

**EXPLORING CONSUMER CONFUSION IN
HEALTHCARE DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE: A
PATIENT CONFUSION FRAMEWORK**

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**DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI
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HEALTHCARE DECISION MAKING AND CHOICE:
A PATIENT CONFUSION FRAMEWORK**

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that thesis titled “Exploring consumer confusion in healthcare decision making and choice: a patient confusion framework,” which is being submitted by **Vishakha Chauhan** to the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** (Ph.D.) is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. She has worked under my supervision in conformity with the rules and regulations of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The research reports and results presented in the thesis have not been submitted in part or whole for the award of any degree or diploma in any other University or Institute.

(Prof. Mahim Sagar)

Research Supervisor

Department of Management Studies,

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

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“If each of my words were a drop of water, you would see through them and glimpse what I feel: gratitude.”

-Octavio Paz

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ABSTRACT

Consumer confusion is an emerging area in the marketing literature that has picked up pace in recent decades owing to the importance of understanding consumer decision-making in an information-overloaded marketing environment. Confusion represents a fundamental problem in consumer decision-making at the pre-purchase stage of the buying process. Consumers today have access to multiple sources of information, including digital channels, social media, online reviews, mass media, word of mouth, salespersons support, and many more. In this scenario, information is often cluttered, ambiguous, and confusing to arrive at a purchase decision for any product or service. Marketing and selling efforts are constantly focused on easing consumer decision-making to foster consumer loyalty and retention. Consumer confusion in decision-making can be the target area for marketing efforts which can significantly improve consumer adoption of products and prevent the much wavering and overloaded consumer from switching.

The marketing literature is rich in various product and service industries wherein this concept of confusion has been explored. However, the healthcare sector and patient decision-making remain an understudied but significant area wherein the idea of confusion plays a pivotal role. This research adopts healthcare decision-making in India as the context of the study, where we propose to explore and conceptualize the concept of patient confusion. The Indian healthcare system is particularly susceptible to the problem of patient confusion due to privatization of healthcare, high competition among private providers, and lack of nationalized healthcare coverage. Healthcare decisions are high involvement choices that require knowledge and expertise while navigating complex healthcare systems. However, patients as flawed consumers in an asymmetric information environment often suffer from anxiety and confusion due to a lack of awareness and medical knowledge. In the backdrop of these issues, this study aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of patient confusion,

identify its triggers in the healthcare environment, and decode its possible effects and implications for healthcare marketers.

This study has been conducted in three major phases. The first phase focuses on a critical review of literature that systematically reviews and assesses the current state of marketing literature concerning consumer confusion studies. Within the context of the study, the healthcare decision-making and patient choice literature were also reviewed. Theoretical frameworks from consumer decision-making and emotions areas were taken up to conceptualize this research. Moving forward to the second phase of this research, an exploratory study was conducted wherein the consumer confusion construct was conceptualized in the healthcare context using inductive inquiry. Phenomenological interviews (semi-structured, open-ended) were conducted with patients intercepted at private hospitals in Delhi as part of data collection to understand factors affecting the patient confusion phenomenon. Three significant themes, including characteristics of the decision problem, characteristics of decision-maker and embeddedness in the social context, came out to affect patient confusion. Switching intention was found to be the most significant outcome of patient confusion. Adaptive decision-making framework along with appraisal theories of emotions were leveraged over the qualitative data to lead to proposition of patient confusion framework of drivers and outcomes. This study's third and final phase focused on empirical testing of the patient confusion framework through a deductive inquiry. Quantitative data using a structured questionnaire was collected from patients (out-patients and in-patients) in three multi-specialty hospitals in Delhi. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data and test the proposed hypothesis. As a culmination of results, patient confusion was decoded into various factors that drive its occurrence and impacts marketing outcomes. Physician-patient communication came out to be the most significant factor that causes patient confusion. Information ambiguity, information overload, information similarity,

information asymmetry, and patient involvement also significantly drive patient confusion. Health literacy, self-efficacy, and social influence did not significantly affect patient confusion. Patient confusion's impact on switching intention was also confirmed. Agency/attribution was found to moderate the relationship between patient confusion and switching intention significantly. Coping potential did not show significant moderation. Lastly, patient confusion significantly mediated the relationship between the drivers and the outcomes. Each of the factors and their implications has been discussed in the concluding chapters.

Mitigation of confusion in patient decision-making during hospital choice and treatment can greatly improve the utilization of health services, create much-needed patient autonomy, and foster loyalty and patient retention for marketers. Hospitals can inculcate confusion parameters and findings of this study in their patient satisfaction surveys as confusion mitigation is directly related to satisfaction and reduced switching behavior. In life and death, improved healthcare decisions can also reduce morbidities and improve health outcomes. The study is also vital to government agencies and policy makers to better formulate more patient-centric health policies.

सार

उपभोक्ता भ्रम विपणन साहित्य में एक उभरता हुआ क्षेत्र है जिसने हाल के दशकों में सूचना-अधिभारित विपणन वातावरण में उपभोक्ता निर्णय लेने को समझने के महत्व के कारण गति पकड़ी है। खरीद प्रक्रिया के पूर्व-खरीद चरण में उपभोक्ता निर्णय लेने में भ्रम एक मूलभूत समस्या का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। आज उपभोक्ताओं के पास सूचना के कई स्रोतों तक पहुंच है, जिसमें डिजिटल चैनल, सोशल मीडिया, ऑनलाइन समीक्षाएं, मास मीडिया, वर्ड ऑफ माउथ, सेल्सपर्सन सपोर्ट और कई अन्य शामिल हैं। इस परिदृश्य में, किसी भी उत्पाद या सेवा के लिए खरीद निर्णय पर पहुंचने के लिए जानकारी अक्सर अव्यवस्थित, अस्पष्ट और भ्रमित करने वाली होती है। उपभोक्ता की वफादारी और प्रतिधारण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए उपभोक्ता निर्णय लेने को आसान बनाने पर विपणन और बिक्री के प्रयास लगातार केंद्रित हैं। निर्णय लेने में उपभोक्ता भ्रम विपणन प्रयासों के लिए लक्षित क्षेत्र हो सकता है जो उपभोक्ताओं को उत्पादों को अपनाने में काफी सुधार कर सकता है और बहुत अधिक डगमगाने वाले और अतिभारित उपभोक्ता को स्विच करने से रोक सकता है।

विपणन साहित्य विभिन्न उत्पाद और सेवा उद्योगों में समृद्ध है जिसमें भ्रम की इस अवधारणा का पता लगाया गया है। हालाँकि, स्वास्थ्य सेवा क्षेत्र और रोगी निर्णय लेना एक महत्वपूर्ण लेकिन महत्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र है जहाँ भ्रम का विचार एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है। यह शोध अध्ययन के संदर्भ के रूप में भारत में स्वास्थ्य देखभाल निर्णय लेने को अपनाता है, जहाँ हम रोगी भ्रम की अवधारणा का पता लगाने और अवधारणा का प्रस्ताव करते हैं। भारतीय स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली विशेष रूप से स्वास्थ्य देखभाल के निजीकरण, निजी प्रदाताओं के बीच उच्च प्रतिस्पर्धा और राष्ट्रीयकृत स्वास्थ्य देखभाल कवरेज की कमी के कारण रोगी भ्रम की समस्या के लिए अतिसंवेदनशील है। हेल्थकेयर निर्णय उच्च भागीदारी विकल्प हैं जिनके लिए जटिल स्वास्थ्य देखभाल प्रणालियों को नेविगेट करते समय ज्ञान और विशेषज्ञता की आवश्यकता होती है। हालाँकि, एक असममित सूचना वातावरण में त्रुटिपूर्ण उपभोक्ताओं के रूप में रोगी अक्सर जागरूकता और चिकित्सा ज्ञान की कमी के कारण चिंता और भ्रम से ग्रस्त होते हैं। इन मुद्दों की

पृष्ठभूमि में, इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य रोगी भ्रम की घटना को गहराई से समझना, स्वास्थ्य देखभाल के माहौल में इसके ट्रिगर्स की पहचान करना और हेल्थकेयर मार्केटर्स के लिए इसके संभावित प्रभावों और प्रभावों को समझना है।

यह अध्ययन तीन प्रमुख चरणों में किया गया है। पहला चरण साहित्य की एक आलोचनात्मक समीक्षा पर केंद्रित है जो उपभोक्ता भ्रम अध्ययन से संबंधित विपणन साहित्य की वर्तमान स्थिति की व्यवस्थित रूप से समीक्षा और मूल्यांकन करता है। अध्ययन के संदर्भ में, स्वास्थ्य संबंधी निर्णय लेने और रोगी पसंद साहित्य की भी समीक्षा की गई। इस शोध की अवधारणा के लिए उपभोक्ता निर्णय लेने और भावनाओं के क्षेत्रों से सैद्धांतिक ढांचे को लिया गया। इस शोध के दूसरे चरण की ओर बढ़ते हुए, एक खोजपूर्ण अध्ययन किया गया जिसमें आगमनात्मक जांच का उपयोग करते हुए स्वास्थ्य देखभाल के संदर्भ में उपभोक्ता भ्रम निर्माण की अवधारणा की गई। रोगी भ्रम की घटना को प्रभावित करने वाले कारकों को समझने के लिए डेटा संग्रह के हिस्से के रूप में दिल्ली के निजी अस्पतालों में इंटरसेप्ट किए गए रोगियों के साथ घटनात्मक साक्षात्कार (अर्ध-संरचित, ओपन-एंडेड) आयोजित किए गए थे। रोगी भ्रम को प्रभावित करने के लिए निर्णय समस्या की विशेषताओं, निर्णय लेने वाले की विशेषताओं और सामाजिक संदर्भ में अंतर्निहितता सहित तीन महत्वपूर्ण विषय सामने आए। स्विचिंग इरादा रोगी भ्रम का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण परिणाम पाया गया। अनुकूली निर्णय लेने की रूपरेखा के साथ-साथ भावनाओं के मूल्यांकन सिद्धांतों का गुणात्मक डेटा पर लाभ उठाया गया ताकि ड्राइवर्स और परिणामों के रोगी भ्रम ढांचे के प्रस्ताव का नेतृत्व किया जा सके। इस अध्ययन का तीसरा और अंतिम चरण एक निगमनात्मक पूछताछ के माध्यम से रोगी भ्रम ढांचे के अनुभवजन्य परीक्षण पर केंद्रित है। संरचित प्रश्नावली का उपयोग करके मात्रात्मक डेटा दिल्ली के तीन बहु-विशिष्ट अस्पतालों में रोगियों (बाहरी रोगियों और रोगियों) से एकत्र किया गया था। डेटा का विश्लेषण करने और प्रस्तावित परिकल्पना का परीक्षण करने के लिए संरचनात्मक समीकरण मॉडलिंग का उपयोग किया गया था। परिणामों की परिणति के रूप में, रोगी भ्रम को विभिन्न कारकों में विभाजित किया गया था जो इसकी घटना को चलाते हैं और विपणन परिणामों को प्रभावित करते हैं।

चिकित्सक-रोगी संचार सबसे महत्वपूर्ण कारक निकला जो रोगी के भ्रम का कारण बनता है। सूचना अस्पष्टता, सूचना अधिभार, सूचना समानता, सूचना विषमता, और रोगी की भागीदारी भी रोगी भ्रम को महत्वपूर्ण रूप से प्रेरित करती है। स्वास्थ्य साक्षरता, आत्म-प्रभावकारिता और सामाजिक प्रभाव ने रोगी भ्रम को महत्वपूर्ण रूप से प्रभावित नहीं किया। स्विचिंग इरादे पर रोगी भ्रम के प्रभाव की भी पुष्टि की गई। एजेंसी/एट्रिब्यूशन को रोगी भ्रम और स्विचिंग इरादे के बीच संबंधों को महत्वपूर्ण रूप से मॉडरेट करने के लिए पाया गया। मुकाबला करने की क्षमता ने महत्वपूर्ण संयम नहीं दिखाया। अंत में, रोगी भ्रम ने ड्राइवरो और परिणामों के बीच संबंधों में महत्वपूर्ण रूप से मध्यस्थता की। अंतिम अध्यायों में प्रत्येक कारक और उनके प्रभावों पर चर्चा की गई है।

अस्पताल के चुनाव और उपचार के दौरान रोगी के निर्णय लेने में भ्रम की स्थिति को कम करने से स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं के उपयोग में काफी सुधार हो सकता है, रोगी स्वायत्तता का निर्माण हो सकता है, और विपणक के लिए वफादारी और रोगी प्रतिधारण को बढ़ावा मिल सकता है। अस्पताल अपने रोगी संतुष्टि सर्वेक्षणों में इस अध्ययन के भ्रम मानकों और निष्कर्षों को शामिल कर सकते हैं क्योंकि भ्रम का शमन सीधे संतुष्टि और कम स्विचिंग व्यवहार से संबंधित है। जीवन और मृत्यु में, बेहतर स्वास्थ्य देखभाल निर्णय भी रुग्णता को कम कर सकते हैं और स्वास्थ्य परिणामों में सुधार कर सकते हैं। अधिक रोगी-केंद्रित स्वास्थ्य नीतियों को बेहतर ढंग से तैयार करने के लिए सरकारी एजेंसियों और नीति निर्माताओं के लिए भी अध्ययन महत्वपूर्ण है।

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