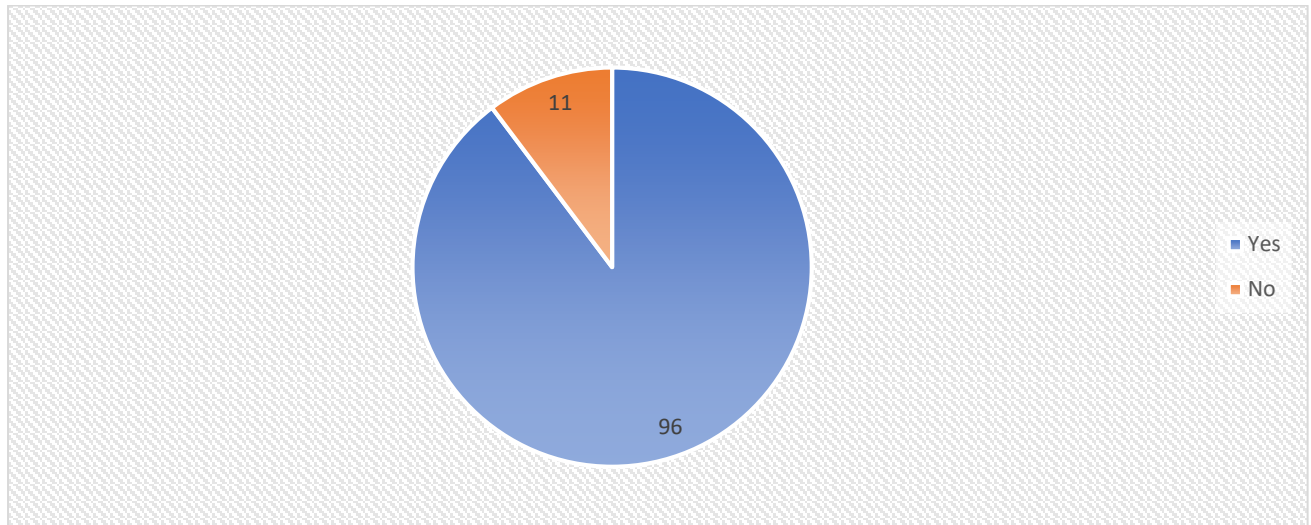
**7. Do you think pharmaceutical companies are transparent in their advertising?**



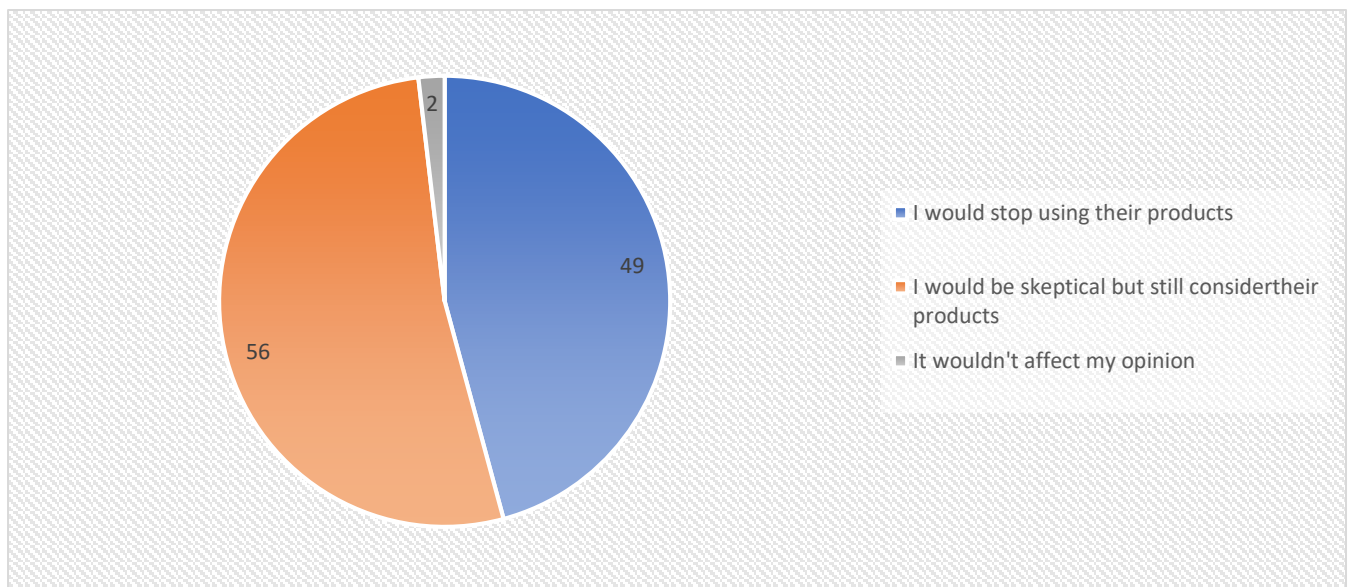
**8. What ethical concerns do you associate with pharmaceutical campaigns? (Check all that apply)**



**9. Would a pharmaceutical company's corporate social responsibility efforts (e.g., donations, patient support programs) influence your perception of their brand?**



**10. If a pharmaceutical company faced a public scandal (e.g., lawsuits, data manipulation), how would it affect your trust in the brand?**



A total of 106 individuals took part in the survey aimed at evaluating the influence of pharmaceutical marketing campaigns on public perception and trust. Most participants stated that they most often encountered pharmaceutical promotions on digital media, followed by television and print sources. Responses regarding overall opinion on such advertising were varied—some viewers found them educational and reliable, while others expressed skepticism about exaggerated claims and the lack of full transparency. The most influential elements identified were how clearly the message was delivered, the trustworthiness of the source, emotional impact, and the presence of informative content. Notably, around 60% of respondents acknowledged that their views about a pharmaceutical brand had shifted as a result of a specific campaign. Additionally, many participants agreed that effective advertising efforts could enhance the level of trust in a brand. Nonetheless, ethical concerns such as misleading content and overemphasis on commercial benefits were frequently mentioned. From a

statistical perspective, ANOVA results showed minimal variation in trust levels across different job categories, indicating that factors influencing trust tend to be consistent. However, the Chi-square test revealed a notable connection between how people perceived advertisements and how they made decisions, suggesting that campaigns have a direct impact on consumer behavior and brand perception.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The results shed light on how pharmaceutical promotions play a key role in shaping public trust and brand recognition. Regardless of differences in professional background, trust in pharmaceutical campaigns appeared to stem from universal factors such as message clarity, credibility, and emotional engagement. This suggests that companies aiming to strengthen their branding should focus on transparent, informative, and relatable messaging. The strong correlation between advertisement perception and decision-making emphasizes the strategic importance of well-crafted campaigns in influencing consumer attitudes. While many participants acknowledged the positive influence of campaigns, they also raised valid concerns regarding ethics—particularly the risks of misinformation and over-commercialization. This indicates a growing awareness among the public and a demand for responsible advertising practices. In an age where digital platforms dominate communication, pharmaceutical brands must balance persuasive messaging with integrity. Ethical marketing not only protects public trust but also supports long-term brand reputation. In conclusion, while impactful campaigns can enhance visibility and consumer loyalty, they must be executed with honesty and accountability to ensure alignment with public health priorities.

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